Building a NE evidence base to support policy and planning in developing countries

Draft concept note for a dispersed research review, policy briefs and evidence base

NE = food and nutrition education
SBC = Social and behavior change

Nutrition is in the world’s eye, but the pathways to improved diet and nutrition status are not well established for countries in development. We know that greater agricultural productivity, increased biodiversity, or increases in disposable income do not necessarily or notably improve diets, food practices and nutrition status, and even the long-term effectiveness of providing specific micronutrients in supplements and food fortification has been called into question.

A  There is evidence of impact of NE

NE is one of the most widely recommended strategies for enhancing nutrition impact. There is increasing evidence that

- NE is an essential catalyst in impacting nutrition status and food practices, and that
  - effects can be sustained
  - interventions can be cost-effective
  - implementation at scale is possible.
- NE components are key in nutrition-related activities in several sectors (health, agriculture and food security, education, community development, social protection)
- the form and approach of the NE intervention are critical to success, hence the need for professional capacity building
- the nature and extent of “environmental support” are also critical.

Great headway has been made in some fields by some international aid organizations (e.g. SPRING, Helen Keller International, Alive and Thrive), the need for nutrition education in all

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1 In this document “nutrition education” (NE) refers to action taken to improve dietary and food practices, and not to instruction in nutrition science (as often understood). It embraces culturally appropriate actions at several levels and in several sectors which aim to produce voluntary changes in practices and attitudes, and includes behavior change approaches. “NE” may be stand-alone (e.g. in schools, public campaigns, IYCF counseling, food guidelines), or integrated with other nutrition-related activities (e.g. in agriculture, food security, health, social protection, community development) and interventions to improve the food environment (e.g. restrictions on food advertising, labeling, sugar taxes, improving health service delivery). It includes activities in three spheres:
- Direct actions to influence food behavior
- Political and institutional advocacy and promotion
- In-service, pre-service and ad hoc training, curriculum development and capacity building.
related sectors has been recognized in international meetings and documents (e.g. ICN2 and the NOURISHING Framework). However, the evidence is scattered and not well-known to national practitioners and advocates, and there is at present no forum to promote it or association to gather it.

B Unperceived needs

In many countries the importance of NE in preventing malnutrition is not reflected in policy, professional attention, practical action or financial support. The field of infant and young child feeding (IYCF) is generally well covered, with real strides made in embedding practices in country services, but for developing countries we know of no policy briefs to guide governments, donors and aid agencies in choosing and operationalising NE strategies to accelerate dietary improvement in the general public or in schools, and, NE - as opposed to nutrition itself - seldom features in the policy and planning of relevant ministries, according to local professionals in Africa, see FEDS 2015). The need is often not perceived even by nutrition professionals: for example, many international nutrition meetings and conferences give almost no space to NE (see programs for planned 2016 nutrition conferences in Africa). Few countries are able to demonstrate local success in practical terms, since capacity building in NE is widely lacking (see FAO 2011) and NE expertise or experience are seldom required in post descriptions.

The ICN 2 framework for action (http://www.fao.org/3/a-mm215e.pdf) includes NE and the GLOPAN policy brief lists school NE in its top 10 actions to prevent malnutrition (http://glopan.org/sites/default/files/pictures/Nutritionforgrowth2Full.pdf). However some international nutrition strategy documents do not mention NE (notably the Global Nutrition Reports); some large donors and aid agencies (e.g. CGIAR, Gates) are exploring the field but plan to stick to “hard” interventions until the evidence for NE is compelling and scale-up possibilities are manifest; the World Bank is making real efforts towards nutrition-sensitive agriculture (https://olc.worldbank.org/content/nutrition-sensitive-agriculture-projects-demystified) but some large agriculture investors and NGOs do not have clear approaches to handling NE. NE has almost no profile in international professional organizations, associations, institutions, blogs and websites dealing with nutrition issues (e.g. WPHNA, AMA, ANEC, IUNS, ICDA, UNSCN). Economists, agriculturists and health professionals generally bypass NE in their professional training curricula and publications. Several international course providers which offer suites of online nutrition courses do not include nutrition education or SBCC.

