FACILITATOR'S GUIDE
for COMMUNITY NUTRITION EDUCATION

April 2014
How to Use this Document

This short guide has been developed by the LEARN project as an initial resource for LIFT Implementing Partner staff who have received a nutrition training from LEARN. It provides basic technical information on nutrition, covered during the LEARN training, as well as step-by-step instructions for three simple participatory nutrition activities that can be conducted by project staff in their communities. The objective is to encourage staff to start initial discussions about nutrition in their communities and to focus on a few simple key messages related to the importance of a diverse diet. It is not meant to prepare staff to conduct detailed nutrition trainings for their beneficiaries.

The guide is organized into two parts: 1) Basic Nutrition & Food Groups and 2) Balanced Diet. The first section of each part provides technical information which should be studied by the facilitator. *This information should not be read to or distributed as handouts to community members.* The steps for each activity should be carefully reviewed and prepared before conducting the activity in a community. To encourage discussion, it is recommended to conduct the activities with smaller groups of people.

**Tips for Conducting Activities**

- Prepare well for the session
- Be professional and friendly
- Create a safe environment to learn and to make mistakes
- Be understanding and respectful of different opinions
- Draw from participants’ personal experiences
- Be attentive at all times
- Use simple words
- Be a good listener and encourage questions
- Wrap up each activity with the key messages
- After each session, think about how it can be improved next time

**Adults learn:**
- What is useful to them
- When it is relevant to them
- At their own pace
Different foods contain different nutrients that allow our bodies to grow and function. In order to be healthy and for children to grow and develop normally, it is important to understand that a variety of foods are needed in a healthy diet.

In Myanmar, we teach people about nutrition using the 3 food groups: energy foods, growth foods, and protective foods. However, there are also other more technical names to describe the different nutrients in our food.

### MACRONUTRIENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nutrient</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carbohydrates</td>
<td>Provide the main source of energy and are usually the largest part of a meal. Rice is the most commonly consumed carbohydrate in Myanmar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fat</td>
<td>Allow us to store energy and help our bodies absorb some vitamins. Oil is a form of fat, but fat is included in other foods, like meat, nuts and coconut.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protein</td>
<td>Needed for growth and immune function. Meat, fish, eggs and beans all contain protein.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### MICRONUTRIENTS

Micronutrients are needed in small quantities. There are over 30 types of vitamins & minerals, each of which has a specific function in the body. We only need a little bit of each micronutrient, but they are
so important that not having enough of certain micronutrients means a person can get very sick or become disabled. Some examples of micronutrients and their functions are given in Table 2. Vitamin A, B1, and iron are three of the micronutrients that are lacking in many people’s diets in Myanmar.

Water is also essential to life, even though it is not always considered a nutrient group.

When talking to communities about nutrition in Myanmar, we use the 3 FOOD GROUPS, which is easier to understand than the scientific terms.

The **Energy group** includes foods that are a good source of Carbohydrates or Fat

The **Growth group** includes foods that are a good source of Protein

The **Protective group** includes foods that are a good source of Micronutrients

Many individual foods contain some protein, fat, carbohydrates and micronutrients and can belong to more than one food group. However, to keep it simple, foods are usually categorized depending on which nutrients they most contribute to a person’s diet.

