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"Fill the Nutrient Gap"

The World Food Programme (WFP) is investing in new approaches for nutrition assessments, including pilot testing the "Fill the Nutrient Gap tool", which WFP developed in 2014/15 with technical inputs from UNICEF and research institutes such as the University of California, Davis, the International Food Policy Research Institute and Epicentre.

In Ghana, thanks to funding from the Government of Japan, the Ghana Health Service and WFP co-hosted a stakeholder meeting to discuss the findings of the "Fill the Nutrient Gap." The nutrition situation in Ghana was analysed and discussions focused on identifying possible optimal packages of interventions to improve nutrient intake, with special focus on the first 1000 days of life.

The meeting facilitated dialogue between different stakeholders in various sectors. A report on the nutrition characterisation of women and children in Ghana, including the affordability of nutritious diets will be completed in the coming weeks.

Thirty-six stakeholders participated in the meeting. There were Government partners—Ghana Health Service, Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection; Academia and Research Institutions—University of Ghana, University for Development Studies, Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research; Development Partners—USAID, GIZ, UNICEF, FAO, WHO; and staff from WFP Headquarters, Regional Office, Country Office and Sub-Office.



The tool provides a framework for improved analysis of the nutrition situation, and aims to facilitate decision-making by helping to identify strategies for improving complementary

feeding, particularly through increased access to nutrients during the critical first 1,000 days.

The Fill the Nutrient Gap tool is being pilot tested in El Salvador, Ghana and Madagascar.

A Win for Smallholder Maize Farmers: By-law in Ejura Bans “Bushweight”

The Ejura-Sekyedumasi Municipal Assembly has passed a by-law banning the traditional ‘bushweight’ measurement system and enforcing the use of standard ‘size 4’ sacks (jute sacks) for bagging maize for sale. This initiative has benefitted several actors in the maize value chain, especially farmers.

The World Food Programme (WFP), under its Purchase for Progress (P4P) initiative, provided weighing scales to smallholder farmers to ensure that each bag of maize which WFP bought, correctly weighed 50kg or 100kg. The farmers in the Ejura-Sekyedumasi municipality soon realised that their earnings increased when they weighed their maize and so they began advocating for change from “bushweight” to standardized weights in their area. Together with other stakeholders’ their efforts resulted in the passing of a by-law enforcing the use of standard ‘size 4’ sacks (110kg) for bagging maize.

“Bushweight” Versus “Size 4” Bags

Maize is a staple food eaten in many households in Ghana and is usually sold in open markets or at farm gates where producers and buyers trade.

Without standardized weights, large scale traders and middle men use the traditional “bush weight” system in determining the weight of a bag. This means gauging the amount of grain in a sack and selling heaped bags between 130kg and 170kg of maize for the value of a 100kg bag, which deprives farmers of more than of a third of their produce.



According to the Municipal Chief Executive Officer of the Ejura-Sekyedumasi Municipality, Alhaji Mohammed Bawah Brimah, “Because farmers were being cheated by the middlemen and buyers, they couldn’t make profit on their yield and this affected their ability to make ends meet.”

Adam Suleman, a maize farmer, confirms that “He used to sell 8-9 bags per acre using the “bush weight” but now I sell 12-15 bags per acre using the new Size 4 bag.”

Another farmer, Iddrisu Alhassan Volmah, affirmed that “Farmers make more profit now. I think more people are now involved in farming.”

Process of Adopting and Standardizing the “Size 4” Bag

After the concept of weights had gained traction as a result of WFP food purchases, Farm Radio International (FRI), in partnership with local FM stations Akyeaa and Obuoba, started advocacy and sensitization programmes to convince farmers and producers to adopt the size 4 bags. Consequently, farmers petitioned the local government and traditional authorities.

A committee met with all the actors in the maize value chain in the Ejura municipality as well as surrounding Techiman, Atebubu and Nkoranza districts and major maize markets. Upon the committee’s recommendation, the Municipal Assembly passed a by-law and the Size 4 measuring bag became the standardized and legitimate mode of trading maize in the municipality.

Implementation

The Ejura Sekyedumasi Municipal Assembly established a task force to enforce the implementation of the new by-law. Fines were imposed on recalcitrant farmers and buyers. Some people were forced to re-bag their maize into the correct bags at checkpoints which were mounted on the main roads.

But the enforcement was not without opposition. The Municipal Chief Executive explained that, “There was resistance from all quarters —transporters, buyers, middlemen and even some farmers who felt they would not get buyers to purchase their produce”.

After months of continuous sensitization on the radio, the new size bag was accepted as the approved size for trading of maize in Ejura.

Farmers in Nsuta, a neighbouring district, are clamouring for its introduction there. Efforts are being made to embark on nationwide sensitization and advocacy.

The P4P initiative in Ghana is funded by the Government of Canada.

Mobile Money Transfers Increase Impact of WFP's Work

"I like receiving money through my mobile phone because I can cash the exact amount I need for food and save the rest to buy seeds for my farm."

These are the words of Adams Inusah, a farmer in Gbache who is participating in the construction of fish ponds under the World Food Programme's (WFP) asset creation programme. Adams' sentiments are some of the reasons why WFP has piloted mobile money transfers in four communities in Ghana's Upper West Region.

WFP shifted from food assistance to cash transfers in its asset creation programme in 2014, in order to inject money into local economies and allow people the flexibility to buy the type of food they want. Asset creation projects are usually undertaken in rural communities where most people do not have bank accounts, and so beneficiaries are sometimes tempted to spend the money they receive on trivial purchases.