So in NE advocacy, SNEB does not have a lot of company, and we have to be grateful that it is aiming to extend its influence outside the USA.

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2 We hear that this is not the case in India!
C  Need for information and an evidence base

Thus there are needs to be addressed at all levels, for example in establishing global forums, blogs and networks and in national capacity building. One underlying need is for a well-organized evidence base of NE impact which can be called on to identify research gaps, develop policy briefs for governments, donors and aid agencies, inform advocacy, formulate policy and design programs. However there is no funding and no responsible international agency.

There is a great deal of information on global solutions to nutrition problems, but there is far less on nutrition education solutions. This initiative aims to respond to questions about NE which are important in national policy and planning, such as: How best to improve national nutrition status (including the role of NE)?, Why do we need NE (instead of or as well as other strategies) and where is it needed? What makes NE effective and how do we know? How best to do NE economically and sustainably? and What capacity is needed? The indications are that many countries do not have the answers to these questions — or even ask them.

The available evidence on nutrition education impact and approach tends to be skewed to wealthier countries and their predominant nutrition issues (an imbalance which is reflected in the available databases, see Annex 1). For poorer countries, large-scale activities and quality data centre on a few high-priority issues such as IYCF, of necessity neglecting many other important target groups and the public awareness which builds a critical mass of social acceptance. Gaps in the evidence on successful approaches have been noted by the main players in the field (see e.g. SPRING 2014).

Moreover, as indicated above, the available evidence has not been getting through. A proactive approach is required to make it more accessible. The evidence gathered must of course be high quality, interesting and well-interpreted, but it is equally important that it does not remain inert but is needed, known, usable and used. Researchers and end-users should collaborate to map and prioritise evidence needs, analyse evidence and draw conclusions, generate useful products (e.g. policy briefs, advocacy materials, checklists and protocols), use them, follow them up, and publish/disseminate useful findings. The search brief may need to be wider than usual, so as to include known best practices, negative evidence and indicative findings as well as “gold standard” research; sustainability, cost-effectiveness and methodology will be important search criteria. For a fuller account, see Annex 1.
D  SNEB and SNEB Resolution
The needs described above are the basis for the Resolution on building a NE evidence base submitted to the SNEB membership. It is hoped that SNEB might lend its voice to such an initiative. This resolution is proposed for discussion:

- **SNEB urges its leadership to spearhead the establishment of a nutrition education evidence database for developing countries, which will help to identify research gaps, inform advocacy, formulate policy briefs, design nutrition education programs and curricula, and promote local nutrition education employment infrastructure and capacity in developing countries in all nutrition-related sectors (e.g. health, education, agriculture and food security, social protection and community development).**

AND

- **SNEB urges its members to support in principle, and practically with information and advice, the establishment and use of this nutrition education evidence database for developing countries.**

E  Aims
Some specific aims of the initiative are:

- to build a strong evidence base for nutrition education impact on health, its long-term sustainability and cost-effectiveness in relation to other nutrition-related interventions
- to establish working relations between researchers and end-users
- to map evidence needs in consultation with end-users, including for example activity areas in particular need of nutrition education, the effectiveness of different methodologies and mixes of education and education support in different contexts, examples of sustained change
- to seek out demonstrably effective training programs and curricula in relevant sectors
- to make key findings available and usable in policy briefs, article, advocacy materials and checklists, get them discussed, adapted, tried out and utilized on the ground
- to raise the profile of nutrition education nationally and internationally through targeted advocacy
- to extend the collaborative network of professional nutrition educators.

F  Some principles and key features
- Going beyond “inert information” (i.e. gathering data, classifying it and lodging it) to ensure wide recognition and active use of evidence.
Hence two lines of work: (a) ongoing collection of data and documentation, (b) projects focused on single questions (for examples see Annex 2), resulting in “products” such as policy briefs, advocacy materials, assessment checklists for policies or programs.

