Guidelines for Participatory Nutrition Projects

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Reprinted, 1994, 1995

The designations employed and the presentation of material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country's territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

Cover design, illustrations, graphics and lay-out by Studio Dickerson, Rome

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner. Applications for such permission, with a statement of the purpose and extent of the reproduction, should be addressed to the Director, Publications Division, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Via delle Terme di Caracalla, 00100 Rome, Italy.

© FAO 1993

Contents

Introduction

Acknowledgements

Participatory nutrition projects

The guidelines

Chapter 1: preparatory phase

Summary

Gathering and reviewing existing information

Establishing links with other development agencies and institutions
Selecting a community

Developing or strengthening relationships and dialogue with the community

Stimulating community interest in food and nutrition

Chapter 2: participatory appraisal of community food and nutrition

Summary

Participatory Appraisal: Why?

Participatory Appraisal: What?

Participatory appraisal: When?

Participatory appraisal: How?

Setting priorities

Chapter 3: design and implementation of participatory projects and activities

Summary

Identification and selection of activities

Mobilizing community resources

Obtaining support from local institutions

Preparation of micro-project proposals

Chapter 4: monitoring and evaluation of participatory nutrition projects

Summary

Participatory monitoring and evaluation: Why?

Monitoring and evaluation: Who?

Monitoring and evaluation: What?

Monitoring and evaluation: How?

Monitoring and evaluation: When?

List of suggested complementary readings

Introduction

Acknowledgements
Participatory nutrition projects

The guidelines

Introduction

Acknowledgements

These guidelines have been prepared by the Nutrition Programmes Service of the Food Policy and Nutrition Division of FAO. FAO has a long history and experience of participatory development projects. The People's Participation Programme, initiated in 1980 by the Rural Development Analysis and Organization Service, promotes this approach. Several other units in FAO have also been designing development projects that take into account the perceived needs and capacities of the people which the project intends to help. These different experiences have demonstrated the effectiveness of participatory rural development and led to the approval of the Plan of Action for People's Participation in Rural Development by member countries at the FAO conference of 1991.

These guidelines are partly based on practical field experience of the National Institute of Nutrition in Mexico and two non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the Partnership for Productivity Foundation in Kenya and the International Institute for Rural Reconstruction in the Philippines, which have implemented participatory nutrition projects in a number of communities with the support of FAO.

These guidelines have also profited from the experience of other FAO-supported projects, such as the People's Participation Project in Sri Lanka which emphasized the nutritional implications of its income-generating activities for small-scale farmers and the Freedom From Hunger Campaign (FFHC) project supporting small-scale food producers and processors in Ghana, to which the Fisheries Department provided technical assistance. In addition, several FAO professionals provided input to these guidelines from their experience.

We would like to acknowledge the important contribution provided by all those mentioned above.

The development of these guidelines is an ongoing process and comments and suggestions from people working in the field all over the world would be welcome.

Participatory nutrition projects

Malnutrition remains a serious problem in most developing countries today. It is a problem that affects specific groups rather than the population as a whole. Efforts to improve nutrition, therefore, need to focus on these groups and address people on the level of the community.

Experience has shown that when a community is fully involved in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of nutrition and other development projects, these are likely to be more effective and sustainable. Such participatory efforts more often meet the real needs of the people in the community and achieve results that can be continued with minimal external inputs.

In light of this, these guidelines have been prepared to help development staff working at community level to promote the design and implementation of participatory nutrition projects.

Underweight children: An indicator of malnutrition
Food and nutrition are complex issues that involve constantly changing environmental, cultural and economic factors. This is especially true for poor families.

Even households which formerly obtained their food through a combination of subsistence production and barter are today facing the need to adapt to a changing environment: economies increasingly based on money, declining availability of resources, increasing population, new expectation, new technology.

Participatory nutrition projects aim to improve the nutritional situation of vulnerable households through concrete activities which are designed, implemented, monitored and evaluated by the people of the community and which address the causes of malnutrition as the people themselves perceive them.

Many efforts have already been made to incorporate nutrition in agriculture projects. Most of these concentrate on improving the nutritional status of the target population through complementing agricultural activities with more specific nutrition interventions, such as nutrition education. Participatory projects render these efforts even more effective by addressing the causes of malnutrition from the perspective of the people themselves.

In order to alleviate malnutrition effectively, it is important for the community and the development worker to:

- understand the food and nutrition situation of the community;
- be aware of the existing constraints to adequate nutrition;
- decide which problems should be given priority;
- identify resources available for undertaking activities to overcome such problems.

The causes of malnutrition can be traced to a variety of factors including inadequate food production, inequitable distribution, and lack of income, health and education. These causes can be arranged in three major clusters: food insecurity, inadequate caring capacity, and impaired health. Nutrition or, rather, keeping the household well-fed is thus a major concern of many social groups and is often a basic element in the
organization of societies. This concern increases with poverty.

Nutrition, therefore, can provide a good entry point to generate people's participation and to reach and involve people who are often left out of development activities, particularly women. All over the world, women play a major role at different stages of the food chain: production, processing, purchasing, preparation and distribution. Participatory nutrition projects highlight women's role and strengthen their involvement in nutrition-related activities, including income-generating activities, thus contributing to women's empowerment.

Nutrition also provides a good entry point to discuss the development problems facing the community in an integrated way and can thus help development workers target their community activities more effectively.

The response to people's food and nutrition problems will differ according to the specific situation of the people, for instance, whether they live in urban slums or isolated rural areas. Participatory nutrition projects promote the collaboration of institutions, such as governmental and non-governmental organizations, that are capable of supporting the specific needs of the community. Successful participatory nutrition projects can, at the same time, help governments develop and/or strengthen effective mechanisms for coordination of development efforts at local level.

In many countries, governments have committed themselves to increase people's participation, achieve effective decentralization and alleviate poverty. This commitment creates a positive environment for participatory nutrition projects, which can in turn contribute to establishing mechanisms to implement these policies.

Participatory nutrition projects will have a greater impact, however, if macro-economic and political decisions to enhance agricultural production, guarantee stable food prices and ensure the free movement of goods and services are taken and implemented at the highest political level. A commitment to poverty alleviation is also important.

**The guidelines**

The guidelines are designed for use by professional staff from different technical and institutional backgrounds, who have had formal technical training or education, and who either work at the community level or are responsible for community development activities. These development workers may be government employees such as agricultural extensionists, primary school teachers or health staff or they may be part of a non-governmental organization. They may be working with one or several communities on a specific technical task or have many varied responsibilities. Whatever their professional situation, it is hoped that these guidelines will help development workers to integrate nutrition concerns in their routine activities effectively.

**The guidelines describe the following aspects of participatory nutrition projects:**

- Preparatory stage: establishing initial contacts between development workers, communities and other development agents
- Participatory appraisal of the food and nutrition situation of the community.
- Selection and implementation of activities to improve this situation.
- The monitoring and evaluation process.

These guidelines include short checklists to help summarize issues or outline steps to be taken. Simple diagrams and charts, developed or adapted from actual field experiences, illustrate the specific tasks to be performed in each stage. The constraints most commonly encountered are also listed.

These guidelines are designed to be used with flexibility: participatory processes involve continual revision of
assessment and decision-making as the project develops.

Some of the steps presented in a sequence may have to be carried out simultaneously. Others may not be relevant in a specific local situation or may have already been taken.

Participatory projects take time. These guidelines are designed, therefore, for use by development workers who will be working with a community for at least two years.

Chapter 1: preparatory phase

Summary

Gathering and reviewing existing information

Establishing links with other development agencies and institutions

Selecting a community

Developing or strengthening relationships and dialogue with the community

Stimulating community interest in food and nutrition

Chapter 1: preparatory phase

Summary

The preparatory phase of a participatory nutrition project in a community consists of several important and essential activities.

One of the first steps is to gather and review existing information on food and nutrition issues related to the local community. This can be done through contacting institutions that can provide nutrition-related information, identifying key contacts and discussing local nutrition issues with them individually or in groups. With this information, the development worker can prepare an initial assessment.

Another early step is to establish or strengthen links with other development agents and institutions. This can be done through making an inventory of institutions working locally on food and nutrition-related issues and contacting them on a one-to-one basis and, when possible, in groups. Development workers can then make an inventory of the services provided by other development institutions.

Selecting a community for a participatory nutrition project will depend on whether the development worker is already working in one or more communities, on the food and nutrition needs of the communities and the potential openness of the community to a participatory project.

After selecting the community, the development worker initiates or strengthens relationships with the community and begins a food and nutrition dialogue with the people. This can be done through meetings with local leaders and with the community to discuss with them about food and nutrition issues. The development worker also identifies existing organizations in the community and the relationships between groups inside and outside the community.

The development worker may have to initiate concrete activities related to food and nutrition to stimulate community interest.
The development worker does not necessarily need to carry out all these activities on a step by step basis. Many of these activities may overlap and reinforce each other. Some may already have been done. Others, such as gathering and reviewing information, do not necessarily have to be totally completed before beginning a project, but can be continued throughout the course of the project. These guidelines are meant to be used flexibly.

This preparatory phase might take approximately three months, depending on how frequently the development worker is in contact with the community and other local development staff. A primary school teacher living in the community will need less time than an agricultural extensionist who is based in the district capital and has to travel to the community.