Table 1 summarizes each food group and gives examples for each.
### Table 1. Summary of Food Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ENERGY FOODS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CARBOHYDRATES</strong></td>
<td>Provide the main source of energy. These foods help our bodies to work, move and think.</td>
<td>Examples: Rice, corn, noodles, potatoes, bread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FAT</strong></td>
<td>Main source of stored energy, as well as protection. Fat is also needed to help the body absorb some vitamins (like vitamin A).</td>
<td>Examples: Oil, butter, animal fat, groundnut, avocado</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GROWTH FOODS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PROTEIN</strong></td>
<td>Needed for growth, immune function and essential hormones. These foods are especially important for children, adolescents and pregnant and lactating women.</td>
<td>Examples: Animal sources: Chicken, beef, pork, eggs, fish, seafood, milk Plant sources: Beans, tofu, lentils, soybeans, groundnuts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PROTECTIVE FOODS</strong></td>
<td>Vitamins and minerals (also called micronutrients) are needed in small quantities to strengthen the body’s immune system. Each micronutrient performs a different function in the body. Micronutrients are especially important for children under 5 years (and more specifically children 6-23 months) and pregnant and lactating women, who have higher nutrient requirements.</td>
<td>Fruits and vegetables are a good source of micronutrients.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 2. Key Micronutrients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vitamin</th>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Deficiency Effects</th>
<th>Foods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>VITAMIN A</strong></td>
<td>Important for vision, growth and development, immune function and reproduction. Deficiency can lead to night blindness &amp; increased chance of dying from infectious diseases.</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Vitamin A-rich foods:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Vitamin A-rich foods:</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>Plant sources:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Dark green leafy vegetables (e.g. watercress, water spinach, moringa)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dark green leafy vegetables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Orange fruits and vegetables (e.g. pumpkin, ripe papaya, carrot)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Orange fruits and vegetables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Animal sources:</em> Eggs, liver, fish</td>
<td></td>
<td>Animal sources:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>VITAMIN B1 (THIAMIN)</strong></td>
<td>Important for nerve function. Deficiency can lead to beriberi – loss of appetite, oedema (swelling), nervous system dysfunction and death.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Thiamin-rich foods: Pork, beans, fish, groundnut, sunflower seeds, unmilled rice, moringa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IRON</strong></td>
<td>Important for delivering oxygen to different cells in the body and for proper functioning of muscles and the brain. Deficiency can lead to anemia, fatigue, increased risk for infection, decreased work capacity and increased risk to give birth a baby with low birth weight.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Iron-rich foods: Beef, chicken, fish, eggs, liver, beans, groundnuts, dark green leafy vegetables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IODINE</strong></td>
<td>Important for hormones produced by thyroid gland. Deficiency can lead to goiters and children born with cretinism (mental retardation).</td>
<td></td>
<td>Good sources of iodine: Iodized Salt, fish (from ocean), prawns &amp; shrimp (from ocean), seaweed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Purpose:
- To introduce the concept of the three food groups and the main function of each
- To identify foods from each food group

Time: 30 minutes

Materials:
- About 60 small pieces of paper (2 or 3 per participant)
- 3 pieces of Flipchart paper marked with 1) Energy Foods, 2) Growth Foods, 3) Protective Foods
- Pens or markers
- 3 Food Groups Flyer or Poster

Action

1. Give the example of a stove and ask: What do you need to make a fire for cooking?
   Explain: If we want to use a stove, it needs kindling and a match, fuel such as wood, and air. When the fire has lots of dry wood it burns well and makes good coal, and when it runs out of fuel/wood, it burns down. Our bodies are the same: they need fuel to keep going and if the food we eat is not enough or adequate we get tired and weak and can get sick. The fuel for people is the nutrients in the food we eat.

2. Explain that a healthy diet is one that includes a variety of foods from every food group every day.
   Discussion: Ask the participants if they know what the different food groups are. What are the functions of each food group? What foods do they usually eat from each food group? Explain (or summarize) that there are three groups of foods: energy foods, growth foods and protective foods.

3. Exercise: Provide each participant with 2 or more small pieces of blank paper. Ask them to write the name of a locally available ingredient on each piece of paper (or draw a picture). Explain that they should not write down foods that include many ingredients (e.g. mohinga). Collect all the pieces of papers and mixed them up together in a bowl. Lay the 3 flipcharts marked with the food groups on the floor or on three separate tables and ask each participant to take two small pieces of paper from the bowl. Get them to place each piece of paper into the food group to which it belongs. When everyone has placed their papers, ask everyone to walk around and look at the 3 groups with all the different foods. Ask them if all the foods are in the correct groups. If there are
some foods in the wrong group, ask the participants which group the food should belong in and why.

4. Once all the foods are in the correct categories, show the 3 Food Group poster. Ask participants what they see in the poster. What is the function of each food group?

5. Explain the key message: It is important that we include foods from all three food groups in our daily diets. Energy foods are the main source of energy in our diets (and are usually the biggest part of our meal), Growth foods help our bodies to grow and heal themselves, and Protective foods protect our bodies from illness.

6. Rice is a good source of energy and the biggest part of diets in Myanmar, but in order to be healthy, we also need foods that help our bodies grow (animal source foods, beans & legumes) and foods that protect our bodies from illness (different color fruits and vegetables).

Notes to Facilitator:

Many individual foods can belong to more than one food group because they can contain more than one type of nutrient. However, to keep it simple, foods are usually categorized depending on which nutrients they most contribute to a person’s diet.

ENERGY FOOD GROUP includes:
- Staple foods that form the main part of the meal (noodles, bread, potatoes, corn, potatoes, etc)
- Rice, although rice is sometimes shown separately in the middle of the three food groups since it is the main part of a Myanmar meal
- Oil, fat and sugar

GROWTH FOOD GROUP includes:
- Animal foods (meat, fish, chicken, eggs, liver, dairy products, insects, etc.)
- Beans and legumes (cowpeas, lentils, groundnut, etc.)

PROTECTIVE FOOD GROUP includes:
- Most fruits and vegetables (except starchy roots and tubers like potato, yam and corn).
Protective Foods: Vitamins & Minerals

Activity 1B

Purpose:
- To introduce what vitamins & minerals are, and the importance of them for our body
- To learn about the roles and food sources of some of the key vitamins & minerals

Note: The Food Group Activity (1A) should be conducted before this activity.