- Distributed research, making use of a wide network.
- Establishing needs, producing something useful and making sure it is used.
- Sense of purpose and achievement for all as well as external recognition.
- Maintaining interaction among working groups.
- Workload cut to fit, contributors undertake what they can and pursue own interests.
- Consistently high research standards.
- Publicity and promotion built into the program (e.g. bulletin, presentations).
- A brand name and a distinctive format and layout for products.

G Immediate plan of action

(for more detail see Annex 2 TRIAL YEAR)

At least a year of exploration, discussion and experimentation is needed to set up and try out the program. Here is how it might work:

- **First actions** are to set up a provisional taskforce and workspace, agree on aims, plan the trial year, and establish management and methodology questions to be discussed and resolved through the trial period. Produce a brief description and workplan for presentation to others.
- **Contact** Make contact with other interested organizations and individuals, both researchers and end-users, and get to know their needs, interests and resources.
- **Evidence needs** Establishing some priority evidence needs (i.e. the research questions) through a small survey and discussion with partners.
- **Choosing models** At the same time, explore existing data/evidence bases and decide on the model(s) required – e.g. a simple database with categories and keywords, or an evidence base responding to urgent questions, which searches for evidence, analyzes findings, draws conclusions and promotes through usable products, or both.
- **Design** The database and the methodology for research projects are designed.
- **Piloting** The database is piloted with input from collaborators. Two small collaborative research projects are mounted as pilots, gathering and analyzing data, producing findings and conclusions, developing small products and bringing them into use.
- **Dissemination and publicity** Publicizing the initiative (if successful) is essential for raising the profile of nutrition education. All those involved should be free to participate.
Management, administration and budget  At the end of the trial period, and after discussions with partners and SNEB, decisions should be made about whether the initiative is feasible, how it will be managed, its IT requirements, and the possibilities of funding.

REFERENCES
FAO. 2011. The need for professional training in nutrition education and communication. 
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ANNEX 1: IS THERE A NEED FOR ANOTHER EVIDENCE BASE?

The SNEB Committee posed the following question about this Resolution:
“A great deal of information already exists on global solutions to nutrition problems. Need to clarify how this initiative would make that information better or more accessible.”

The summary response below to this comment roughly follows the content of section (C) above. It is a more detailed argument, including an outline of areas of NE activity (as a basis for mapping the need for NE), and examples of existing databases which deal with NE.

1. INFORMATION ON NUTRITION EDUCATION SOLUTIONS

A great deal of information certainly exists on global solutions to nutrition problems. However, there is far less on nutrition education solutions and their comparative advantages or disadvantages (e.g. with regard to impact, costs and sustainability). The evidence targeted in this initiative will focus on nutrition education as a solution or part of a solution, in relation to other food and nutrition solutions (e.g. food fortification, micronutrient supplements, biofortification, increased agricultural production or crop diversity, food subsidies or taxes, advertising controls, social protection schemes, school meals, income generation). It will broadly seek to answer the following questions:

- **How best to improve national nutrition status (including the role of NE)?** The need for attention to nutrition as a basis for good health, for both vulnerable groups and the general population, is now widely recognized (see e.g. ICN2 2015) and national food and nutrition security policies are generally in place. A range of strategies is available for improving national nutrition status, of which nutrition education, stand-alone or integrated, is one. Governments need to be able to decide what package of strategies to choose, which are most effective, cost-effective and sustainable, and in what conditions and combinations. To our knowledge, apart from the 1000 days, there are **no evidence-based guidelines for making these strategic choices**.