Gathering and reviewing existing information

One of the first steps in planning a participatory nutrition project is to gather and review existing information that can give an initial picture of the food and nutrition situation in the area. This information may also help development workers to select communities for nutrition activities.

The design of a community nutrition project calls for information on food production and supply, food habits, access to health services and water supply systems, in addition to technical nutrition information, such as heights and weights of under-five children and weaning practices. It will also be useful to review other information related to food and nutrition, such as appropriate technology for food production, processing and storage or market prices of local basic foods (e.g. staples, oil and sugar).

This information can be found in published materials, reports and studies or data-collection systems. Some of this information may be gathered locally from existing institutions, such as health centres or agricultural extension services and some may be available at provincial or central level at ministries, universities, non-governmental organizations, development agencies or private sector institutions. Supervisors may be able to provide some of these materials and assist development workers to identify other materials and where to find them.
The views of local experts and leaders about the local nutrition problems are also useful. Development workers can meet local leaders individually or as a group. A meeting that gathers people from different backgrounds and fields who know the local situation has some advantages: it can help determine what specific issues need further checking and investigating and can serve as the basis for further cooperation between the institutions and/or people present.

After reviewing existing information, the development worker makes an initial assessment of the food and nutrition situation in the area.

The following checklist 1 has been developed to help development workers organize and record food and nutrition information. The checklist is meant to be used as a flexible guide. The kind and amount of information needed and/or available will vary from place to place. Gaps in information can be filled in as needed as the project develops.

**Checklist 1: Information on food and nutrition**

This checklist is a tool for organizing and recording the community food and nutrition information that may be needed for a participatory nutrition project. It also lists possible sources of information for each issue. Gaps in information can be filled in as the project develops.

**1. Nutritional status**

Sources: routine data-collection systems and nutritional surveillance from health centres, nutritionists, NGOs

- What is the prevalence of nutritional problems in the area?

  low weight for age
low height for age (stunting) indicator of chronic malnutrition
low weight for height (wasting) indicator of acute malnutrition
micro-nutrient deficiency (e.g. anaemia or avitaminosis A)

- Which groups are most affected?
  age
  gender
  community
  type of household (e.g. landless, migrants, fisherfolk)

- Is the situation changing? How?

2. Food consumption patterns

Sources: Surveys from statistical units of Nutrition Institutes or Departments, rural sociologists, anthropologists, Ministry of Health, development agencies

- What are the local food practices and beliefs?
  Do all the local population groups have the same eating habits?
  If not, which are the main groups that share similar eating patterns?
  Why?
  What are the main food sources? What is a typical meal?
  Intra-household food distribution: Who in the family eats what? How often a day?
  How does this vary year round?
  What are the local beliefs related to particular foods (including taboos)?

- What are the breastfeeding and weaning practices?

3. Prevalence and seasonality of main diseases

Source: Health clinics

- What are the main diseases (e.g. diarrhoea, measles, malaria, respiratory tract infections, AIDS)?
  Who are the main sufferers?
  How prevalent are these diseases?
  What is their seasonality?

4. Health services

Sources: Ministry of Health, health services

- What kind of facilities are provided (e.g. health post, health centre)?
- What services are provided?
- Which are provided on a regular basis?
- Where are the health facilities located (indicate on map of the area)?

5. Agricultural data on local food production, seasonality, constraints
- What food crops are produced?
- What proportion are subsistence food crops and what proportion are cash crops?
- Subsistence food: what are the main foods produced?
  - Staples (e.g. cereals, roots and tubers):
  - Fruits and vegetables:
  - Animal products (e.g. meat, eggs, milk, cheese):
- Cash crops: what are the main crops in the area?
- What are the constraints to food production (e.g. climate; access to land, water, labour and other inputs; storage, processing and preparation, marketing system)?
- Is there a lean or "hungry" season?
  - What areas or households are most affected?
  - How do people deal with scarcity?

6. Food marketing
Sources: government services, such as the Ministries of Trade or Finance
- What markets, stores, retail stores exist?
- What transportation facilities exist (e.g. roads and bridges; public and private transport, such as trucks, bicycles, boats)?
- What are the market prices of essential foods (e.g. staples, oil, fruits and vegetables)?

7. Water supply systems
Sources: local public health services, engineering/water supply board
- What water supply systems exist?
  - traditional (e.g. open wells, water holes, rivers):
  - government services (e.g. tube wells, hand pumps):
  - other development projects:

8. General information on local development
Sources: local government, local offices of the different line ministries
- What are the national development policies related to community development and food and nutrition?

**Constraints**

In carrying out this work, the development worker may encounter a number of problems or constraints.

- It may be difficult to obtain materials on nutrition and food security locally. The information may not be available or the development worker may need special authorization to get it. Some institutions may not be willing to share information. Sometimes this can be avoided by careful planning of the interviews and a positive approach. It is best to respect any initial resistance. Resistance is likely to be overcome as the process evolves and communication is promoted by the development worker.

- Literature on nutrition often focuses on under-five children and pregnant and lactating women. Although this information is important, information on households in general is needed. The development worker may also have to differentiate other population groups according to their access to and consumption of food.

- The information available may be too general and/or not very recent. This can be supplemented with other information, written or verbal, collected by the development worker. This would allow the development worker to compare the local situation and the overall situation in the country and illustrate the changes that have taken place over time.

![Figure](image)

**Establishing links with other development agencies and institutions**

An important step in preparing a participatory nutrition project is to make contact and establish links with other development agents and institutions working on food and nutrition or related issues.

Because malnutrition has many causes, the solution to nutritional problems involves people and institutions working in different development sectors, including agriculture, health, education and community development. It is useful to make an inventory of the institutions that are working locally or supporting local activities related to food and nutrition. These can include government institutions, such as Ministries of Agriculture, Health and Education, and political and administrative authorities, as well as non-governmental organizations involved in development work. These would include, in particular, farmers' associations, trade unions and other people's organizations concerned with social issues and local development.

It is best to begin making contacts with these different institutions at an early stage. Whenever possible, it is useful to get information about the institution first. This way, the development worker can determine the best way to approach the institution. In speaking with representatives of the different institutions, development workers can:
- explain the approach they intend to follow to promote participatory nutrition activities;
- ask for suggestions on how the institutions can cooperate and assist in the activities;
- gather specific information on what services the institutions offer or can offer to the community, what their resources are and what their current plan of operations is at community level;
- find out what coordination mechanisms exist between the different organizations as a basis for future working relationships.

An inventory of services locally available to communities is very useful. This inventory can list the services provided, the name of the providing institution, its location and distance from the community, and the resources that the institution can make available. Figure 1 is an example of such an inventory. An inventory worksheet has also been provided for the use of development workers.

**Figure 1: Example of an inventory sheet of services that are locally available to a community**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Services provided</th>
<th>Institution responsible</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Distance from community</th>
<th>Resources available</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture extension services</td>
<td>..........................</td>
<td>..........</td>
<td>..........................</td>
<td>..........................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livestock extension</td>
<td>..........................</td>
<td>..........</td>
<td>..........................</td>
<td>..........................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health services Primary health care</td>
<td>..........................</td>
<td>..........</td>
<td>..........................</td>
<td>..........................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small credit support</td>
<td>..........................</td>
<td>..........</td>
<td>..........................</td>
<td>..........................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water supply</td>
<td>..........................</td>
<td>..........</td>
<td>..........................</td>
<td>..........................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanitation</td>
<td>..........................</td>
<td>..........</td>
<td>..........................</td>
<td>..........................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women's development services</td>
<td>..........................</td>
<td>..........</td>
<td>..........................</td>
<td>..........................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forestry extension</td>
<td>..........................</td>
<td>..........</td>
<td>..........................</td>
<td>..........................</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A map can help visualize where in the community or area these services are available. Map 1 gives an example of how this can be done. It shows the location of services provided by different development institutions in a rural community in the Philippines.

Organizations working locally can be very useful sources of information. A visit to their projects can be a good way to find out more about the area. Their training modules and materials may also be useful for the participatory nutrition project.

Developing good relationships and cooperation with local government authorities from the start will help ensure their long-term support to the participatory nutrition project, an essential ingredient to its success and sustainability. Sharing the information gathered with the local administration will improve the dissemination of information and increase the awareness of government staff on nutrition and food security issues. It is good to involve professionals at the decision-making level because they are well placed to see that information flows both from the field to the national level and from the central level to the field.

In countries where district planning cells exist, the process of developing cooperation is simpler. Development
workers can go to the district planning cells for assistance when gathering and analyzing information and for discussions with the agents of the various technical ministries who are usually found at this level.

As a complement to one-to-one meetings with staff from each institution, it is very useful to organize a joint meeting of the most important organizations working at local level. In this meeting the development worker can present the participatory nutrition project, answer questions, give further explanations, ask for suggestions on how those present can contribute to the project and promote cooperation between government, NGOs and the community.

It is also a good idea to start gathering information on possible funding sources for community development activities. This information will come in very handy later if financial resources are needed.

**BOX 1: Meeting with other development agencies: the Philippines**

In a participatory nutrition project started by the International Institute of Rural Reconstruction in the Philippines, an initial inter-agency workshop brought together staff from the Department of Health, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Social Welfare and Development, the Department of Local Government and Community Development and the Sangguniang Bayan representative to discuss the activities to be implemented in the village of San Francisco. A map was drawn to show where the activities of the agencies were located in the area. During this meeting, a detailed plan of operations was drawn up and the participants agreed to carry out clearly defined activities by a given date.

