Identifying Culturally Specific Nutrition Interventions in Kenya to Increase Consumption of African Indigenous Vegetables

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Abstract
Malnutrition is an increasing concern in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). African Indigenous Vegetables (AIVs) can contribute to household food and nutrition security in SSA, including Kenya. The objective of this study, as part of the larger USAID Feed the Future grant Improving Nutrition with African Indigenous Vegetables in Zambia and Kenya was to identify culturally appropriate nutrition interventions to increase household consumption of AIVs. This study utilized a mixed methods approach. Researchers collected quantitative data through a questionnaire-style interview administered by trained field enumerators in the regional language (n=500) and qualitative male and female focus groups (n=7). All quantitative analyses were conducted using the statistical software package IBM SPSS Statistics version 26. The focus group notes were open-coded and organized based on key themes related to the impact pathway using NVivo (Version 12). In Kenya 10\% of respondents’ dietary diversity scores fell below the minimum threshold and 13\% experienced some level of household hunger. The qualitative and quantitative research tools further identified drivers and barriers for AIV consumption. Respondents noted AIV health benefits (94\%) and improved recipes (93\%) as a motivator for consuming AIVs in the household. In the focus groups, the participants listed ease of preparation, abundance, affordability, and health as motivators for consuming AIVs. Survey respondents noted nightshade (33\%) as their preferred AIV, while cowpea leaves (16\%) and spider plant (14\%). The Conceptual Pathway between Agriculture and Nutrition was used to identify an intervention package that was delivered at the household and community level. In addition, the culmination of this intervention package led to the development of a culinary skills and recipe book.