INDICATOR SELECTION
SOME BIG PICTURE REMINDERS...
Reaching Consensus on a Global Dietary Diversity Indicator for Women
Washington, DC, July 14–15, 2014

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Dietary diversity indicators – what are they?

• Usually measured as # of foods or **food groups** consumed over a reference time period (**day**)

• Indicator:
  - Something we can measure
  - Sometimes as **proxy** for something we care about (**micronutrient adequacy**)
  - Also can be considered as a **behavioral indicator** in efforts promoting consumption of diverse diets
Processes for selection of indicators

• Selection of indicators - should meet **substantive, technical criteria**, but also requires practical and policy inputs

• Selection of indicators should consider **perspectives and needs of multiple stakeholders**, decision-makers

• The **WDDP** provides inputs on the **substantive and technical** side

• Important to bear in mind **needs and issues of other stakeholders** as we discuss technical strengths, limitations
Indicators for what?

- Advocacy/raising awareness
- Global/national assessment - Relative to targets
- Sub-national assessment
  - With attention to sample size, seasonality
- Evaluation of large-scale/national programs
- Depending on sample size:
  - Evaluation of smaller-scale programs
- Decision-making about allocation of resources (e.g. geographic targeting)
- Screening of individuals
Indicators for whom?

- What audience(s)?
- Closely related to previous *(for what)*?
- Indicator should make sense and be easily understood by target audiences
- Relates to our search for a dichotomous indicator – for use in advocacy and in global assessment
Indicator criteria - 1

Many sets of criteria w/lots of overlap (SMART; CREAM; others...)

- **Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound**
- **Clear, Relevant, Economic, Adequate, Monitorable**
- Many other “sets” of criteria, including some or all of:
  - Reliable, valid, sensitive, grounded in research, contextually/culturally appropriate
  - Simple, cost-effective, availability of affordable data, burden on data collection/subjects, accepted practice and history of use
  - Comparable, can be aggregated, pathway for use of data, value within a set of indicators, policy-relevance, compel interest and excite....
Indicator criteria - 2

These provide good checklists but usually stop short of saying...

- Specific – How specific? – a matter of degree
- Measurable – How easily? What is affordable?
- How to balance one criterion against another? etc.
Use of indicator criteria

- Usually the criteria are used to compare proposed indicator(s) to alternatives
- When is an imperfect indicator better than no indicator, and how imperfect can it be?
- Depends on proposed uses........
- Other presentations will cover in detail some technical criteria (sensitivity, specificity, others) available to us
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Reminders about dietary diversity

Why do we think food group diversity is good?

- Many reasons, WDDP results are only one small piece of it
- Most dietary guidelines include this dimension but many do not specify a recommended number of food groups; those that do range from 4 to 7 food groups\(^a\)
- There is no global recommendation, and lack of consistency in national recommendations means these cannot guide selection of cut-offs based on behavioral recommendation
- NB – while guidelines could suggest cut-offs, the reverse is not true! Indicator cut-off ≠ a guideline

Dietary diversity indicators...

May do best at the low end of the diversity spectrum – moving from very low diversity to moderate

- Diets with very low diversity are never good, but
- Diets measured as diverse by our food group indicator can still be quite bad diets, especially if quantities of nutrient-dense foods are very small

Reflect only one dimension of diet quality: micronutrient adequacy, other dimensions (balance, moderation) are becoming increasingly important public health concerns globally, in context of transition
Reminder of opportunities...

- Questionnaires that capture sufficient information to calculate DD indicator could also provide other useful information
  - Intake patterns for specific nutrient-dense food groups targeted by behavioral interventions
  - Diversity within broader groups (e.g.: diversity of fruit/veg intake; has been linked to reduced risk of some cancers)

- Amenable to extension to include “transition-relevant” questions – this is an area of high interest and needed work at the moment
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