Mobile money transfers enable them to 'save' part of their earnings on their mobile phones or SIM cards so that they cash the exact amount they need at any given time. They simply go to the nearest mobile money vendor whenever they need extra cash. As payments in the asset creation programme occur three times during the nine-month construction period, participants have time and some extra income to build up savings.



A beneficiary goes to check if his payment is reflecting on his SIM card

Asset creation projects improve lives

People living in rural communities which face harsh climatic conditions often need help to acquire communal infrastructure which can improve their lives. WFP asset creation projects helps to build resilience, improve livelihoods and boost food security and nutrition.

WFP works with local authorities, mainly Departments of Agriculture under District Assemblies, and non-governmental institutions, to undertake projects which communities themselves request for. Thanks to funding from the Government of Canada, 94 communities have been helped to build and rehabilitate small dams and dug-outs for storing rain water for household use and livestock rearing. Some communities have constructed fish ponds while others are being

Asset creation projects also reduce migration to urban centres.

"I have been farming since I completed senior high school in 2009 and I have noticed that during the off farming season there is no work and so most young people my age go to large cities to work as labourers and 'kayaye' (head porters)," said Adams. "But this year, they stayed home to construct the fish ponds and earn some money."

People in Gbache who do not own mobile phones are hoping that MTN, the mobile network company with whom WFP is working, will offer phones at discounted prices so that they can check the balances on their SIM cards more regularly and better manage their savings.

Nepalese Team Visits Ghana to Learn About the School Feeding Programme

In collaboration with the Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP), WFP facilitated a study tour for a delegation from Nepal who came to learn about the management processes, caterer system, local procurement and smallholder farmer linkages in the implementation of the school feeding programme. This is the second such study tour in two years, the first visit was by a team from the Gambia in 2014.

The five-member delegation from Nepal was composed of Indramani Pokhrel, Under Secretary for the Ministry of Education; Deepak Koirala, Under Secretary for the Ministry of Education; Bishnu Bahadur Dware, Joint Secretary and Programme Director of the Food for Education Project; and Mamta Gurung and Sikha Thapa, from WFP Nepal.

The team interacted with the Honourable Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection, Dela Sowah, and the Ministry's Chief Director, Kwesi Amoh-Himbson. Their discussions centred on the broader issues of policy guidance for social protection interventions in Ghana and coordination, both of which are key success factors for the effective implementation of social interventions in Ghana.

At a stakeholder partners' meeting, the National Coordinator of the GSFP explained the workings of the caterer system and its effectiveness as a business model. Dr. Esther Ofei-Aboagye, the consultant who drafted the Ghana School Feeding Policy, and the Social Protection Policy, highlighted the strengths the policies bring to the school feeding programme. Other partners - Partnership for Child Development (PCD), the Netherlands Foundation SNV and Ghana Education Service - described their contributions to the Ghana programme. The Nepalese team also shared some good examples about advocacy for Zero Hunger in schools in Nepal.

Lessons Learned

At the end of the five-day visit, the Nepalese expressed delight about the lessons they had learnt. Mr. Dware was particularly impressed that the school feeding programme was housed under a single ministry, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, which coordinates all social protection interventions. He recognized this as a strong statement of commitment by the Government to address the needs of the vulnerable in society.

With more than 70 percent of Nepalese involved in agriculture, the team recognized the untapped



potential for local economies to thrive through linking the school feeding programme with local agriculture production. They were impressed about the strong synergy between the school feeding policy and its implementation on the ground.

Ms Gurung, the Head of Education Support of WFP in Nepal, remarked about how the Ghana School Feeding Programme had moved from the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, to the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, with continued acceptance and community participation and ownership. She commended the coordination from the national to the district levels, noting with interest how the decentralized approach had ensured traction for the programme. She hoped that this visit marked the beginning of a strong partnership between Nepal and Ghana which would be nurtured to the mutual benefit of school feeding in both countries.

In Ghana, WFP supports GSFP to implement school feeding in selected schools in northern Ghana. With support from the Centre of Excellence in Brazil, WFP is supporting the development of a national policy and finalization of the legislation. Technical support is also being provided to improve the nutrition benefits of school meals using locally produced foods. In areas with low gender parity, WFP is providing incentives to 30,000 girls to encourage them to attend and complete school.

Voices from the field: What does **Zero Hunger** mean to you?



Zero Hunger: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.



Rahman Barikisu, a seamstress

“Zero Hunger means I get to eat whatever I want, whenever I want.”



Hadija Dawuda with her daughter, Hikimatu

“Zero Hunger is when you have work to do and then you can always get good food to eat.”



Fulera with her son, Abdurahim Tungteeya

“Zero Hunger means the absence of poverty because if you have the money, you can buy any type of food you want even if you don't produce it.”



Bintu Alhassan with one of her twins

“Zero Hunger means happiness for all. It means when there is hunger, organizations like WFP will provide food and then everyone will be happy.”

Upcoming Events:

- ◆ Launch of Nutrition Programme on Prevention of Stunting (*powered by the SCOPE IT platform*)
- ◆ Close out of Purchase for Progress (P4P) initiative
- ◆ Launch of Enhanced Nutrition and Value Chain in Ghana (ENVAC)
- ◆ Launch of Cost of Hunger in Africa: Ghana Report

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