Map 1: Location of services in a village area in The Philippines.
Selecting a community

If development workers are already working in one or several communities, community selection may simply mean deciding with which community to start discussing food and nutrition. Sometimes, however, development workers have to decide or help decide in which community to start promoting a participatory nutrition project.

A variety of factors can contribute to this decision. One is the food and nutrition needs of the people of the community as perceived by the people or by outsiders. Sometimes the community is already aware of these needs and members or groups in the community might even request, formally or informally, food and nutrition-related activities. When the community is aware of the food and nutrition problems they face, the overall participatory process is easier.

Communities are not often aware of their food and nutrition needs and problems. Needs may, however, have been assessed on the basis of nutrition data, such as acute chronic malnutrition, micro-nutrient deficiencies; or health related data, such as high infant mortality rate; or awareness of a specific stress situation affecting food supply, such as drought, population pressure or major economic constraints.

The development worker will also consider the openness of the community to a participatory project. It is more
difficult to foster a participatory approach in communities where top-down development activities have been or are being carried out. Small and remote communities that have received little or no external support are likely to provide more successful entry points for a participatory nutrition programme.

Focusing on a group of communities in a given geographical area rather than on only one community at this stage will allow flexibility. If one community proves not to be really interested in the participatory nutrition project, another can be selected in its place.

**BOX 2: Identifying and Selecting Poor Communities: Sri Lanka**

In a people's participation project in Sri Lanka, the project coordinator asks the village level officials to fill a printed form for each village with information on: the number of food stamp receivers, the total amount of paddy and high lands available, the total head of livestock owned and the ownership pattern and the availability of irrigation water. They are also requested to make a sketch indicating the location of the village and key elements such as the major service centres or approach roads.

Once the information is received at the division level, the villages are selected on the basis of scarcity of resources and remoteness by the divisional secretary and other officials such as extension and health staff. Among those selected villages, clusters of 5-6 neighbouring villages are then identified as a project area.

One of the main advantages of this method, beyond ensuring a selection of the very poor villages, is that it involves the administrative staff at division level from the start. This contributes to effective cooperation between the project and the divisional secretary and staff and to developing and strengthening formal links between higher institutional levels and the divisional secretary. These are crucial for sustainability of the project.

**Developing or strengthening relationships and dialogue with the community**

A participatory nutrition project is based on dialogue between the development worker and the community. In talking together, each will contribute to a better understanding of the food and nutrition issues in the community. The understanding and view of these issues will evolve and grow in the course of the project.

How can the development worker begin or strengthen relationships with the community? If the worker is already familiar with the community, a good place to start is with existing relationships. It is also good to involve community leaders and educated people (traditional leaders, elders, school teachers, religious authorities, women's group leaders, representatives of people's organizations) right from the start. These people are keys to communication with others in the community: they can provide useful information and suggestions and can help the development worker make contacts with others. The support of community leaders also lends credibility to the project and helps ensure its success and sustainability.

From these initial contacts, the development worker can identify the issues that are most likely to raise the interest of a significant part of the community and the people most likely to be interested.

Once the contacts are made and the issues identified, it is good to hold a general meeting with the community. If the community as a whole meets regularly or is meeting for another purpose, the development worker can ask to speak during this meeting. Or, the community leaders can be asked to call a special meeting. The first meeting is a time for introducing the development worker and the food and nutrition issues. In the following days or during the next visit, the development worker can continue the discussions with individuals or small groups.

In these discussions, the development worker needs to take care not to foster misunderstandings and unrealistic expectations. The community should be aware of the development worker's intentions and resources (e.g. time, money) from the start.

It is essential to involve as many people as possible in the dialogue on food and nutrition. The development
worker needs to be aware of the daily schedule of activities of the different groups in the community, such as men and women, youth and adults, in order to plan with the community the times for visits and meetings when these groups can participate. Other arrangements may also be needed in order to make it possible for people to attend. Women, for instance, may need childcare arrangements. Such arrangements can also be discussed and planned with the community.

Women usually play a decisive role in starting the participatory nutrition process because of their leading role in food and nutrition in the household. In most countries women are responsible for food-related activities: production, gathering, processing and storage, purchasing, preparation, intra-household distribution and consumption. Women are usually those most concerned with household food security; that is, with having a sufficient supply of food for their families year round.

The households and individuals that most need assistance are usually not involved in consultations and decision-making processes in the community. This isolates them even more from development opportunities. Other social groups, such as young people are also often excluded. The development worker can try to identify such groups from the start and actively promote their involvement in the participatory nutrition project.

As soon as they know in which community they plan to promote the participatory nutrition project, development workers can start gathering information on formal or informal organizations in the community and on their links with external institutions. They can find out whether there are already trained community workers, such as community health workers. They can also try to obtain information on past development activities in the community and whether they were successful or not and the reasons why.

It may be useful to visualize the interaction of external institutions with the community as a whole and with its different groups by having the community make a diagram of these. An example is given in Figure 2, called a Venn diagram. This consists of a series of circles of various sizes. The major circle stand for the community and each circle inside or outside the major circle represents an individual, a group or an institution. The size of the circles indicates their importance, and the overlapping between them indicates the degree of interaction.

Constructing such a diagram during meetings with community groups, provides an opportunity to discuss existing problems and opportunities for assistance to the community. The development worker can compare the diagram with the inventory of locally available community services to help assess the efficiency of such services.

Figure 2: Venn diagram showing interaction of external institutions with the community of Ikolomani, Kenya
Constraints

- Development workers sometimes use technical terminology when speaking about nutrition problems (for example kwashiorkor, vitamins, proteins), or concepts which the community does not understand. This obstacle to dialogue can be avoided by using terms that the people do understand and that can be translated in the local language.

- Certain groups in the community may feel threatened by the participatory nutrition process or its outcomes, since it might raise questions on resource allocation and power structure within the community. Being aware of this and improving the exchange of information throughout the participatory process can help ease these fears.

Figure
Stimulating community interest in food and nutrition

In some cases, food and nutrition are central concerns of the community and community response is immediate, particularly when the community actually faces increasing or regularly occurring food scarcity. In many cases, however, development workers may find that community members are not very interested. The people may not share the same views on food and nutrition issues as the development workers and they may not see how these are related to improving their overall welfare. They may actually view outsiders' interest in this field as a waste of their own time. Then the efforts of the development worker can get bogged down due to the lack of interest of the community.

How can the development worker overcome this lack of interest and get things moving in the community? One successful approach is to initiate such activities requested by some community members to stimulate and crystallize community interest in food and nutrition and give proof that the development worker is ready to support concrete actions beyond the initial study phase.

BOX 3: Starting Community Dialogue: Mexico

In a participatory nutrition project in Mexico, development workers encountered difficulties in establishing a dialogue with the community selected. Although the people showed signs of chronic malnutrition, they had little awareness of any nutritional problems. After exploring different ways to generate people's interest in food and nutrition issues, the project staff found that the most successful way was to introduce new dishes to vary the monotony of the usual daily diet. Some communities organized themselves to pay for demonstrators to show how to prepare new dishes. Since the dishes were prepared with locally available foods, opportunities and constraints regarding local production of such foods were then discussed. These demonstrations thus provided an opportunity for debating food and nutrition-related issues.

BOX 4: Food and nutrition activities: Kenya

In Kakamega district, Kenya, households rely mainly on maize for their subsistence. Population pressure has led to overworking the increasingly scarce land, and to insufficient maize production per capita and food supply problems. In order to improve their food and nutrition situation, small farmers first asked development workers for support to increase maize production. Demonstration plots using hybrid maize and a comparatively high-input technology were therefore set up. Further discussions on the best use of existing resources led them to discuss alternative land use. They progressively shifted production towards agro-forestry and horticulture using big-intensive technology. This provided a more diversified food base and generated income to buy maize.

Sometimes communities request activities, such as agricultural or food preparation demonstrations, which may appear inappropriate to the development worker. However these can provide occasions for community members to meet and discuss food and nutrition issues.
Routine data collection activities can also be used to start discussions and lead households to question their food related habits.

**BOX 5 : Using growth monitoring to start discussions: Tanzania**

In a UNICEF-supported project in Iringa, Tanzania, the widespread use of growth-monitoring charts for under-five children provided an entry point for Village Health Committees to discuss the food and nutrition problems faced by households with one or more malnourished children. This led to the identification and implementation of community or household activities such as home-gardens, promotion of drought-resistant crops, training in agro-forestry, promotion of income-generating activities, organization of child care, training in food processing and preservation or improvement of food preparation.

