



World Food Programme

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## Formative research for transformative school-based programmes in Haiti

*Anthrologica*



**The World Food Programme (WFP) Haiti** conducted two formative studies to inform its school-based programming. One focused on gender (2019) and the other on nutrition and hygiene (2019-2021). Through this research, WFP aimed to better understand what children, their families and communities think, know and do, to design a people-centred programme of behavioural change.

Formative research provides evidence

1

Evidence improves programming

2

Better programming leads to transformative action

3

Formative research leads to more relevant and effective programmes. It is an essential component of programme design that can be done rapidly and at low cost.



*If we want an intervention to be successful, we need to understand what it is that we are trying to improve or to change from the user's perspective. And having that knowledge is key to designing the right approach, messages, using the right tools, channels. It is key to having the impact that we are ultimately looking for.*

Programme Policy Officer, School-based Programmes Division, WFP Headquarters



## FORMATIVE RESEARCH PROVIDES EVIDENCE

# 1

### ▶ Collecting the data

- The studies used participatory methods tailored to specific groups. These included drawings, quizzes, card games, ballot boxes, focus group discussions, interviews and participant observation.
- A wide range of stakeholders were involved, including students, care givers and parents, teachers and other school staff, canteen workers, farmers, civil society and government.

### ▶ Key findings from the two formative studies

- Only women and girls participated in food preparation and distribution related to the school feeding programme.
- Women assumed responsibility for sourcing, storing, preparing and serving food for their household.
- Food consumption was gendered, with women having to serve themselves last and respect certain food taboos.
- Most students expressed a preference for fresh produce compared to corn or mais, but these items were unavailable in most schools.
- Overall, parents and teachers thought the students needed greater quantities and more variety of foods.
- The one school included in the 2019 study that was part of the home-grown school feeding programme produced its own fresh vegetables, and student and staff satisfaction appeared to be significantly higher there than in schools with the conventional canteen system.

## EVIDENCE IMPROVES PROGRAMMING

# 2

### ▶ Using the data

- The data were analysed and the key findings presented at a three-day workshop with implementation partners.
- Key objectives for the Social and Behaviour Change Communication strategy were agreed and the findings formed the basis of a draft strategy, plan of operations and monitoring and evaluation framework.
- The evidence will be used to develop a programme that addresses sociocultural barriers and norms around healthy eating, hygiene practices, gender equality and social inclusion within schools and the broader community.

## BETTER PROGRAMMING LEADS TO TRANSFORMATIVE ACTION

# 3

The formative studies laid the foundations on which subsequent strategies, activities, programmes and additional research can be built. The evidence provided by the formative research can be used to design more gender-equitable school-based programmes and inform policy at the broader level.

### ▶ Learning from the experience

- In addition to primarily informing the Social and Behaviour Change Communication strategy, the research findings also have the potential to inform broader programming and policy.
- It was challenging to find local personnel with strong experience in formative research, but other skills such as being a good facilitator who could motivate participation were highly valued, and could be complemented with basic research skills.
- An ideal programme implementing partner in Haiti would have strong local capacity, as well as a regional vision and technical support mechanisms.

### ▶ Key considerations for formative research

- It is necessary to invest in social science expertise and capacity-building at regional, country and local levels.
- Methods should be flexible, participatory and engaging, and a safe and secure environment should be created to ensure participants are part of the entire research process.
- Findings should be used as an evidence base for programming and be operationalised in a timely manner.
- Cross-sectoral partnerships should be built to ensure sensitive issues raised during the research can be addressed.



*“Community members get really excited that they get to share their sentiments, even about basic things – what is their life like at the household and community level. People say, ‘We’ve never been asked this before.’”*

Gender, Protection and School Feeding Advisor, WFP Haiti Country Office



**Formative research** can be used to make programmes more people-centred, relevant and effective, and to inform policy and strategy. It can help foster positive community engagement to support programme implementation, strengthen partnerships, provide evidence for advocacy efforts, increase organisational visibility and encourage investment from donors. **Formative research** should be seen to be an integral, embedded component of a programme and should be properly resourced.