- **Why do NE and where?** We know that NE can orient other strategies and enhance their nutrition impact (e.g. in income generation, social protection, home gardening), and that as a stand-alone it can produce significant changes in food behavior. However, NE remains less prevalent and far less well-funded than material interventions. Decision-makers in the relevant sectors (Health, Agriculture and Food Security, Education, Social Protection and Community Development) therefore need to **recognize the need for NE and where it can best be used**, with examples and models of **what has been achieved in countries similar to their own**. Informal surveys of NE national policies in Africa (FEDS 2015) indicate that very few relevant ministries’ policies and plans cover NE, suggesting that they are either not aware of the evidence or are not making use of it.
How to do NE effectively, sustainably and economically? And what training is needed?
Knowing that it matters is not enough: planners need to know how it works and how to do it, what resources and training it demands, what models have the best reputation for impact, cost-effectiveness and sustainability, and what will work in their own context. It may be this knowhow that is most important in opening the way. Without it, planners cannot build professional capacity in services, assess existing interventions and proposals or design and carry out new ones.

2. IMBALANCES IN THE EVIDENCE
The existing evidence on nutrition education is skewed by imbalances in the scale and number of NE activities, the issues they focus on and the level of evaluation and impact assessment, which affect their relevance to developing countries.

Most evidence comes from wealthier countries, which have the resources to generate more research and evaluate and publish it more systematically. Their main focus is on overweight and obesity, issues which have their own websites and publications. By contrast, although overweight is increasing in poorer countries, outstanding issues of undernutrition remain in infant and maternal mortality, stunting and “hidden hunger”, exacerbated by disease and poor hygiene and sanitation, while social support is weakened by poor public understanding of good diet and the nutrition transition.

In the developing world, NE activity also focuses on a relatively narrow range of issues and targets. Promoting IYCF in the first 1000 days is clearly a high priority, but enduring impacts on food practices must also depend upon raising social awareness of good diet and hence on public education and a broader focus. There is little NE activity or information for example on the quality and impact of school NE, good diet for adolescent girls, dietary diversity in home diets, avoiding junk food, and (in countries where a large proportion of households depend on their own agricultural production) on how to grow a good diet. Many countries have food-based dietary guidelines but implementation plans and impact assessment are still rare (the main strategy is “dissemination”), as are capacity building for NE in health and agriculture services, and posts which require expertise in NE (FAO, 2011).

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3 The NE process divides into (a) project framework actions (FR, M&E etc., well understood, although not widely implemented), and (b) the program of participant actions and activities, supported by media and materials, which is still an experimental area. Many have noted the “learning methodology gap” in research reports, and BC/education theory does not do much to suggest how it can be operationalised. Meanwhile, the prevailing models of nutrition education in many countries and relevant professions are oriented to pure information delivery, which has little effect in changing food behavior.

4 There are honourable exceptions in development activities (e.g. A&T, SPRING, FANTA, Helen Keller), mostly focused on IYCF.

5 It should be asked however why SUN programs tend to focus on supplements more than on food solutions and NE.
Leading players in the field recognize the many gaps in the evidence for what works in interventions. SBCC Nutrition, for example, has recently reviewed the BCC/SBCC NE evidence (SPRING 2014) and produced extensive lists of what works and what could be done better in BC impact, design and implementation, for example, gaps in evidence of long-term sustained impact, comparative effectiveness of different strategies in IPC (the “methodology gap”), the skills and capacity needed to implement SBCC, and success in integrating NE into national services, all of high relevance to developing countries.

3. HOW WOULD THIS INITIATIVE MAKE THE INFORMATION BETTER OR MORE ACCESSIBLE?
Information gathered should be high quality, interesting and well-interpreted, but should also be proactive: it should not remain inert but be needed, known, usable and used. It should be part of a process by which researchers and end-users collaborate to

- identify priority evidence needs and end-users (e.g. national advocates, aid organizations)
- collect and analyse evidence, draw conclusions and make recommendations for use
- generate useful products (e.g. policy briefs and checklists, advocacy materials, assessment protocols)
- use the products and follow up on their use
- publish/disseminate useful findings and products through networks, articles, personal contacts.