Communication activities on food and nutrition, such as popular theatre, use of video recording and rural radio are means of participatory education that can also provide entertainment, distraction from the daily routine and opportunities to meet. The development worker can try to identify institutions with communication experience and resources in the area or in the country to explore possible cooperation. Development communication will be useful throughout the participatory nutrition project.
1. Gathering and reviewing preliminary information
   · contacting institutions likely to provide nutrition-related information
   · identifying key contacts and discussing with them local nutrition-related issues
   · holding joint meetings with key contacts
   · preparing an initial assessment

2. Establishing/strengthening links with other local development institutions
   · making an inventory of institutions working on nutrition related issues
   · promoting joint meetings of institutions at local level to present participatory nutrition concept
   · making an inventory of resources available

3. Selecting a community
   · identifying possible sites establishing criteria in decision making.

4. Initiating a food and nutrition dialogue with the community
   · meeting with local leaders to discuss possible collaboration with the community on issues of food and nutrition
   · informing the community at large about food and nutrition
   · identifying existing organizations within the community
   · identifying the different relationships between groups inside and outside the community

5. Stimulating interest in food and nutrition issues
   · starting small-scale activities
   · using means of communication (e.g. radio, theatre and video)

Chapter 2: participatory appraisal of community food and nutrition

Summary

Participatory Appraisal: Why?
Participatory Appraisal: What?
Participatory appraisal: When?
Participatory appraisal: How?

Setting priorities

Chapter 2: participatory appraisal of community food and nutrition
Summary

When the community is ready to carry out a participatory nutrition project, the development worker assists the community to appraise its food and nutrition situation.

This appraisal helps the community to understand its food and nutrition situation; to identify the problems and constraints to adequate nutrition and the households most affected; and to prioritize its food and nutrition problems. The appraisal also serves as the basis for people to plan food and nutrition activities together.

Development workers can use the initial assessment of food and nutrition carried out in the preparatory phase to develop a checklist of issues to pursue with the community. Marginalized households and individuals need special attention.

While the appraisal may be carried out at any time of year, the food and nutrition situation of a community may differ according to the season. Additional information gathered in other seasons will complement and complete the appraisal.

Because participatory appraisal involves dialogue among the community and with the development worker, it is a time-consuming and on-going process which can take weeks or months.

The information for participatory appraisal of community food and nutrition can be gathered in various ways, including: semi-structured individual or group interviews, visualization techniques, participant observation, listening to cultural traditions, popular theatre and role-playing, games and celebrations. Information can also be obtained from community institutions. Analytical exercises such as seasonal calendars, ranking exercises, maps and time charts are very useful.

The development worker helps the community to summarize and discuss the results of the appraisal and to prioritize the problems that emerge.

   Who catches the fish? Who buys it, cleans it, smokes it and sells it? What does that cost in time, effort and cash? These are core check-list items for understanding fishing communities
Participatory Appraisal: Why?

Participatory nutrition projects focus on helping specific groups make informed choices so that they can ensure good nutrition of all household members.

Through dialogue between development workers and the population, participatory projects help people decide which changes, innovations or interventions are appropriate to improve their food and nutrition situation.

Solutions are likely to be most appropriate and sustainable when they are based on the problem analysis and opinions of the people concerned. The participatory appraisal process involves people in assessing their own food and nutrition situation and identifying the causes of food and nutrition problems according to their perceptions. The role of the development worker in this appraisal process is that of a facilitator.

The participatory appraisal process serves to:

- raise awareness of both the community and development workers on food and nutrition issues;
- promote the participation of different community groups (in particular, women, poor people, young people)
- provide a basis for planning food and nutrition-related activities;
- collect information for the monitoring and evaluation system;
- contribute to community empowerment.

Participatory Appraisal: What?

In carrying out the participatory appraisal, three points deserve particular attention:

1. Traditional food habits end production systems and how they change over time, why they change and whether
or not these changes have resulted in improved nutrition.

2. The desired food patterns, or what people would prefer to eat and why. In many cases people would like to eat more "prestige" foods which may often be nutritionally inadequate and are usually expensive.

3. The ways households cope with seasonal or unexpected food and nutrition problems and the long-term impact of these coping mechanisms on food production and consumption of the household. Marginalized households and individuals need special attention. Within a community, the allocation of resources such as land, water, labour or income among households is unequal. The poorest households are likely to have the most serious nutritional problems in the community and the least resources.

Not only do limited resources not allow these households to cover essential needs like food, shelter, clothing; in addition they may be ignored or not accepted by the community as a whole; they may be obliged to seek employment out of the community and therefore not be able to participate in the analysis of problems and in the design of activities. Gathering this kind of information will help the development worker decide what is needed to allow such households to participate in and benefit from the participatory nutrition project.

A good way to identify the poorest households is to encourage the community to agree on a list of criteria by which to identify them. These indicators of poverty will reflect the social, cultural and economic characteristics of the community and will vary from one community to the other.

**BOX 6: Indicators of poverty: Kenya**

In a participatory nutrition project in Kakamega district, Kenya, the communities agreed on the following indicators of poverty for households/individuals:

- extreme malnutrition problems
- income less than Kshs. 15 a day
- less than 1/4 acre of agricultural land
- more than 7 children
- unable to educate children
- grass thatched roof that leaks during rain
- infested with jiggers (parasites)
- lack of adequate clothing
- poor hygienic conditions
- disabled people
- orphaned or abandoned children
- neglected people over 70
- outcasts (because of disease or crime)

During the participatory appraisal process, development workers facilitate the community's assessment of its own food and nutrition situation and its causes, rather than express opinions on problems and needs identified by others.
The initial assessment of the food and nutrition situation in the area, carried out in the preparatory phase will help development workers prepare checklists of issues to be investigated in the participatory appraisal. Checklist 2 gives a list of issues which may guide development workers. The checklist is intended to be used as a reference to stimulate dialogue, rather than as a questionnaire. Before using it, the development worker should try to find out from key contacts in the community which are the sensitive issues and how to deal with them.

Checklist 2: Participatory appraisal of community food and nutrition - issues of interest

This checklist of issues to be explored with the community is meant to be adapted or added to for each specific community. It is also intended to be used to stimulate dialogue about similarities and differences between households, rather than as a questionnaire.

1. Local food systems and recent changes

(For each social group identified in the preparatory phase)

- How do households obtain their food?
  
  What do they produce?
  What do they purchase?
  Other sources?

- Has this situation changed in the last years?
  
  How?
  Why?

- How are these changes perceived?
  
  Why?

2. Food habits, preferences and related beliefs

- How many meals do the different household members eat a day?
  
  In which season?
  What do they eat?
  Any snacks in between?
  Do children eat differently?
  How?
  What age groups (e.g. infants, school age children)?

- Has this changed lately?
  
  Why?
  How are changes perceived?
  Why?
Why not?
- Coping mechanisms: how do eating patterns change in times of scarcity?
  
  How is food obtained in such cases?
- If the household had more resources, what foods would they like to eat more or more often?
  
  Why?
- What foods are considered especially good or to be avoided in certain circumstances?
  
  Which foods?
  
  When?

3. Activities of household members related to food and nutrition

(e.g. food collection, food production, food processing, purchasing, preparation)
- What are these activities?
- Who performs them:
  
  men?
  
  women?
  
  children?
- How much time does it take them a day?
- Does this vary?
  
  When?
  
  Why? (season? other factors?)

4. Production for household consumption
- What foods are produced by the household?
  
  How many months do staples last?
  
  During which months do they eat the other foods?
- Has this changed in the last ten years?
  
  How?
- How are these changes perceived?
  
  Why?
- What are the problems encountered?
- What are the periods of food scarcity?
For which foods?
What efforts do people make to overcome these?

5. Processing of local foods
- Which foods produced are processed? How?
  At household level?
  At community level?
  Constraints?

6. Food storage
- What foods are stored? How?
  At household level?
  At community level?
  Constraints?

7. Food purchasing
- How much of the household income is spent on food and cooking, directly or indirectly (e.g. fuel, water)?
- What are the other essential purchases in the family budget? Are these permanent or occasional?
- What are the foods purchased? Which are considered as essential?
  Which as luxury?
  Why?
- How have purchasing habits changed in recent years?
  Why?

8. Food preparation and usage
- How is food prepared at household level? Where? On what kind of stove?
  Are any special foods prepared for small children? How?
  For other members of the family? Constraints?
- How is food portioned out within the household? At mealtimes?
  By whom?
  To whom?
  How often?
- What happens to leftovers?
9. Water supply and usage
- Where does the household get its water from:
  - For drinking?
  - For food preparation?
  - For washing?
  - For agricultural uses?
- What are the problems for each of these uses?
- What happens to waste water?

10. Environmental aspects
- How many rooms does the household have for living in?
  - How many people (adults, children) live in these?
- What are people's practices regarding defecation?
- What are people's hygiene practices in relation to food preparation, consumption and storage?

11. Nutritional status
- Is malnutrition a familiar notion to the community?
  - What does the community perceive as malnutrition?
  - How important is it?
- How are there many thin children or adults are there in the community?
  - How do people describe and explain this?
  - What do they do about it?

12. Diseases, causes and cures
- What are the prevailing diseases in the community?
  - Who suffers from them?
  - When do people suffer from them most?
  - What causes them?
- How do people deal with disease?
- What support is available? Traditional healer? Community health worker? Health services?

13. Caring capacity
- Who looks after small children and infants?
- Who feeds them? How often?

14. Social aspects

- Which are the poorest households within the community?
  Why?

- Do they have any specific food and nutrition problems?
  Which?
  Why?

- Who are the most influential people in the community?
  Why?

