

Nutrition Behavior Profile Development, August 2018 to March 2020

USAID Lead: USAID Global Health Bureau, Nutrition Social and Behavior Change (SBC) team

Partners: Members of the Nutrition SBC team from the Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance and the Bureau for Resilience and Food Security

Background:

Recognizing the significant contribution of malnutrition to mortality, the Nutrition SBC team at USAID's Global Health Bureau wanted to give more prominence to nutrition behaviors within health programming. They recognized a need for consensus on the key behaviors and guidance to help program managers navigate the complexity of improving these behaviors. Important to the team was demonstrating that: 1) many nutrition behaviors as routinely stated (eg. complementary feeding) are a composite of multiple behaviors, each with different influencing factors; and 2) a system-wide program strategy to address these factors is necessary to achieve results.

Key Activities:

Working together, ACCELERATE and the USAID teams started by defining the activity goal: to identify the behaviors that most directly impact malnutrition (wasting and stunting) contributing to mortality.. Reviews by the Lancet, Cochrane Reviews, and other meta-analyses, led to five nutrition-specific behavior clusters. For each, the team isolated the individual behaviors --such as feeding appropriate amounts of food or a diversity of foods under complementary feeding.

Fifteen behaviors were identified and agreed upon.

[Click for the 15 Behavior Profiles](#)

Next, drawing from recent published and grey literature, the team developed 15 Nutrition Behavior Profiles which bring together the factors and actors influencing the behavior and connect pathways between these elements and illustrative strategic action(s) which address the factors. These pathways establish the logic behind why a particular strategic action would be needed in a program. Finally, the team identified behavior outcome indicators for each behavior using established and new DHS indicators, and suggested custom indicators when needed. Once complete, ACCELERATE thoroughly vetted and adjusted the Behavior Profile with USAID Nutrition team members.

Key Learning:

It was eye-opening to see how a focus on enabling the primary actor (e.g., the caregiver) to practice nutrition behaviors could be the key to building a truly human-centered program strategy. The team saw how addressing improved complementary feeding practices means considering, prioritizing and analyzing six carefully defined behaviors, and building intentional pathways to specific strategic actions that included a mix of policy work, reshaping aspects of service delivery or product availability, and enhanced community and family support, as well as communication. As the team defined behavior indicators, they noted DHS's important work to lay the foundation for sound behavioral metrics.

Key Outputs:

A set of agreed-upon priority behaviors and 15 Behavior Profiles that analyze health behaviors critical to reaching the goal of reducing stunting and wasting in young children. The Behavior Profiles will help program staff worldwide consider, for their context, the full range of factors that influence the practice of these behaviors, informing research, program design and management.