Time: 45 minutes

Materials:
- 2 clear drinking glasses
- Drinking water
- Spoon
- Salt
- Photo of Vitamin A deficiency
- 3 Food Groups Poster or Flyer

Action

1. Ask participants: Do they remember what the three food groups are? What is the function of each food group? Can someone give examples from each food group?

2. Explain (or summarize) that there are three food groups – energy foods, growth foods and protective foods. In this activity, we are going to focus on protective foods.

3. Explain that protective foods are important because they contain something called vitamins & minerals. We only need a little bit of each vitamin & mineral, but they are so important that not having enough of each means a person can get very sick or become disabled.

4. Demonstration

   Ask a volunteer to help you do a taste test. Ask him/her to close his/her eyes. Put a large pinch of salt into one of the cups of water and stir to dissolve. Ask the volunteer to open his/her eyes and examine the two cups of water for the differences in content and smell and to describe his/her observations to the group. Then ask the volunteer to drink a sip of each and ask him/her about the difference in taste.

   Ask the other participants to describe how much salt you put into the cup. Explain that such a small quantity made such a difference in taste. This is similar to vitamins & minerals, that are needed in small quantities but which make a big difference (and are essential) to the health of an individual.
Ask: Can anyone name any vitamins & minerals?

5. Explain that there are more than 30 different vitamins & minerals, each with their own purpose.

Give examples of a few vitamins & minerals and briefly explain their roles:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MICRONUTRIENT</th>
<th>FUNCTION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin A</td>
<td>Important for vision, growth and development, immune function and reproduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin B1</td>
<td>Important for nerve function</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron</td>
<td>Important for proper functioning of muscles and the brain</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Explain that Vitamin A, B1, and iron are three of the vitamins & minerals that are lacking in many people’s diets in Myanmar.

6. Vitamin & Mineral Deficiencies

a) Show the picture of **vitamin A deficiency**. Ask if anyone has ever seen someone with an eye problem like this or who had night blindness. Ask what they think are the causes. After discussion, explain that this problem is caused by a lack of vitamin A in the diet. Hold up the 3 Food Groups poster and ask: What foods do you think can prevent this problem? Explain that including dark green leafy vegetables and orange fruits and vegetables regularly in the diet can prevent this problem.

b) Show the picture of **iron deficiency anemia**. Explain that this woman is pregnant and feels tired all the time and that the inside of her eyelids and her tongue are very pale. Ask if anyone has ever heard of someone with a problem like this. Ask what they think are the causes. After discussion, explain that this problem is caused by a lack of a mineral called iron in the diet. Hold up the 3 Food Groups poster and ask: Do you know what foods can prevent this problem? Explain that beef, other meats, eggs, beans, and dark green leafy vegetables are good sources of iron and including these regularly in the diet can prevent this problem.

c) Explain that there are other problems and illnesses that can result from a lack of variety in the diet. Ask if anyone has heard of **beriberi**. Explain that an adult with beriberi can have weakness in their legs or numbness in their hands and feet and that we often see this is in breastfeeding women. Ask if anyone has ever seen or heard of someone with a problem like this. Ask what they think are the causes. After discussion, explain that this problem is caused by a lack of vitamin B1 in the diet. Hold up the 3 Food Groups poster and ask: Do you know what foods can prevent this problem? Explain that pork, liver, beans and groundnuts are all good sources of vitamin B1 and including these regularly in the diet can prevent this problem.
7. Explain that these are just three examples of what can happen when a person does not get enough of certain vitamins or minerals in the diet. Pointing to the protective food group, summarize the **key message** that although it is not necessary to remember which foods have which exact vitamins or minerals, it is important to eat a variety of foods every day, especially fruits and vegetables of different colors. It is especially important for young children and pregnant and lactating women to eat these foods to help them develop well and to protect them from illness.

**VITAMIN A DEFICIENCY**

![Vitamin A Deficiency Image](source: ICH/UNHCR 2003)

**IRON DEFICIENCY ANEMIA**

![Iron Deficiency Anemia Image](source: ICH/UNHCR 2003)
A balanced diet means eating a variety of foods in the meals we consume daily. It is important for people to eat diverse foods from the three food groups in the right proportions, so that they can get all the energy and nutrients they need to function, grow and be healthy.