**Participatory appraisal: When?**

Seasonal changes affect the food and nutrition situation of the community, and the information provided during the appraisal will be influenced by the time of year selected to carry it out. The information, therefore, must be interpreted according to when it was obtained. Further information can be gathered at other times of the year. Appraisals of household food and nutrition during hungry periods are particularly useful for identifying major problems and how people cope with them.

The appraisal process requires time for interaction among community members and between community members and the development worker. In planning the appraisal, the development worker needs to keep in mind that some activities can only be carried out in comparatively slack periods when people have more free time or do not mind being interrupted.

The appraisal process is an ongoing one. On the basis of the community's initial understanding of the constraints they face, the development worker will help them to plan activities. This process may go on at intervals over two to three months. As the project progresses, the community and the development worker may both revise their perception of problems, reorient food and nutrition activities and develop new ones.

The participatory process needs trust between the development worker and the community. This takes time. It is therefore necessary for a development worker to work with a community for some time to implement and carry through a participatory project. A minimum of two years is considered necessary.

Fish-smoke, 3 discuss the household food budget of one member, written in chalk on the table
Participatory appraisal: How?

The development worker can assist the community in using different methods to gather information on food and nutrition.

The development worker can encourage the community to designate a person or a group of people to collect existing information. Many institutions, such as health posts, routinely collect information which may relate to the food and nutrition situation of the community. When necessary, the development worker can facilitate contacts between the institution and the community. For example, arrangements can be made for a health worker to explain why what information is collected by the health centre as a basis for discussion.

Much of the information will be verbal. Any encounter or meeting can be used for this purpose, from informal chatting to formal community gatherings.

Development workers can find out a great deal by observing the way people live, asking for information on what they see, analysing the answers and discussing this analysing with the people. This approach, sometimes called participant observation, can also stimulate discussion about routine activities which people otherwise take for granted and never question.

Semi-structured interviews can be conducted with different sized groups and key contacts in the community. A semi-structured interview is an informal but guided interview session, prepared by the development worker, in which only some of the questions are predetermined and new questions or lines of questioning arise during the interview, in response to answers from those interviewed.

Small group meetings allow more in-depth discussions on issues of common concern. For example, a group of pregnant and lactating women is likely to be interested in discussing children's diet. The development worker can encourage the community to identify such focus groups. An appropriate size for a small group discussion is between 6 to 12 people.

Many people find it difficult to participate in group discussions with the result that meetings tend to be dominated by a limited number of speakers. In literate communities, the development worker can improve participation and protect confidentiality by having participants write down the points they consider essential for the discussion. Such visualization techniques can also be adapted for use by illiterate people, particularly with maps, representative diagrams, or ranking exercises. For writing, groups can be organized so that there is one
person in each group who can write down the group's points.

**One-to-one dialogues** are particularly useful in eliciting the views of individuals too shy to speak in public.

**BOX 7: Assessing wasting thinness in children**

One method used with ease even by illiterate community members to assess the prevalence of wasting among under-five children, is based on the fact that a mid-upper arm circumference inferior to 12.5 cm is a sign of severe malnutrition.

The Child-to-Child Foundation suggests whittling a branch or finding a cylinder which is about 10 cm long, with a 12.5 cm diameter: this allows rapid comparison with the mid-arm circumference of under-fives. This device was successfully used by older school children during a rapid appraisal of the food and nutrition situation of a fishing community in Kabak, Guinea (West Africa).

![Figure](image)

Observing and listening to **oral traditions** can yield a wealth of information on food habits, social uses of food and changes in food patterns. The development worker can ask people to recall stories, songs and rituals related to food. This will also provide entertainment and stimulate debate on food and nutrition.

**Popular theatre** and **role-playing** have proven effective in raising community awareness of food and nutrition issues and promoting participation of both actors and spectators in the community.

Organizing games and celebrations is another way to increase participation and opportunities to exchange opinions about food and nutrition.

A variety of analytical visualization exercises can also be used to stimulate the interest of the participants and to clarify information. These include seasonal calendars, ranking exercises, maps and time charts.

**Calendars** can be prepared by specific groups in the community (e.g. women, farmers, landless labourers). The topics can include cropping patterns, food availability, price of foods, expenditures planned, prevalence of diseases, labour demand (in particular for women), and show how these change during the year. Calendars help clarify seasonal constraints on adequate nutrition (nutritional stress periods) and constraints on solving them.

Examples of two different kinds of calendars are shown in Figures 3 and 4. Calendars will be useful to refer
back to at a later stage of the participatory nutrition project during the selection of activities when establishing their timing and phasing. They can also help identify time-dependent opportunities, such as when new crops could be grown. Comparison of calendars drawn up by different population groups may reveal differences in perception and can lead to useful discussions and new information.

Figure 3: Seasonal calendar of a community in The Philippines.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>January</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>March</th>
<th>April</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>June</th>
<th>July</th>
<th>August</th>
<th>September</th>
<th>October</th>
<th>November</th>
<th>December</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weather:</td>
<td><img src="image" alt=" Seasonal calendar of a community in The Philippines. " /></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Activities:</td>
<td><img src="image" alt=" Seasonal calendar of a community in The Philippines. " /></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Activities:</td>
<td><img src="image" alt=" Seasonal calendar of a community in The Philippines. " /></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Illnesses:</td>
<td><img src="image" alt=" Seasonal calendar of a community in The Philippines. " /></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash Flow:</td>
<td><img src="image" alt=" Seasonal calendar of a community in The Philippines. " /></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Availability - Rice:</td>
<td><img src="image" alt=" Seasonal calendar of a community in The Philippines. " /></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Availability - V Gamb: animal foods:</td>
<td><img src="image" alt=" Seasonal calendar of a community in The Philippines. " /></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4: Nutritional stress calendar for small-scale fish-smokers in Chokomey and Oshiyie, Ghana.
Ranking exercises are useful as a way find out people's preferences, or as an alternative to quantitative data. In a ranking exercise, people can use available materials such as stones, beans or sticks of varying sizes to express their preferences, or to answer questions such as: Which is the busiest month for agricultural work? When is a specific food item most expensive in the market? Which is the most profitable occupation? The information gathered can be recorded and used with other data-gathering methods, for example in preparing a seasonal calendar. Ranking exercises are also useful at a later stage in defining priority problems and selecting priority activities. Wealth-ranking helps identify target groups for different activities

Maps drawn by different population groups can help clarify problems, raise discussion and identify possible solutions. These maps can indicate the location of houses, food production and gathering sites, sites for collection of fuelwood, sites for food distribution, water sources and health facilities. Map 2 provides an example from a community in a participatory nutrition project in the Philippines.

Map 2: Map of a community in The Philippines showing locations of households, road, wells, etc.
Figure 5: Time chart of daily activities of a fish-smoker.

Source: Participatory Nutrition Project, IIRR, The Philippines
Time charts of daily, monthly or yearly activities of historical events can help the population clarify their roles, identify problems and help the community assess the feasibility of possible solutions. Different time charts can be drawn up as needed according to gender, main occupation or age, and according to the time of year. An example of a time chart is given in Figure 5.

### Example of a Time Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Relative Time Spent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sweeping</td>
<td>05.00 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fetching Water</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bathing Child + Self</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buying and Eating Food</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washing Clothes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waiting at Beach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoking Fish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooking Dinner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bathing Child + Self</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red At 21.00 Hours</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N.B. The black dots in the right column represent the beans used to quantify the time spent on each activity.
Preparing a time chart:

The relative amount of time is indicated by the number of beans or other objects (stones, stacks, etc.) next to the activity. The largest numbers of objects are placed next to the activity that takes the most amount of time.

**BOX 8: Participatory food and nutrition appraisal: Guinea**

In the fishing community in Kabak, Guinea (West Africa) mentioned in Box 7, the participatory appraisal of the food and nutrition situation identified the following problems:

- meals are infrequent and monotonous
- children are weaned too late
- beaches are filthy (refuse from fish preparation and indiscriminate defecation)
- the water for drinking is dirty
- households are constantly indebted

This led to discussions on possible solutions such as establishing a rice bank, protecting the wells, cleaning the beaches (which could be organized locally) and improving health services by introducing a mobile clinic to complement the fixed post.

The development worker should summarize and discuss the information gathered at intervals and share the outcome of group analysis among different groups and the community as a whole. This helps to ensure that the community is in agreement on the interpretation of the information collected and to identify needs for further information.

An impact diagram or a "problem tree" can be used as a visual summary of the information gathered, to point out the origins of problems and show the causes of malnutrition and their interconnections. It can provide a good basis for discussions and subsequent planning of interventions. An example of an impact diagram is
Analysing the information gathered will help the community to identify population groups and/or households at risk for each of the nutrition problems identified, as well as which households are most seriously affected by a problem.

Six months is not unduly long for this appraisal process, when carried out at the pace set by the community. The time will depend on the availability and interest of community members and on the frequency and duration of the interaction between the development worker and the community.

The appraisal and information-gathering process will continue throughout the project, and project activities will be identified as the appraisal progresses: activities will be fine-tuned and modified as new information and community needs emerge.

After the community has identified a series of food and nutrition-related problems, the underlying causes of these problems, and the groups/households affected by these problems, the result of this community analysis can be compared with the initial assessment carried out in the preparatory phase. Any discrepancies and contradictions between the two can be discussed with the community in order to elicit further information and
improve understanding of the problems.

