

Nutrition Report on Healthy Diets (Training) in Akwaya

1. Introduction

After a test phase of the nutrition program in some villages and groups around Buea Subdivision of Cameroon, the program was now taken to Akwaya Subdivision where malnutrition and under nutrition are most pronounced and endemic.

Some of the villages in Akwaya that the nutrition program was conducted in were: Ote, Bachama, Bandolo, Kelou, Tava and Eshobi. A total of eight women's groups participated in the training of phase one, phase two was not conducted since the groups size were not too large, and phase three with the cooking practice. A total of 82 women and 2 men were trained in 3 training workshops conducted in 3 villages. All the group members were very active to learn new ways of preparing food that will help to curb diseases among their children and families.



On the bike to Ote village



Travelling to Akwaya- crossing Mone River



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2. PART ONE

2.1 OBJECTIVES

Unlike other communities, the Akwaya subdivision of Cameroon is difficult to access. During the preparatory segment of the training, the objectives were:

- To prepare the women groups and communities ahead of the nutrition training sessions
- To plan the activities to be undertaken with the women groups during the training sessions.

2.2 EXPECTED RESULTS

- Women groups identified
- Women groups mobilised

3. PLANNED ACTIVITIES

In line with the ‘methodology guide’ of FORUDEF, activities during the preparatory part of this training included the following:

- Meeting/contact with the communities’ heads
- Giving of information to the communities
- Identify and prepare logistics
- Set community indicators

All of these were done in one day in the different villages.

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4. THE PROCESS – PART ONE

4.1 MEETING/CONTACT VISITS

On arrival in each village, we presented ourselves to the different communities' leaders. They were welcoming in all the cases. Taking time off was not anything they would want to do but they understood the need for the women to be part of the nutrition training.

4.2 FORGING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

We talked to the community representatives about our mission. The emphasis was on our concern about the malnutrition and under nutrition situation in Akwaya Subdivision and how much it was affecting the lives of children and pregnant women. We gave some examples of the causes and effects of malnutrition and under nutrition of children and pregnant women using some posters prepared by FORUDEF staff.

4.3 SET COMMUNITY INDICATORS

The indicators included the mobilization of women and active participation. All the villages simply used town criers and group announcements to inform their members.

4.4 GATHERING OF INFORMATION

During our meetings, discussions revealed that they have the following as their staple food and all was prepared in the same way. Problems in their communities included ignorance and illiteracy.

5. ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Meeting/Contact visits were made in the three communities

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- Information was given to the communities' leaders regarding the type of food available and how it was prepared and collected.
- The logistics for the training sessions were identified and prepared.

These accomplishments were a reflection of the work done on Day One in the different villages. Training followed the next day in all the villages.

6. THE PROCESS – PART TWO

FORUDEF strategy is designed to cause the women to appreciate the gravity and danger inherent in malnutrition in Akwaya Subdivision and to participate in the fight against it.

6.1 OBJECTIVES

During the implementation of phases 1-3, the objectives were:

- Sensitize and educate women on healthy diet.
- Create awareness to women on the importance of feeding well and being healthy with the local and available resources in their communities.
- Carry out practicals with the women on how to prepare food, which is balanced and nutritional for children and the family.

6.2 EXPECTED RESULTS

- Participants will have received all of the training steps involved in phases 1-3
- Participants will have a significantly better knowledge of a balanced diet nutrition.
- Participants will know how to cook nutritional meals that incorporate all three major nutrient groups.
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6.3 PARTICIPANTS EXPECTATIONS

- To understand the causes and effects of malnutrition
- To learn what a balanced and healthy diet is all about

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- To learn the style of cooking a healthy diet
- To learn how to feed our children and family well
- To learn how to collaborate in the house with our husbands so that we can improve on how to bring up our children

6.4 PARTICIPANTS FEARS

- Difficulties in getting the right requirements for a healthy diet
- Continue in the old fashion of cooking
- Acquire knowledge that will be difficult to implement

6.5 METHODOLOGY

- Expose/Lectures
- Brainstorming
- Questions and Answers

7 THE TRAINING PROCESS

A. NUTRITION WORKSHOP

In the three villages, the FORUDEF team of facilitators was presented and introduced to the women groups by the team leader. This was followed by an icebreaking activity, usually a song. The objectives, programme and methodology of the training were explained and discussed.



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The chief facilitator Mrs. Tabe Susan went on to ask the participants to list some of the foods they consumed on daily basis and the common illnesses that attack their children in their respective communities.

7.1 Common food consumed

- Banana and pepper,
- Plantain and oil, mango soup,
- Cocoyams and bitter leaf,”
- Banana and “mbulu” commonly called “seeking table”
- Fufu and okra soup, tanchot soup, coco leaf soup, cassava leaf soup
- Cocoyam and green vegetable, bitter leaf, oil,

7.2 Common sicknesses in Akwaya Subdivision

- Malaria
- Fever
- Vomiting
- Catarrh & cough
- Dysentery,
- Diarrhoea
- “Jeti-Jeti”
- Kwashiorkor
- Yellow fever

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- Pile
- Scabies

From the different kinds of food consumed in the different communities, it was realized that the notion of feeding in these communities was to eat and get full, known in pidgin as, “chop flop”. This was not because they did not have the food that were to be consumed to give them healthy diet, but that they were ignorant and did not know how to use it effectively. Secondly, it was a way of feeding in their community that they inherited from their own parents. Through the discussions and observations, we noticed that almost all the children, pregnant women and nursing mothers in these communities suffered from malnutrition. The participants confirmed that whenever a child or a pregnant woman was sick, they easily went anaemic.