In this regard, here are some possibilities to be discussed by the first working group:

a) Relevance and response to needs
- Select for relevance to developing countries, their outstanding issues, contexts, cultures and capacities, while not neglecting relevant evidence from elsewhere.
- Map the field of perceived evidence needs (based on a checklist of NE activities - see (4) below). A wide consultative base would make it possible to identify and address real user needs (for example, the absence of NE in national policies, curriculum gaps in school NE programs, training needs etc.).
- Match searches to known needs and purposes, in order to answer questions which practitioners, governments, aid organizations, project and program managers and policy-makers in development are or should be asking (e.g. those in 1 above). Existing databases (see (5) below) have great strengths but we have not found any which fully respond to these questions.

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6 Interest in this area is increasing. FANTA is planning a review to “examine development-focused projects that implement/have implemented a combination of nutrition-sensitive and nutrition-specific approaches to address nutrition outcomes without directly providing food or non-food transfers to project participants.”
b) Content and quality – high standards but a wide search brief?
- Give due weight to “gold standard” RCTs.
- Include categories for indicative findings and best practices which have not necessarily been validated by “gold standard” RCTs.
- Pay attention to negative evidence, e.g. of popular initiatives which have not shown sustainable or cost-effective results in improved nutrition status or food behavior (e.g. some cases of labeling, nutrition in agriculture, FBDGs, mass media, 5-a-day).
- Broaden the search terms and use organization contacts to pick up more relevant literature. In our experience, some useful research and documentation generated by organizations has not reached any review or database.
- Extend search criteria to include cost, cost-effectiveness, sustainability, ease of operation, and “learning methodology”, which is often neglected in research studies and reviews (e.g. type of communication, kinds of participant activity, form of mass media, people involved and how, what “adult learning principles” are adopted and how they are applied).

9 Indicative findings” are those which suggest connections which should be explored more rigorously. In NE, for example, some long-term effects can be shown to correlate with particular conditions. Examples are: (a) The lower levels of obesity and NCDs in Quebecois adults compared to the rest of Canada appear to be related to the long-term ban on food advertising for children on Quebec TV. (b) The low level of obesity in Japan is attributed to an extensive practical NE curriculum throughout the education system. (c) Although the banning of soda drinks was not achieved in NY, there has been a considerable drop in public consumption, which may be related to the widespread discussion stimulated by the media debate on the legislation itself.

10 For example, FAO products include a review of NE capacity needs in Africa and the related trialled and revised package for assessing national NE capacity; a review of training needs in NE, and the resulting training course; assessment checklists for use in deciding whether to initiate or maintain existing programs.

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8 Quality research and findings are in short supply: it is not uncommon to read reviews based on a 1% or 2% sample of the literature in print, the rest being discarded as ineligible. This suggests that a huge amount of time is being wasted both in doing the research and in reading and rejecting. (It should be noted that the reasons for rejection are themselves indicative of outlooks and patterns of practice which need to change.) It would be good if this initiative could play a small part in improving the quality of research, but this may be blue sky thinking.

c) Accessibility
The available evidence is not getting through. NE is still not widely recognized (by governments, international institutions, donors, aid agencies, course providers, professional associations, development blogs etc.) as an effective, measurable, cost-effective and sustainable solution. “Accessibility” should be seen as proactive, not only making information available, but activating it by involving end-users, tackling needs, suggesting uses and creating demand through dissemination, promotion, trial and use in the field.
4. CHECKLIST OF AREAS OF ACTIVITY INVOLVING NE

(Areas which have received a lot of research attention are in bold.)

1 WHAT’S THE PROBLEM AND HOW BEST TO DEAL WITH IT?

**NE’s role in relation to specific nutrition issues – stand-alone and in combination**

➢ Aim: to ensure that NE is not bypassed as a strategy or sidelined in integrated interventions.