Some of the problems that development workers consider important may not be recognized as such by the community at this stage. Forcing people to take up problems which they do not understand or agree with would be counter-productive. It is best to concentrate on problems agreed upon by the community. However, as the project progresses, the understanding of both the community and the development worker will evolve and there will be more mutual understanding between them and interest in each others' perspective.

The development worker may want to discuss with other people working in the area the points of disagreement over perceptions and priorities with the community in order to compare experiences and approaches. This can provide insights on how to address these issues in future.

**BOX 9: Identification of food and nutrition problems: Kenya**

In a participatory nutrition project in Kakamega district, Kenya, food and nutrition problems were found to be caused by:

- land scarcity related to increasing population pressure
- changes in agricultural patterns, in particular progressive abandonment of traditional food crops such as millet and sorghum, leading to inappropriate farming techniques
- high financial demands on households from December to February
- lack of alternative income-generating activities
- competition within a limited household budget between food expenditures and other requirements (e.g. funerals)
- increasingly difficult access to fuelwood
- inadequate food preparation and distribution among household members
- poor marketing and distribution system in the area (too few markets, absence of village food stores), aggravated by a poor road network
- poor water supply
- lack of sanitation and basic hygiene
- insufficient health services and problems of existing health facilities (lack of medicines).

**Setting priorities**

The next step in the participatory appraisal of food and nutrition is to prioritize the problems. Discussing the following issues will help the community to set priorities:

- What is the most serious problem? Why?
- Who should be helped first? Why?
- What should be done first? Why?

In order to ensure the full participation of all members of the community, it might be necessary to organize separate discussions with specific groups, such as women, young people or marginalized households.
Community priorities can be compared with the priorities identified in the initial assessment. Vietnamese farmers discuss the meets of different possible sites for a clinic

**Constraints**

- People's perceptions of what is or is not a problem often differ from that of the development worker. For example, the perception of thinness varies a great deal from one culture to another. In some people's eyes, thinness may not be related to nutrition. Likewise many people do not relate clinical signs of malnutrition to their eating habits. Linking nutritional problems to inadequate consumption may be unacceptable to parents who feel that their ability to satisfy their children's needs is being questioned.

Using technical approaches which the community does not understand or accept can block the participatory process.

- Given the diversity of topics considered in the participatory appraisal, the analysis may become so broad that people lose sight of the more specific food and nutrition issues. The development worker's role is to bring the process back on course every now and then, taking care not to impose views and undermine the participatory process.

Figure
Steps in the participatory appraisal of community food and nutrition

The development worker helps the community to:

1. Analyse its food and nutrition situation.
2. Identify its own nutrition-related problems and major constraints to adequate nutrition.
3. Identify vulnerable households in relation to each problem and determine those most affected.
4. Prioritize their food and nutrition problems.
5. Summarize and agree on the outcomes of the appraisal.

Chapter 3: design and implementation of participatory projects and activities

Summary

Identification and selection of activities
Mobilizing community resources
Obtaining support from local institutions
Preparation of micro-project proposals

Chapter 3: design and implementation of participatory projects and activities

Summary

Following the participatory appraisal of food and nutrition, the development worker helps the community to design and implement participatory projects and activities.

The first step is to identify activities that can help the community solve its food and nutrition problems. The development worker helps the community set goals to solve each priority problem, identify activities to attain
the goals, discuss the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of the activities, establish objectives and a time frame for each activity and select and agree on the activities to be carried out.

After agreement is reached on which activities to carry out, the development worker helps the community to prepare a work plan, identify a food and nutrition coordinating group and mobilize its internal resources.

For those activities that require external support, the development worker can assist the community to identify and contact local institutions that can help. If further external support is needed from government or other institutions, the community can be helped to prepare micro-project proposals and present them to the appropriate institutions.

**Identification and selection of activities**

After the community has identified its food and nutrition problems, the next step is to find solutions to these problems by selecting activities to improve the food and nutrition situation of the community.

The development worker helps the community design activities that address the various causes of malnutrition. In rural areas, participatory nutrition projects are likely to emphasize production, preservation, preparation and consumption of local foods that can help provide a balanced diet. Activities might include: diversification of food crops for subsistence and/or income generation, nutrition education, improved preservation and preparation of foods (including those for child feeding), improving availability of fuelwood or alternative energy sources, improving the food supply system, promoting income generation, improving water supply and access to health services, and population education.

Figure 7: Flow chart of goals: Identifying activities to improve nutrition
The following steps will help the community decide which activities to implement:

1. **Establish a goal for each of the priority problems.** The community can translate the flow chart of problems drawn up in the participatory appraisal into a flow chart of goals (see Figure 7).

   For example:

   Problem: insufficient access to firewood is a constraint to adequate food preparation.

   Goal: ensure access to sufficient energy for adequate food preparation.

2. **Examine the possible activities to attain these goals.** The community or specific interest group will study the different alternatives and choose the most appropriate strategy to reach the goals. This strategy will probably combine a series of activities.

   To be able to select the most feasible activities, the community needs information on what resources are needed and available to carry out the activities. It is the role of the development worker to help the people obtain this information and to help them assess how feasible these solutions are.
In the case of our example, activities could include planting and management of woodlots, promotion of agroforestry, use of energy-saving stoves, promotion of less energy-consuming recipes, promotion and improved marketing of alternative energy sources such as gas and kerosene.

The most feasible activities may not always be those that address the problems that were identified as priority. In many instances, it may be comparatively simple to solve problems which the community has not considered top priority. On the other hand, some of the key constraints to adequate nutrition, such as access to land and water, may not be easily solved in the short term. However, these constraints and possible solutions can be discussed and brought to the attention of policy makers through community representatives, development workers and local government.

3. Establish objectives for each activity. The development worker will help the community select objectives that are:

   - Realistic: is this activity feasible? Are resources available?
   - Clearly specified: What?
   - Quantified: How much/many?
   - Timed: By when?

An example of such an objective is: "23 households which have difficulties in obtaining the fuelwood needed daily will build an improved stove by 31 January 1994".

Indicators for monitoring the progress of each activity will therefore be selected at this stage (in our example, number of improved stoves).

One of the tasks of the development worker is to systematically verify who benefits from the agreed upon activities, especially income-generating activities which benefit only a limited number of households. Priority should be given:

   - to individual or group income-generating activities that not only benefit the households involved but also improve the whole community's access to food, such as setting up a retail store for basic foods in communities where there is none;

   - to individuals or groups within the community who face the most difficult food and nutrition situations.

Because marginalized households are very likely to have nutritional problems, they will probably be a priority target group for some of the activities. However, the community may decide that additional activities are needed to specifically support these households, at least in an initial period.

Once the community has agreed on the activities to be carried out and established an objective for each activity, a formal decision is made and recorded.

Throughout this process, the development worker acts as a facilitator, respecting the pace of the community so that people can reach their own conclusions regarding the identification of problems and solutions.

Due to the participatory nature of the project, the community's perception of priority problems will evolve as the project progresses. Goals, activities and objectives are therefore likely to change and flexibility will be required in the implementation of activities.

Box 10: Improving community food and nutrition: Philippines

In the community of Kiko Rosa in the Philippines, people identified as main causes of their nutrition problems:
the high prices of basic commodities such as rice, insecurity of land tenure, inadequate knowledge, lack of hygiene, inadequate water supply, poor environmental sanitation, inadequate health facilities, contamination of air and water from nearby agricultural farms, remoteness of markets combined with poor road infrastructure, low wages, large families, misallocation of resources (alcoholism, smoking, gambling, "vanities").

Solutions considered included youth education health and nutrition education sessions, promotion of adapted technologies for food production, processing and preservation, home-based income-generation projects for mothers of malnourished children, construction of pit latrines and discussions with the commercial agriculture farms.

Problems were ranked in order of priority, target groups identified and solutions combined into a plan of action.

Health and nutrition education sessions with parents were jointly planned by the NGO promoting the participatory nutrition project and the line agencies involved (Department of Health, Department of Social Welfare and Development, Department of Agriculture, and Municipal Councillor for Health). Meetings were organized with representatives of the Department of Agrarian Reform to discuss the priorities of the community. A portion of the school grounds was allocated for gardening and demonstration of big-intensive gardening and inputs (seeds, training material, involvement of teachers) were provided by the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Education, Culture and Sports. Several visits were organized for community members to projects and activities relevant to their own situation, with the dual purpose of providing information and motivation. Visitors reported to the whole community on their trip as a basis for discussions.

The Basketball League, extremely active and popular in the community, was used as a means to disseminate information to the community.

**Constraints**

- Development workers have usually been encouraged to follow a logical framework approach to project design that proceeds step by step from problem identification to selection of activities, to implementation and to monitoring and evaluation. When dealing with an issue as complex as that of nutrition, adhering too strictly to such a sequential approach may lead development workers to impose their views on the community and hinder the participatory process.

- Levels of participation in problem identification and activity selection need to be closely monitored. Attendance is not sufficient by itself. More important is the actual contribution of specific community members. Participation will take different forms for different people in different cultures, so assessment of participation must be tailored to the social context.

