

INDICATOR SELECTION

SOME BIG PICTURE REMINDERS...

Reaching Consensus on a Global Dietary Diversity Indicator for Women
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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, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**elevant, **T**ime-bound
- **C**lear, **R**elevant, **E**conomic, **A**dequate, **M**onitorable
- 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**

^a FAO repository, guidelines from Africa, Asia/Pacific, & LAC <http://www.fao.org/ag/humannutrition/nutritioneducation/fbdg/en/>

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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