

Senegal: A successful community-based strategy to improve child malnutrition

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BACKGROUND

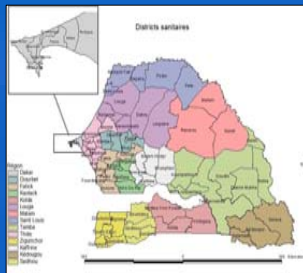
- In the rural district of Tivaouane (Dept of Thies, Senegal), 24% of under-five children were underweight (2003). The national average was 19%.
- Major causes of underweight include:
 - Women's lack of knowledge of healthy nutrition practices, e.g.:
 - Poor hygiene and basic cleansing
 - Late breast-feeding
 - Socio-cultural beliefs (food taboos, especially for young children and pregnant women)
- Infection with malaria and intestinal parasites
- Micronutrient deficiencies

OBJECTIVES

- To provide Vitamin A supplementation to at least 85% of children 12-59 months every 6 months
- To de-worm at least 85% of children aged 12-59 months every 6 months
- To increase to 85% the proportion of under-five children sleeping under insecticide-treated nets (ITN)
- To reduce by 25% the prevalence of underweight among under-five children by December 2011

PROJECT INFORMATION

- Plan began implementing a World Bank-funded community-based child nutrition project in 2005.
- The project covers 29,665 children (98% of the target population) in Tivaouane and 12 other districts in Senegal.



METHODS

STRENGTHEN INVOLVEMENT OF COMMUNITY LEADERS AND ORGANIZATIONS IN HEALTH COMMITTEES & ACTIVITIES

- 13 community-based organizations carried out field activities.
- These 13 sites are used to coordinate the planning and delivery of the project's information and services among existing neighborhood delegates, Mothers' Committees, and community leaders.
- A Communal Coordination Committee was formed in each site.

STRENGTHEN SKILLS AND PERFORMANCE OF COMMUNITY HEALTH TEAM

- Community health volunteers were trained in essential nutritional tasks:
 - Taking a census of the target population
 - Monthly weighing of children to detect inadequate growth
 - Cooking demonstrations and nutrition education highlighting the nutritive value of local recipes and foods
 - Distributing of vitamin A supplements
 - De-worming
 - Promoting the use of insecticide-treated bed nets
 - Promoting of iodized salt consumption
 - Encouraging pregnant women to use health facilities for prenatal consultation and iron supplementation

IMPROVE MOTHERS' KNOWLEDGE ABOUT CHILD NUTRITION

Communication for behavioral change by Community Health Teams to promote key behaviors related to nutrition, child weaning and child disease prevention:

- Community education sessions
- Individual counseling
- Radio programming
- Social mobilization
- Educating local leaders to gain their support

ENHANCE NUTRITIONAL SERVICES AVAILABILITY AT COMMUNITY LEVEL

- The project provided equipment and supplies (weighing scales, vitamin A, BCC materials, etc.) to Community Health Teams
- Project and MOH staff verified the quality of nutritional services offered by community health teams
- WFP-provided flour distributed to undernourished children
- During home visits, community volunteers followed up the actions of the mother and provided context-specific counseling.
- Ill children were referred to the MOH facility for appropriate treatment



RESULTS

- In Tivaouane district (as of June 2008):
 - Vitamin A supplementation coverage for children rose from 30% to 91%
 - De-worming coverage for children rose from 23% to 100%
 - Household ITN use rose from 55% to 87%
 - Household consumption of iodized salt rose from 59% to 78%
 - The prevalence of underweight among children under 5 decreased from 24% to 5%
- Similar results are being achieved in the other 12 districts covered by the project.

- Community leaders and mothers' committees supported volunteers in social mobilization, culinary demonstrations, distribution of products and weighing of children.
- "Any person... will tell you that we have recorded less death of children during the last 2 years, even during the rainy season, which used to be the period of the highest death rate"
 - Mbaye Ndiaye, community health educator, Ndiayene Sirakh community

CONCLUSIONS

- In spite of poverty, it is possible to improve children's nutritional status by involving and training community health workers and other actors (community organizations, mothers).
- Harmful cultural practices affecting child nutrition can be changed through strong and regular communication with the community.
- Distribution of essential child products by community health workers improves community participation, accessibility, and coverage.

NEXT STEPS

- Maintain activities in the current 90 sites
- Extend the project by adding 37 new sites and doubling its target population, adding an additional 30,845 children