MINIMUM ACCEPTABLE DIET

Outcome indicator

Indicator Phrasing

INDICATOR PHRASING: % of children 6 - 23 months of age who consumed a Minimum Acceptable Diet the previous day and night

What is its purpose?

The indicator assesses the acceptability of a child's diet based on its micronutrient adequacy and meal frequency.

How to Collect and Analyse the Required Data

A child is considered to have a Minimum Acceptable Diet when its diet meets both so-called “Minimum Dietary Diversity” and the “Minimum Meal Frequency”. These can be assessed by conducting interviews with the caregivers of a representative sample of children aged 6 – 23 months, collecting the following data:

Assessing Minimum Dietary Diversity

1) Check whether yesterday was a **special day** (religious festival or celebration) when an unusually varied or limited diet was eaten - if so, do not proceed with collecting dietary data as it is likely that they will not reflect a typical diet.

2) **List all meals** that the child ate in the previous day using the Recording Meals Form (see below, including specific survey questions).

3) Double check the **meals' composition** (e.g. porridge with or without milk).

4) Check for any **snacks** (including fruits) which were not mentioned.

5) Only then **record in the questionnaire** which food groups were eaten. **Double check** with the respondent regarding which foods the child ate from all the groups that were not mentioned (for example: "Did s/he yesterday eat any eggs?")

6) Per each child, **count the number of food groups s/he consumed.**

7) **Highlight in your data analysis** the children who consumed foods from at least 4 food groups – this means that their diet met the Minimum Dietary Diversity.

Assessing Minimum Meal Frequency

1) If the survey did not collect this data earlier, when the enumerators finish asking about the meals a child ate (see above), let them collect the following information:

Q1: Can you please remind me her/ his exact age?

A1: ..... months

Q2: Did you breastfeed her/ him yesterday during the day or at night?

A2: yes / no

2) Use the information recorded in the Recording Meals Form (see below) to count the number of meals each child ate in the course of the day.

3) **Highlight in your data analysis** the children whose diet met the Minimum Meal Frequency – this means that:

- If they are breastfed infants aged 6 - 8 months, they ate at least 2 meals in a day (excluding breast milk)

- If they are breastfeed children aged 9 – 23 months, they ate at least 3 meals in a day (excluding breast milk)

- If they are non-breastfed children aged 6 – 23 months, they ate at least 4 meals in a day

To **calculate the indicator's value**:

- Sum up the number of children aged 6 - 23 months whose diet met the Minimum Dietary Diversity and Minimum Meal Frequency – this means those who consumed “Minimum Acceptable Diet”

- Divide the number of children aged 6 - 23 months who consumed the Minimum Acceptable Diet by the total number of surveyed children aged 6 - 23 months

- Multiply the result by 100 to convert it to percentages

Disaggregate by

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To calculate the indicator's value:

- sum up the number of children aged 6 - 23 months whose diet met the Minimum Dietary Diversity and Minimum Meal Frequency – this means those who consumed “Minimum Acceptable Diet”

Disaggregate the data by gender, age group, and wealth category.

Important Comments

1) Meal frequency as well as dietary diversity can be prone to **seasonal differences** (e.g. during the lean season, poor households commonly reduce the number of eaten meals and often also consume less diverse diet). Do your best to collect baseline and endline data at the same times of a year; otherwise, you will receive two sets of data that are not comparable. At the same time, **avoid collecting data during the fasting periods** (such as pre-Easter time or Ramadan) and during the **fasting days.**

2) Consider **reporting separately** on the % of children whose diet met the Minimum Dietary Diversity and on the % of children whose diet met the Minimum Meal Frequency.

3) This indicator relies on accurate age assessment. Since people often do not remember the exact dates of their children’s birth, the data collectors should **never rely only on the information provided by caregivers and always verify the child’s age**. This can be done by reviewing the child’s birth certificate or other documents; however, since many caregivers do not have such documents, it is essential that your data collectors are able to **determine the child’s age by using local events calendars.** Read FAO’s Guidelines (see below) to learn how to prepare local events calendars and how to train data collectors in their correct use.

4) When training your data collectors, **practice extensively** which meals belong to which food group (allocate at least 3 hours full of examples and exercises). For example, while pumpkin flesh

belongs to Vitamin A Rich Foods, pumpkin leaves belong to Dark Green Leafy Vegetables (see more examples in the FAO Guidelines below). If your questionnaire includes examples of different foods per each group, **ensure that the examples are relevant to the local context.**

5) Ensure that enumerators clearly understand and explain to the respondent that even **snacks, such as fruit, need to be counted in**.

6) Do not record foods in **quantities lower than one teaspoon** (for example, a small amount of fish powder added for flavouring).