



CWP& ECD: Meeting childhood food and nutrition security challenge

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**Economic Performance
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Why is childhood food and nutrition security important?

- A child's mental and physical development is harmed if the child does not eat enough nutritious foods and this usually manifests in:
 - poor cognitive development,
 - weak educational performance,
 - increased risk of morbidity and
 - impaired immune functions.
- Vitamin A deficiency is strongly associated with night blindness and high rates of early child mortality.
- It is difficult to reverse **stunting** after age 2, and therefore early intervention essential.

Meanings of childhood food and nutrition security

- ‘Food and nutrition security’ is mainly associated with access to food rather than national food production, but rarely with nutritional status linked to age, weight & height.
 - Understanding of food security is commonly associated with the ‘visible signs of hunger’- eating enough food 3 times a day
 - Some respondents lacked complete familiarity with the concept food security
- Menus show limited ranges of the food (lack diversity of food groups)- concentrated around caloric intake rather than dietary diversity (rare fruit consumption); some snacks are not nutritious
- Some ECDs were unable to afford the written menu throughout the last year: in the most extreme case the ECD ran out of money to buy food on the menu for 150 days.
- ECDs rarely tracked information **on child malnutrition** (stunting)- not eating enough of the right kinds of food – which requires information about the health status.

CWP- food production and distribution

- A number of CWP sites operate food gardens, often alongside other work activities
 - Grow and harvest a limited range of vegetable crops- with seasonal variation; however, virtually no horticultural (fruits, etc) and no animal keeping reported
 - There is growing interest in transitioning from community food gardens to '1 home 1 garden' as has become popular in KZN- transfer farming skill needs to match access to suitable land
 - Lower cost of access to food (affordability)- Riemvasmaak R80 per shopping trip in nearby town
- Most common food distribution channels:
 - Distribution to vulnerable households (sick), orphans and vulnerable children
 - Selling into local informal markets but there is no clarity how income from sales (profits) get distributed among project participants or reinvested
 - Some sites allocate a share of output to CWP participants

ECD- food access and consumption

- The majority of ECDs in our study appear to rely primarily on food purchases, food packs from parents and donations (DSD subsidy, etc) rather than 'food gardens'
- Some ECDs operate their own food gardens whilst others do not
- Active ECD food gardens tend to cultivate and harvest a limited range and quantity of vegetable crops- spinach, cabbage, carrots, potatoes...



CWP-ECD interaction for early childhood food and nutrition security

- In some instances CWP food gardens interact with ECDs (perhaps not as complex as in other areas) whereas in other cases they do not.
- Some CWP workers leave their children at ECDs on workdays, but the centers often close before the end of their workday
- Even where they exist in the same locality, CWP support around food needs of ECDs is varied and criteria for partnering remain hazy:
 - “The CWP has not approached us yet and perhaps it is because we are the best ECD centre in Manenberg. Also, the CWP may think we do not need assistance from them.” (Manenberg, ECD)
- A bottom-up community-driven approach works better:
 - “There was a community agreement in place to address hunger in ECD centers and in homes who cannot afford food.... We use a *consultative way* to approach the growing of food.” (Harrismith CWP site)

Support for food production and access

- Provincial Departments Agriculture- inputs, extension advice, training
- Department of Social Development- subsidy grants
- Implementing agents (Teba, Seriti, Lima, etc)
- Local supermarkets
- Municipalities- seeds, inputs, land, fencing
- Kirstenbosch- training to Manenberg CWP?



A summary of few challenges

- Expand awareness of early childhood nutritional status to include dietary diversity, etc...
- Active use of nutritional health information from clinics-RtHCard
- Food gardens require access to land, water, seeds, etc... leverage support from other state departments?
- Animal farming in urban sites (municipal rules, etc)?
- Training in agro-ecological farm practices
- Lack of funding for nutritionally adequate food for children..
- How should CWP distribute food garden output?
 - Sell marketable surplus & transition to 'farm enterprise'
 - allocations to participants & double-dipping?