



Evaluating the Impact of a Multi-Sectoral Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture Programme on Women's Dietary Diversity in Southern Province, Zambia

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Abstract

Malnutrition remains prevalent in Zambia, especially among women of reproductive age. Nutrition-sensitive agriculture programmes are seen as a strategy to improve dietary outcomes by addressing underlying food security determinants. This policy brief evaluates the impact of a multi-sectoral nutrition-sensitive agriculture programme in Southern Province, Zambia, on the dietary diversity of women of reproductive age. Its objective is to generate evidence for policymakers on scaling and refining similar integrated interventions. A mixed-methods approach was employed. Quantitative data on women's dietary diversity scores were collected through household surveys. Qualitative insights were gathered via focus group discussions with programme participants and implementers to understand contextual and implementation factors. The programme demonstrated a modest positive association with improved dietary diversity. Quantitative analysis indicated participating women had a higher likelihood of achieving minimum dietary diversity compared to non-participants. Qualitative data identified women's access to and control over income from agricultural sales as a key enabling factor. Multi-sectoral, nutrition-sensitive agriculture interventions can contribute to improving women's diets in Zambia. The moderate effect observed suggests programme design and implementation require strengthening to maximise impact. Policymakers should: 1) Strengthen components that enhance women's economic empowerment within agriculture programmes. 2) Integrate explicit nutrition behaviour change communication. 3) Improve monitoring systems to track dietary outcomes alongside agricultural production. nutrition-sensitive agriculture, dietary diversity, women's health, Zambia, policy evaluation, multi-sectoral programme This brief provides actionable evidence for Zambian health and agricultural policymakers on designing effective nutrition-sensitive programmes, contributing to the integration of health and agriculture sector strategies.

Keywords: *Nutrition-sensitive agriculture, Dietary diversity, Women's reproductive health, Sub-Saharan Africa, Programme evaluation, Maternal nutrition, Zambia*

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