- In most communities levelling mechanisms exist that tend to maintain the status quo regarding people's access to resources and hierarchy in social organization and decision-making. These will limit the effectiveness of activities to alleviate poverty. While development workers will have little if any influence on these mechanisms, taking them into account when developing a project will improve the selection and design of activities and minimize the negative impact of these mechanisms on household food security of marginalized households. As we have seen in Chapter 1, involving the more powerful people within the community from the start in the participatory nutrition project is important for the project's sustainability. Moreover, it might make them willing to take responsibility for seeing that the benefits of the project reach the less well-off members of the community and the marginalized households.
Mobilizing community resources

After the community has agreed on which activities to include in the participatory nutrition project, the next step is to prepare a work plan with the help of the development worker and establish a food and nutrition coordinating group to coordinate and supervise the implementation of the project. The participatory appraisal exercise will help the community and development worker identify the people who are most interested and active. This could provide the basis of the coordinating group. The food and nutrition coordinating group will be responsible for reporting on the progress of group activities to the community on a regular basis.

To be sustainable, a community level project needs to mobilize its internal resources. Many communities already have savings schemes which should be identified in the initial assessment of resources available. If the initial activities are funded from the savings of the group members themselves, they will remain within the limits of the group's existing capacity and resources, build commitment and reduce dependency. Experience shows that participation increases as people join common activities and contribute to them materially and financially. When people feel they own or have a stake in these activities, they have a greater interest in ensuring that the activities are successful.

For every activity specific groups or individuals will take responsibility and will establish goals: Who will do what? When? How? What other resources, such as technical assistance, training, equipment or funds are needed? Each group will identify, plan, carry out and evaluate its own activities. The role of the development worker is to act as an adviser when called upon.

The design of food and nutrition activities by the community is an awareness building process. As the project evolves, the community will very likely identify complementary training needs. The development worker's task is to investigate the best way to facilitate such training.

A community meeting can be held to present the plan of activities and discuss how to allocate local resources. If the mobilization of internal resources is not sufficient it may be possible to obtain locally available resources from government institutions or NGOs, which could contribute such things as technical expertise or agricultural inputs. More complex activities may require external support. The development worker can help the community estimate the external resources required.

BOX 11: Village-Based Committees: Kenya

In a participatory nutrition project in Kakamega district, Kenya, Village Selection Committees were initially set up to identify marginalized households. Following requests from the people, these were reconstituted and strengthened as Village-Based Committees (VBCs).

Small Interest Groups (SIGs) were set up and registered with the Ministry of Culture and Social Services.
The functions of the VBCs were:

- to keep a register of all SIGs and Focus Groups in the village;
- to keep a register of all projects in the village;
- to coordinate the activities undertaken by SIGs related to nutrition, food security and health;
- to monitor, evaluate and document the progress made by the community in improving nutritional status and health and promoting food security;
- to administer the Food Bank on behalf of the villagers;
- to act as trustees of the community for internal and external resources and to ensure the proper and diligent use of such resources according to the wishes of the community;
- to act as a project committee to appraise individual projects through SIGs or Focus Groups for recommendation to possible donors;
- to assist in the identification of marginal households with a view to enlist their participation in development activities related to nutrition and food security;
- to raise funding internally and externally for the building of the Food Bank and other food security activities;
- to form subcommittees as needed to delegate some of the above-mentioned activities. Such committees include the Executive Committees and loan committees of SIGs and Focus Groups;
- to sign group liability agreements or any other agreement deemed necessary to ensure peer pressure on groups and their members.

**Constraints**

Previous development efforts in the same community may have led people to believe that:

- nutrition activities only concern under-five children, pregnant and lactating women and do not concern men;
- development projects do not involve marginalized households;
- their role is limited to that of passive objects of data collection;
- they are not expected to play an active role but might receive handouts or free inputs;

People's understanding and attitudes can only be modified progressively through dialogue and involvement in the project as it progresses.

Figure
Obtaining support from local institutions

The development workers or institutions promoting the participatory nutrition project need to identify which of the activities selected by the community fall within their areas of expertise. Development workers will likely be able to support directly only a limited number of activities which they will incorporate into their plan of work and discuss with the group responsible in the community. Their support to community activities will not be limited to technical issues but include strengthening community organization and training in basic management procedures to build the community's capability in implementing the activities.

Many of the activities identified by the community may fall beyond the development worker's scope of action. The role of the development worker in this case is to identify institutions such as government services or NGOs which can support specific activities, initiate contacts with them, help the communities to approach them and follow up the outcome.

Some of the activities may fall within the plan of operations of another institution. This will simplify getting their support, particularly if these are information and training activities, which essentially require staff time. For example, if people identify the need for improved agricultural practices the development worker can arrange visits of a local agriculture extensionist. Once the community has identified its needs, problems and opportunities, the outside technician will be able to prepare appropriate activities.

All this will contribute to developing better coordination of community development activities and to bridging the gap and creating linkages between government staff and the communities.

BOX 12: Mobilizing Village Councils: Philippines

In the Philippines, Barangay Development Councils (BDCs) were created in each village in 1986. In some villages the councils never became active. The Participatory Nutrition Project in the village of San Francisco organized and mobilized the dormant BDC, initiating and facilitating meetings. The BDC was trained by staff from the Department of Interior and Local Development and its role in community development was clarified.

A good overall organizational and managerial structure, with the responsibilities of each partner clearly specified for each activity, will greatly contribute to the success of the participatory approach. Chapter 4 will look at how to establish a joint monitoring system to ensure that the responsibilities are carried out.

Constraints

- Government staff may face logistical problems that prevent them from providing the needed technical assistance to the communities as needed. In this case, the community may want to explore how to provide logistical support, such as arranging transportation and food for the staff.
- Other development workers may find it difficult to give the needed help because of conflicting work obligations or excessive workload. This can be avoided and overcome to some degree by involving other development workers from the start and by keeping them informed about the project.

Figure

![Figure](image)

### Preparation of micro-project proposals

Participatory Nutrition Projects will first identify and use resources that are available in the community and locally available from government or other institutions. If some activities require further support the development worker can help the community prepare project proposals combining small-scale activities and present them to institutions.

Funding to support such micro-projects may be available within a community development programme, from NGOs or through development funds meant to support local initiatives. Funding and the way to obtain funding vary from one country to the other. External support will be facilitated if the development worker begins gathering the information and making contacts with funding sources from the start of the project. Helping the community prepare proposals and get acquainted with fundraising procedures will contribute to community empowerment.

In many countries, socio-economic development funds are available for local projects that help the poorest sections of the population. Integrated micro-projects to improve the food and nutrition of the community that include activities of different sectors like agriculture, health and education usually fulfill the requirements to obtain such funding.

Requests for funding from development aid sources are never the final product of the participatory nutrition project. The most important outcomes are the community's changed attitudes in dealing with its own problems and the activities the community undertakes to improve its food and nutrition situation.

If community-level activities are too dependent on external funding, especially for recurring costs, these may not be sustainable. Experience has shown that sustainability of activities is closely related to a good balance between internal and external resources.

Be careful: excessive external funding often generates dependency.
**Steps in the design and implementation of food and nutrition related activities**

The development worker helps the community to:

1. Set a goal to solve each priority problem.
2. Identify activities to reach this goal.
3. Discuss feasibility and cost-effectiveness of alternate activities.
4. Identify objectives and time frame.
5. Select and agree upon activities.
6. Mobilize internal resources.
7. Contact local institutions to obtain support for activities.
8. Write proposals for further fundraising and approach appropriate institutions.

**Chapter 4: monitoring and evaluation of participatory nutrition projects**

**Summary**

**Participatory monitoring and evaluation: Why?**

**Monitoring and evaluation: Who?**

**Monitoring and evaluation: What?**

**Monitoring and evaluation: How?**

**Monitoring and evaluation: When?**

**Chapter 4: monitoring and evaluation of participatory nutrition**
Summary

Participatory monitoring and evaluation is an essential aspect of a participatory nutrition project. It enables the community to assess the progress of the activities and to take steps to resolve problems, changing objectives and adjusting activities if necessary.

The development worker facilitates the process and helps the community to identify indicators, gather information and record it. The food and nutrition coordinating committee combines the information from each group responsible for an activity into an overall monitoring and evaluation system. Discussions are held with the community and with institutions working at the local level to decide what action should be taken as a result of the monitoring and evaluation.

The development worker may need to develop a separate monitoring and evaluation system to meet the needs of a government or donor organization. The development worker also facilitates evaluations of externally-funded projects that involve community representatives, local government staff and external evaluators.

Participatory monitoring and evaluation: Why?

Participatory monitoring and evaluation serves two purposes: it is a management tool that helps people improve their efficiency and effectiveness. It is also an educational process that helps participants increase their awareness and understanding of the various factors that affect their lives. In so doing it increases people's control over the development process.

Monitoring and evaluation enables the community and the development worker to assess the progress and impact of the project, to check if the objectives are realistic and appropriate or if they need to be revised and to identify and anticipate problems so that they can take steps to avoid or solve them. Monitoring and evaluation is linked to decision-making it enables the community to redefine objectives and adjust activities if needed.

When carried out together by people in the community, monitoring and evaluation provides opportunities for individual enjoyment, creativity and exchange of new ideas.

Monitoring and evaluation: Who?

Participatory monitoring and evaluation is carried out by the community itself. The development worker participates in and facilitates this process: assisting the community to design the system and following the activities and the analysis of the information gathered. The ultimate goal is to enable the community to monitor and evaluate its own food and nutrition activities without the help of the development worker.