- **IYCF and maternal diet, the 1,000 days:** breastfeeding, complementary feeding, maternal diet
- **Stunting + micronutrient deficiencies** (e.g. iron, vit A, iodine, zinc) (WHO indicators of N status) & promotion of specific nutrient-rich foods (e.g. ASFs, legumes, F&V)
- **Overweight and obesity** + lifestyle and physical activity
- General dietary diversity
- Relationship of any or all of the above with
  - **hygiene and disease** (malaria, diarrhoeal diseases, helminth infections)
  - agriculture and home gardening
  - other approaches to resolving the issues + relative cost & effectiveness & sustainability + food-based solutions compared to others

2 WHAT’S THE SITUATION? WHY USE NE AND WHERE?

**NE in situation analysis/formative research: what’s known about determinants of behavior & attitude, barriers, KAPP, resources, circumstances, the mental/behavioural map that calls for NE**

➢ Aim: to ensure that behavioral, social and cognitive influences are not ignored in nutrition-focused interventions

- The nutrition transition and its effects on diet and attitude
- Existing food practices and attitudes, perceptions of food values etc. both for specific populations and for the public in general
- Existing influences such as media, advertising (or absence), school programs
- Existing relationships between diet + agriculture/horticulture, hygiene conditions, disease
- Resources available at different levels

3 WHERE IS IT WORKING, HOW EFFECTIVE IS IT AND HOW IS IT DONE? WHAT ARE THE CHOICES?

**NE in existing policy and strategies, infrastructure, types of intervention and services**

➢ Aim: to see if NE is tackling the issues, where, and in what combinations; and if it is successful, economical and long-lasting. NB negative evidence is also needed.

- Existing NE policies and strategic planning across the sectors, including legislation, labeling, FBDGLs
Existing NE integrated in government sectors (agriculture, social protection, health) and projects
Use and impact of national campaigns, national FBDGLs and other materials
School curriculum development, teacher education, and impact over time
Impact, sustainability and cost-effectiveness of interventions

4  APPROACHES AND PROCESSES, MATERIALS, TRAINING, CONSTRUCT OF NE
How to do it effectively, sustainably, and economically
➢  Aim: to ensure that results are achieved and maintained, money and effort are not wasted, and capacity is developed.
  o  Shared understanding of needs and constructs (such as NE, BCC, communication)
  o  Methodologies and constructs of NE being practised: assessment of existing approaches (e.g. national audits) in terms of impact on dietary practices, cost, sustainability
  o  Established project frameworks (FR, project structure, M&E)
  o  Existing capacity, capacity needs and available training
  o  Related professional training for e.g. health workers, teachers, ag officers, nutritionists

5.  EXISTING DATABASES AND EVIDENCE BASES IN NUTRITION/NE

One of the first tasks of the working group will be to study what other databases have to offer and how they work and make links with them to share findings and processes. Below is a superficial view of four well-known databases, the EAL, GINA, NOURISHING and J-PAL, which can all serve as models in one way or another. General points:

  o  Databases are not necessarily evidence bases - e.g. NOURISHING registers major activities but does not apparently analyse them, WHO reports conclusions and analysis if they are submitted, whereas EAL’s working groups and J-PAL staff analyse the evidence and draw conclusions about the strength of the evidence or the comparative effectiveness of different approaches.
  o  Some databases (e.g. EAL and NOURISHING) mainly deal with the developed world and its issues, whereas WHO’S GINA database and J-PAL cover the developing world.
  o  Most databases we have looked at so far regard NE as a very small part of their mandate in relation to other nutrition and health activities.

1.  The Evidence Analysis Library (EAL) of the Academy of Nutritionists and Dieticians
https://www.andeat.org
This library is mainly for members of the Academy, who are for the most part US registered dieticians. The NE element is not extensive compared with the other concerns of the Library. The content is US-oriented, focused mainly on overweight and NCDs. The list of “evidence analysis questions” for review in NE does not aim to be a systematic research map (even many major US initiatives do not get much coverage, e.g. MyPlate, WIC, EFNEP, SNAP-Ed, school
gardens, farm to school, mass media). The one research review we were able to access (about the effect of stand-alone NE on adiposity in schoolchildren) was of a high standard. (https://www.andeal.org/topic.cfm?cat=4741&conclusion_statement_id=251629&highlight=N utrition%20education&home=1.) Lessons could be learned from very systematic approach adopted (e.g. the grading of evidence on a five-point scale).


