IDENTIFYING THE ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS OF A PROPOSED FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY TOOL: LESSONS LEARNT FROM EXISTING METRICS

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Outline

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Introduction

- Food and Nutrition Security (FNS) is topical but has no universal measure
- Measurements of FNS focus on a dimension or aspects of given dimensions(s)
- Rigid and not adaptable to differences in context
- Need a household tool which can:
  - Capture diversity along FNS spectrum
  - Identify different FNS problems
  - Detect changes in household FNS status
Introduction cont....

• Important considerations:
  – Our understanding of the FNS concept and its metrics
  – Strengths and limitations of existing metrics e.g.
    • Universal application
    • Validation
      • Impossible to aggregate or decompose most statistics
      • To agree on what should be measured in each dimension
  • New tool development informed by existing metrics
  • Measuring multidimensional concepts is complex
    – explore the use of an index
Understanding FNS

- FNS from merging of Food Security (FS) and Nutrition security
- FNS defined as “a condition when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.” (UN High-Level Task Force on Global Food Security)
  - Modification of the 1996 World Food summit FS definition
  - Retains four dimensions and acknowledges their hierarchical nature
- a silo-like approach to metric development
The four dimensions of FNS (Feed the Future, USAID, 2010)

1. **AVAILABILITY**
   There is a reliable and consistent source of quality food.

2. **ACCESS**
   People have sufficient resources to produce and/or purchase food.

3. **UTILIZATION**
   People have the knowledge and basic sanitary conditions to choose, prepare, and distribute food in a timely manner.

4. **STABILITY**
   People’s ability to access and utilize food that remains stable and sustained over time.
FNS measurement in SA

• FNS of interest to government departments, research institutions etc.
  – Poverty, agricultural livelihoods, health and more recently social protection

• Data collected using:
  – Income and expenditure surveys, Experiential measures, Anthropometric measures, Individual dietary intake, Dietary diversity scores, coping strategies index

• Generated information:
  – Food consumed and its cost, dietary habits, nutritional status, incidence of hunger and coping mechanisms etc.
  – Incidence and distribution of hunger and food and nutrition insecurity in South Africa
INSPIRING GREATNESS

Some South African FNS indicators (DPME & DAFF, 2017)
FNS measurement challenges in SA

- Different indicators are difficult to compare
- Existing indicators are not comprehensive
- Dissatisfaction with the status quo, calls for better measurement
  - New challenges
- Possible solution, an index
- Precedent in other fields and food security:
  - Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index, Human Development Index
  - Global Food Security Index
- Proposed index - indicators guided by FNS’ dimensions
Proposed components of FNS tool

• Availability
  – Sufficient stores of nutritious food

• Access
  – Types of food available in the community, acquisition, food safety, FNS knowledge

• Utilisation
  – Popular meals in community, individual allocation, anthropometric measures, health status

• Stability and food and nutrition insecurity
  – Shortages (Community and household), incidence, responses to insecurity
Lessons learnt from existing metrics

- Define and identify pathways for each FNS dimension
- Decide what to measure
- When to compromise
- Include validated indicators
- Indicator selection depends on sensitivity desired
- Comprehensive data collection
  - Allow for different types of analysis
- Generate guidelines for sampling, data analysis and results reporting
- A tool which can be used for several purposes is ideal (targeting, monitoring)
Lessons learnt cont. ...

- Cross-cultural application is ideal
  - Focus on universal experiences of FNS

- Calories are not the best way of determining nutrient adequacy
  - Focus more on nutrient density of food consumed
Lessons learnt

- Extensive data collection required, government agencies in partnership with development partners can create a shared database
  - Allow data aggregation and decomposition
- This is an iterative process and developed tools will require validation before adoption
- The index dimensions may match the four existing ones
  - Final selection informed by indicator development
- The FNS measurement index could then be combined with other modules to reflect the context and other subjects of interest
Conclusion

• Developing a universal FNS measure should be given priority by development practitioners
• An index could work as shown in other disciplines
• Progress can be made by working with existing indicators and developing those which are missing
• Lessons from the design and implementation of the existing indicators can inform this process
• Proposed components to cover all dimensions to ensure complete assessment of FNS
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