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From whom do Mothers Receive their Nutrition Knowledge? Participatory Stakeholders' Analysis in Northern Benin

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Abstract

Child Feeding (CF) is mostly a task done by mothers, who conduct it based on their knowledge and capacities. However, little is known about how this knowledge builds up and from whom they receive information and advice. Learning about these actors and their roles will be useful to facilitate future nutritional education interventions. This study aims to identify stakeholders and their importance in CF knowledge acquisition by mothers.

In northern Benin, in the framework of a transdisciplinary project, stakeholder analysis was conducted by developing a series of Venn diagrams with various mothers, fathers and managers of government structures/NGOs involved in nutrition in peri-urban and rural areas of Banikoara and Nikki Districts. This was complemented by individual interviews and focus group discussions. The recordings of the interviews were transcribed and then analyzed using content analysis.

Actors identified to be important in CF knowledge acquisition by mothers can be categorized into three main groups: family members, health officials and other services. Four different types of relationships between the stakeholders and the mothers were identified: i) acquisition of information (advice, knowledge) in CF; ii) provisioning (financial and food resources); iii) childcare (e.g. washing, dressing); and iv) medical treatment of children. In terms of acquiring knowledge about CF, mothers of children under five years refer first to their mother-in-law, then to the oldest woman in the household, the father-in-law, the brother-in-law, the husband, the Community Health Volunteer (CHV), the Social Promotion Center (SPC), the doctor, the traditional practitioner, the friend, and finally the NGO. Only the importance of the CHV and the SPC varies according to the environment (rural or peri-urban).

As the previous generation has a lot of influence on the knowledge acquisition by mothers in child feeding, nutritional education interventions should involve mothers of mothers to enhance knowledge uptake.

Keywords: Benin, child feeding, mothers, participatory, stakeholders