In participatory monitoring and evaluation, people:

- decide what should be monitored and evaluated;
- select indicators for doing so;
- organize the collection of information: How can this be done? Who should do what? When?
- analyse and interpret data.
- use the information.

An organizational structure is needed to ensure that the information generated by the monitoring and evaluation
process is effectively used in decision-making and action. This can be the food and nutrition coordinating committee.

When participatory nutrition activities involve agents or institutions external to the community, a joint monitoring and evaluation process can be discussed, designed and implemented.

External evaluations often do not allow adequate contribution from the people.

**Monitoring and evaluation: What?**

In a participatory nutrition project, the following activities and processes are monitored and evaluated:

- the progress of each activity
- its effectiveness in reaching its objectives
- its relevance to the priorities agreed upon by the community
- how the group in charge of the activity functions
- how the different activities are carried out and
- how the project evolves as a whole
- how the coordinating committee functions
- the relations between the community and the different external institutions involved.

We have seen that the appraisal process covered a wide variety of issues related directly or indirectly to nutrition, including agricultural production and time allocation. Activities were then selected to address some of the main issues identified. The monitoring and evaluation process will consider the information relevant to these issues. This can then be compared with the information collected in the appraisal process in order to see what changes have been brought about.

Qualitative information needs to be complemented with quantitative or at least semi-quantitative information. This can be done by identifying and selecting quantifiable indicators.

**Checklist 3: Monitoring and evaluation of participatory nutrition projects identification of indicators**

The following list is intended to help the development worker chose indicators relevant to the type of activities selected and initiated by the community. These indicators are meant to contribute to discussions at group and community level. Indicators can include:

**1. Indicators related to nutritional impact:**

- Changes in food consumption patterns of households and individuals (e.g. children)
- Increase in food availability:
  - range and quantities of foods produced by the household; modification of production system availability of affordable foods at accessible distribution points
- Number of people with nutritional problems in the community
- Change in food and nutrition related beliefs
- Access to water
- Access to medical services (e.g. attendance to health clinic)

**2. Indicators related to equity:**

- Changes in division of labour and time use by gender
- Changes in distribution of production resources
- Changes in income distribution
- Changes in distribution of knowledge and skills

**3. Indicators related to community participation:**

- Percentage of households involved in at least one activity of the participatory nutrition project (e.g. demonstration)
- Changing size of group membership during the project
- Frequency of attendance at meetings
- involvement of marginalized households
- Number of person/days of labour involved in project activity
- Number, percentage and gender of persons assuming leadership roles

4. Indicators related to the interaction of the community with external services:
- Number and types of institutions with which the community has established regular linkages
- Participation of community in external decisions affecting it directly
- Number of people trained by external institutions

Examples are provided in appendixes 3 and 4.

**Monitoring and evaluation: How?**

Monitoring and evaluation combine recording of specific information with discussion sessions on the progress of activities and the difficulties encountered.

The first step is for the community to decide what criteria to use to judge the success or failure of the participatory nutrition project. These criteria need to be regularly reviewed. Each group responsible for an activity discusses and agrees on possible indicators with a member of the food and nutrition coordinating group. The development worker facilitates these discussions.

The information for monitoring and evaluation can come from discussions and meetings on food and nutrition-related issues at different levels: local, coordinating committee, community, group, interviews. Visits to sites and participant observation can also provide useful information and occasions for discussion. Keeping a diary is very useful. Development workers can record in the diary any indication of change gathered during informal discussions with community members.

Most of the techniques used for participatory appraisal of food and nutrition can also be used for monitoring and evaluation. To facilitate the collection and recording of information, each working group can develop a monitoring chart with the assistance of the development worker. An example is given in Figure 8.

The results are discussed and then combined into an overall monitoring and evaluation system. At the beginning of the project, activities are few and the system can be very simple. As the number of activities increases, the number of indicators will also increase.

The food and nutrition coordinating group combines the different activity monitoring charts into an overall monitoring chart for the participatory nutrition project. An example is given in Figure 9.

As the examples show, monitoring charts can be very simple and designed to be filled in just by checking off items. The preparation and use of these charts make it easy for the group to monitor its activities and stimulate discussions about why activities progress or not.

In a participatory nutrition project, monitoring and evaluation methods and indicators are simple and low-cost, and are designed to provide timely information required for decision-making and action. The cost is estimated according to the actual use of the information collected.

The food and nutrition coordinating group organizes community monitoring meetings about once every three months. During these meetings, each group presents a progress report on their activity and discusses the problems they are encountering.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>Cut fence posts&lt;br&gt;Dig holes for posts&lt;br&gt;Order wire, staples and wire strainer&lt;br&gt;Plough the land&lt;br&gt;Dig drains&lt;br&gt;Cut fields for shade&lt;br&gt;Apply for bank loan&lt;br&gt;Accounts and records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>Erect fence and treat posts with oil&lt;br&gt;Purchase fertiliser&lt;br&gt;Apply pre-planting fertiliser&lt;br&gt;Plant groundnut seed&lt;br&gt;Collect bank loan&lt;br&gt;Accounts and records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>Weeding&lt;br&gt;Watering&lt;br&gt;Check and repair fence and gate&lt;br&gt;Pest control&lt;br&gt;Pile earth on mounds&lt;br&gt;Purchase packaging for harvest&lt;br&gt;Check market&lt;br&gt;Accounts and records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>Weeding&lt;br&gt;Watering&lt;br&gt;Check and repair fence and gate&lt;br&gt;Pest control&lt;br&gt;Pile earth on mounds&lt;br&gt;Purchase packaging for harvest&lt;br&gt;Check market&lt;br&gt;Accounts and records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>Harvest&lt;br&gt;Dry groundnuts&lt;br&gt;Negotiate selling price and check local market price&lt;br&gt;Merry to decide on next work plan&lt;br&gt;Accounts and records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>Repay loan to bank&lt;br&gt;Distribute profits to group&lt;br&gt;Merry to decide on next work plan&lt;br&gt;Accounts and records</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Colours may indicate progress if these are available.

Figure 9: Nutrition project monitoring sheet.
Monitoring and evaluation often generate the need for further monitoring and evaluation and so needs to be a dynamic and flexible process that is reviewed periodically.

The development worker will probably need to collect further information and develop a complementary monitoring and evaluation system to fulfil the requirements of institutions. This may be information which is not directly relevant to actual community work but which may be useful to policy makers, planners at provincial and central level and donors. It is best to keep the two monitoring and evaluation systems separate, so that the needs of development agencies, ministries and donors do not override the needs of the group members themselves.

A regular meeting once a year can bring together development workers from governmental or non-governmental organizations, the local authorities and community representatives, preferably from the food and nutrition coordinating committee, at local level to discuss the progress of participatory nutrition projects and the evolution of the food and nutrition situation.

In most externally funded projects, evaluations are carried out periodically by the donor agency. The development worker can facilitate the involvement of local-level staff (e.g. health or nutrition officers, home economists, agriculture extensionists) in the design and implementation of joint evaluations which involve the community, development workers, local government staff and external evaluators of the participatory nutrition project.

**Monitoring and evaluation: When?**

Monitoring and evaluation is an ongoing process built in from the start of the project. In a participatory nutrition project, it is difficult to separate the stages of problem identification, selection of activities and monitoring and evaluation of these activities. Activities increase awareness, understanding and participation which in turn lead to redefinition of objectives and adjustment of activities or definition of new objectives and selection of new activities. Monitoring and evaluation provides opportunities for learning from action.
**Constraints**

- Development workers are often not very familiar with the concept of monitoring and evaluation. Consequently, they may feel that they need high-calibre expertise and specific funding to design and implement these activities.

- Monitoring and evaluation, however, is a normal part of daily life, whether personal or professional. It is generally a matter of common sense: if something does not turn out as expected, a person tries to understand why and then either modifies the activities or redefines the objectives.

Monitoring and evaluation should therefore not be seen as an external activity imposed by institutions but as an essential part of the everyday learning or decision-making process.

**Figure**
Steps in monitoring and evaluation of participatory nutrition projects

The role of the development worker is to:

1. Assist each group to develop a monitoring and evaluation system for its activities.

2. Assist the food and nutrition coordinating committee (or the relevant community structure) to combine these systems into an overall participatory monitoring and evaluation system for the participatory nutrition project.

3. Develop a separate monitoring and evaluation system for meeting the needs of the government institution or donor.

4. Promote appropriate mechanisms (e.g. annual meetings, field visits) for a joint monitoring and evaluation process involving the community and local institutions;

5. Within externally funded projects, promote the organization of tri-partite evaluations involving community representatives, local government staff and external evaluators.

List of suggested complementary readings

List of suggested complementary readings

FAO, Field Programme Management: Food and Nutrition. A training pack, Rome, (being revised)

FAO, Field Programme Management: Population and Nutrition, Supplementary unit A.

Savage King, F. Nutrition for Developing Countries, and Burgess, A. Oxford Medical Publications,


FAO, Participation in practice: Lessons from the FAO People's Participation Programme, Rome.

FAO, Working together to meet our common needs, Rome.

FAO/RAPA, Taking hold of rural life, Bangkok.

1990


1988

FAO, Agriplan Training System/ Project
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Guidelines for integrating nutrition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Women in fishing communities, Rome</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>