The situation of malnutrition in some villages in Akwaya Sub Division was made known to the participants of all the three communities. The chief facilitator, Mrs Tabe Susan, stated FORUDEF’s concern about the situation in her strategic plan. During this expose, she described the structure put in place by FORUDEF to fight against malnutrition. With this information and what was expected of the participants, the chief facilitator and Ms Pamela Orock, ushered the participants into the “house” analogy. In every training session, the participants were asked the question: “what will happen if you build a house with a strong foundation and no roof nor strong walls?

The house analogy and questions propelled the participants into discovering the problem of malnutrition in their communities as the following were identified on the part of the participants without difficulty:

- Energy (carbohydrate) which was considered as the foundation of every house
- Body builders (protein) which was considered to be the walls of every house
- Protection (vitamins and minerals) which was also considered as the roof of a house

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The women were informed that to feed healthy, one had to consume a balanced diet every day, which includes three types of food namely, carbohydrates, protein, and vitamins and minerals.

After drilling the women on what constituted a balanced diet, Ms Orock Pamela explained to the participants consequences of balanced and unbalanced diet. She used the chart containing two children where one child had a balanced diet and the other does not have. From the diagram, it shows that children who are poorly fed/unbalanced diet will suffer from the following:

- Loss of hair
- Sick eyes
- Loss of teeth
- Skin discoloration
- Big belly
- Weak bones
- Stunted growth
- Thin arms
- Always sick
- Easily get tired

Children who are fed with balanced diet every day would have the following as results:

- Strong teeth
- Strong muscles
- Hardly gets sick
- Healthy skin
- Healthy bones
- Healthy eyes
- Full hair
- Good brain development

7.3 QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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This session was interspersed with the following questions and answers:

Question.

- How many times do you eat beans in a week?

Response

- Once a year that is only on Christmas day.

Question

- How often do you prepare groundnut sauce?

Response

- Once in a while and the quantity is very small; we do not cultivate many groundnuts

Question

- How often do you prepare bush mango soup with ‘Egusi’ (bush seeds)?

Response

- Not often except on season when ‘Egusi’ is harvested and on the basis that the harvest is large because ‘Egusi’ is mostly cultivated for sale.

Question

- How many of you give your children at least one egg in a week?

Response

- Not common. (Just two women said they give their children eggs every week when they are less than 3 months old and the rest of the women said they hardly give eggs to their children. The eggs are kept for procreation.)

The next part of the training was the practical:

B. COOKING

In every village, this session was a special one for the women as they were eager to learn how to prepare healthy diet as this would help to curb down diseases for their children and the rest of the family members. The turnout was very encouraging.



Women preparing items for cooking.

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This was a way of socializing as every woman was happy to prepare and share a common meal with others. The women prepared the following dishes; boiled banana, yam, cocoyam and mango soup. The dishes prepared by FORUDEF served as model for they were cheap, healthy and locally available. Groundnut and beans were demonstrated as cost-effective protein source, which can replace fish and meat. The beans were prepared with onions, smoked crayfish, and small quantity of unbleached palm oil since they cannot afford vegetable oil. Groundnut soup was prepared with smoked fish, sweet bitter leaf (vegetable), palm oil, salt, maggi and onions. Vegetables soup was prepared with groundnut, smoked fish, crayfish, onions and palm oil. Also, FORUDEF prepared hotpot with green banana, groundnut, smoked fish and vegetable. Lastly, the women were taught how to prepare groundnut paste, which was the first time for most of the women to see. The dishes were spiced with salt, maggi and pepper. During the preparation, other recipes were exchanged. Ms Pamela Orock pointed out that nutrients get lost when vegetables are over boiled; hence, the women were encouraged to always prepare their vegetables green just as they saw during the practical demonstrations. Also, the team emphasised hygiene during food preparation.



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7.4 DISCUSSIONS

In plenary, following cooking practice in each of the villages, the women were asked to explain what they had identified as new from the ways they prepared their food. The women discovered better ways of preparing food for their children and families using their locally grown crops. The food prepared by the women groups and FORUDEF staff was shared among the participants, children and visitors. Since this was orange fruit season, in all the villages that training took place, they provided us with enough oranges which were taken after meals.



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8 Constraints

We encountered enormous difficulties during the exercise. The roads were bad, and transport cost was high because of rainy season. There was also the problem of illiteracy besides the difficulties in accessibility, which required more effort on our part to get the message across.

9 Conclusion

In spite of these challenges, the training went well as the women were really interested to study and to improve their diets. In all the villages that the training took place, FORUDEF promised to supply the women's groups with groundnuts and bean seeds during the planting season but on the basis that they must have prepared their farms for planting. The women rewarded us with gifts and they promised to change from their old feeding habits.

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