Although foods from all three food groups do not need to be eaten at every single meal, it is important to try to eat balanced meals as often as possible. Nutritious snacks, such as fruit and nuts, should also be consumed in between meals since they will contribute important nutrients to the daily diet (unlike unhealthy snacks such as processed crackers and candies). A balanced meal should be made up of:

1) **Energy food** – This is made up of a staple food and is the largest part of meal – about 50%. Rice is the most commonly consumed staple in Myanmar, but other examples are: noodles, bread, corn and potatoes. Some additional energy also comes from fat or oil (about 5%).

2) **Growth food** – About 15-20% of the quantity of the meal should be made up of animal foods (meat, offal, fish, eggs) or legumes. Animal foods are especially important for young children and pregnant and lactating women and should be included in their meals whenever possible.

3) **Protective food** – The rest of the meal should be made up of one or more vegetables. Different types of vegetables (of various colors) should be eaten at different meals so that all the micronutrients will be included in the diet.
The above picture shows the estimated proportions of foods that should be consumed from each food group in a balanced meal.  *[Note: The specific recommended proportions depend on the age and sex of the person, but the figure shows a general estimate.]*

One example of a balanced meal could include rice, fish, and a green leafy vegetable, and some oil:

In Myanmar, most people (and not only those from the poorer groups) have the habit of consuming large portions of rice and very small portions of vegetables and animal foods/legumes. Sometimes people have limited access to these foods due to insufficient income and poor access to markets – problems that are often addressed by food security and livelihoods projects. However, many people also consume unbalanced diets due to lack of knowledge, cultural beliefs and traditions. They are used to this style of eating and often feel like they are satisfied only when they have eaten a lot of rice. Furthermore, many believe that young children and breastfeeding women should not eat certain foods which are in fact important for their health. Therefore it is also important to teach communities about the importance of a balanced diet for their health and productivity and to help them identify which vegetables, legumes, and animal foods (including wild foods and insects) can be the most affordable and accessible sources of nutrients in their community. We can encourage them to gradually change their diets and the diets of their children to be healthier and more balanced.

**KEY MESSAGES**

- Include foods from all three food groups in your diet every day.
- Rice does not provide all the nutrients needed in a diet.
- Eat a variety of fruits and vegetables of different colors.
- It is important to include animal foods in the diet whenever possible, especially for young children and women.
Balanced Diet

Activity 2

Purpose:
- To understand the principles of a balanced diet

Note: The Food Group Activity (1A) should be conducted before this activity.

Time: 30 minutes

Materials:
- Small pieces of paper (about 2 per participant) or pieces of paper with food names that were made by participants in the Food Groups activity
- Flipchart paper & markers
- Flipcharts (one per group) with a drawing of a plate divided into 3 sections (see below)

Action

1. Use the pieces of paper with food names or pictures that were made by participants in Activity 1A. Otherwise:

   Provide each participant with 2 small pieces of blank paper. Ask them to write the name of a locally available ingredient on each piece of paper (or draw a picture). Explain that they should not write down foods that include many ingredients (e.g. mohinga). Collect all the pieces of papers and mixed them up together in a bowl.

2. Explain the exercise:

   Now we will start thinking in terms of healthy meals using the ingredient papers. We will give a blank flip chart to each group which already has a drawing of a divided plate. The proportions show the estimated amount of food that you should eat from each of the three food groups.

Flipchart papers should have the following divided plate (unlabeled) drawn:
Each group will receive some ingredient papers and will try to create healthy meals on their plates. If they are missing a particular ingredient they can try to trade ingredients with other groups. If they still can’t find the ingredient that they need they can make a new one up.

3. Let each group show their results and provide feedback. (Check to see that the foods from the correct food groups are included in the three parts of the plate.)

4. At the end of the exercise, explain that the main part of the meal (a little more than half) should be made up of energy foods (most of this should come from foods like rice or noodles and a little bit should come from things like oil and fat). About 15% of the quantity of the meal should come from growth foods (meat, fish, and beans) and the rest of the meal should come from protective foods (vegetables and fruit).

Ask: How much of your plate is full of rice when you usually have a meal? Do you include enough vegetables and fruit in your diet?

5. A balanced diet means eating a variety of foods in the meals we consume daily. A balanced diet is very important to keep ourselves healthy and survive. Nutritious foods and a healthful diet are important because:

- They protect against diseases (improve the body’s immune system)
- They help you to grow well
- They give you energy to work and help you to learn
- They bring satisfaction, make you happy and prevent hunger

Optional review questions after Lunch:

Observe how much of the different food types the participants eat. After the meal, have a discussion using the questions below.

- Was the meal healthy, mixed and balanced?
- Which different nutrients did you get from your meal?
References:


**LEARN (Leveraging Essential Nutrition Actions to Reduce Malnutrition)** is a 3-year LIFT-funded project implemented by Save the Children, ACF and Helen Keller International with the goal of maximizing the nutrition outcomes of LIFT’s food security and livelihoods programming.