The NOURISHING Framework, set up by the World Cancer Research Fund, gathers research and programs dealing with the food environment, the food system and behaviour change, with a view to helping to promote policy and planning for healthy diets and reduce obesity, to identify where action is needed, select and tailor options, and assess approaches. It therefore has an explicit functional purpose. It is very clearly and systematically organized: the entries submitted under “behavior change” are divided into three categories (all with a “delivery” feel): *Informing people about food and nutrition through public awareness, Nutrition advice and counseling in health care settings, and Giving nutrition education and skills*. These are further subdivided, e.g. into education curricula, public campaigns etc., giving a good overview of what is going on. The main focus is on obesity prevention, and the submitted entries are almost all from wealthier countries. We have not explored how the data are used; however the staff are very helpful.

3. **The WHO database on the implementation of nutrition action (GINA)** [https://extranet.who.int/nutrition/gina/](https://extranet.who.int/nutrition/gina/)

The GINA database is wide-ranging and global. It collects relevant interventions, gives a summary and notes on whatever is known about implementation and impact plus references and a website URL if known (there is little on methodology). Criteria for inclusion are not stated (voluntary entries?) – it appears that the database publishes what is submitted, so entries are not consistent/comparable in the data they give.

The number of recent entries on NE is not high and the archive does not appear to recognize “nutrition behavior change” as a search term. The concept of “NE” seems to include micronutrient powders and training in nutrition science. First impressions are that it’s difficult to extract useful info, but we need to investigate the search capacities more thoroughly. Could be a good entry point to see where the studies are coming from.


J-PAL, a group of economists based at MIT, takes as its mission “to reduce poverty by ensuring that policy is informed by scientific evidence. We do this through research, policy outreach, and training.” Their approach (like that of the EAL) is to pose questions which are important for policy decisions, analyse “gold standard” research and compare findings for effectiveness and
cost-effectiveness. They have come up with many surprising conclusions, some of which are presented in their well-known book *Poor Economics*. They have data on a very large number of ongoing and completed randomized evaluations. They do quite a lot on health and education but have hardly touched nutrition. (We have to say that the only time they endorsed a study on nutrition education they came (in our opinion) to the wrong conclusions!)

5. **Other databases** Some other relevant databases are:
  
  o *The Cochrane Library* [http://www.cochranelibrary.com](http://www.cochranelibrary.com)  
    A search for “nutrition education” did not produce any results. “Behavior change” + “nutrition” found two non-relevant articles on, and “behavior change” found 63 items mostly on activity/sports, NCDs or chronic diseases and obesity. Very medical outlook and very oriented to western diseases. However needs more in-depth exploration.
  
    The manager Doug McCall says they don’t have very much on NE and would be glad of contributions.
  
  o *NICE National Institute for Health Care and Excellence* [http://www.evidence.nhs.uk/](http://www.evidence.nhs.uk/) have a very large evidence base, with thousands of items on e.g. NE and BC in nutrition. Not sure how many journals they search or how much there is on lower-income countries.

These should be explored further, and there are certainly others.
ANNEX 2: TRIAL YEAR AND POSSIBLE QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE

This expands Section G in the Concept Note.

1. **First actions:**
   - **Set up taskforce and workspace.** Establish a small provisional taskforce (mainly SNEB members + invited others) with individual and general responsibilities; agree on name, objectives, vision and principles, provisional logo (PRODUCT 1); set up Google working space. NB Some skills/experience/knowledge needed in the taskforce are admin, management and funding; research; database design; IT & website handling; international contacts; experience of developing countries; publicity; survey design. It is suggested that members should pair up with interested colleagues.
   - **Plan trial year** Map out the trial year’s activities and take on specific responsibilities; agree on outputs (e.g. research plan, map of needs, data collection framework, network of interested parties, launch); identify roles (and bait) for collaborators; produce workplan for first 3 months; draft short flier for circulation to interested parties (PRODUCT 2);
   - **Make contacts and get expressions of interest** Get in touch with interested institutions, organizations and individuals who are prepared to contribute time, expertise, or funding; explore their needs and interests, spheres of work, human resources, the data they already have etc. Invite them to collaborate on specific upcoming activities in first-year plan (e.g. survey of needs among own contacts, first contributions to database, models for databases).

2. **Establishing structure, needs, work formats**
   - **Select database/evidence base models** Review existing NE databases and evidence bases, make links, get advice, look at possibilities of collaboration, and choose own models.
   - **Survey evidence needs** Draw up and carry out small survey of evidence needs and draft a broad map of potential action (PRODUCT 3); list findings, formulate research questions, circulate and prioritize.
   - **Discuss and design database and project research plan**
     - (a) design own database (categories, keywords etc. PRODUCT 4) and set it up with input from collaborators.
     - (b) design project research plan: elements and categories, criteria, expected products and outcomes, research methodology.

3. **Doing mini-projects**
   *Carry out two small research projects, produce products and see them into use.*
   - Identify two priorities for mini-research projects, possible products and their use
o Divide the work and invite volunteers (researchers and end-users) to participate
o Carry out projects, produce products (PRODUCT 5) and use
o Follow-up on use of evidence and products
o Post-mortem on projects
o Discuss and draft plans for forthcoming year.
o Joint report on all (PRODUCT 6)
o Publicise and disseminate (PRODUCT 7)

4. Admin, management, roles, funding

*Discuss and decide management, administrative and budget questions*

Meanwhile, discuss management questions and consult with SNEB and partners. By the end of the year decide:
- whether the project is feasible.
- how the initiative will be managed and what role SNEB will play
- what website capacity will be needed and who will manage it
- how to attract funding (needed for management of database, consultants, web charges).

5. A sample of questions which need exploring

(This list could be circulated as parts of a needs analysis among users, who can add, alter or amplify.)

1. How can NE be integrated into existing FS&N, Health and Education policies?
2. What is NE? What does it take to change food practices and attitudes? (examples)
3. How to assess NE needs in a country, with examples of existing practices (What is going on? What is needed and where? How is it done? What works well?)
4. How to assess NE capacity needs in a country?
5. What guidelines exist for NE curriculum development in schools?
6. Can school NE affect food practices of households or individual children?
7. Can school meals affect diet and food practices/outlooks in children or their families?
8. Diet/nutrition counseling/NE re complementary feeding - what really works in terms of changing practices? Can we compare approaches? (NB The area of IYCF is relatively well covered, and questions are being explored.)
9. What NE can agricultural extension programs do and can they have an effect?
10. Can agriculture projects accommodate the idea of BCC approaches in agriculture as a first step to recognizing the psycho-social elements (NE) in nutrition?
11. Can homestead gardens (with NE) affect household diet in the long term?
12. Do Farmer Field Schools (with NE) affect what people grow to eat?
13. What roles can be played by NE in value-chain agricultural interventions?
14. Can agriculture be nutrition-sensitive? What are the obstacles?

15. What is the most effective form of IPC in community NE interventions?
16. What mass media programs, or NE packages including mass media, have the greatest, most durable and most cost-effective impact?
17. What impact can FBDGs have on national diet and food practices, and how?
18. Do campaigns (e.g. for BF, F&V) work to improve practices in the long term?

19. What is the evidence of the added value of NE in social protection schemes?

20. What NE training programs are there for health workers, what is the content, what are the activities, and are there measurable effects?

Possible products
- Policy briefs
- Advocacy materials
- Models for integrating NE into sectoral strategies, projects and programs
- Conference presentation powerpoints
- Protocols for national or institutional capacity assessment in NE
- Checklists for assessing likely impact of proposed NE interventions
- Case studies