

Is social and behavior change communication sufficient?

Reasons for low intake of recommended foods among pregnant and lactating women in rural Bangladesh: an anthropological exploration

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Outline of the presentation



INTRODUCTION



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Introduction

Background

Intervention: Extensive counselling and food demonstration to promote consumption of recommended diet among the pregnant and lactating women (PLW) of BRAC's Maternal Nutrition Initiative (MNI) intervention areas

Household visits

- Counselling: PLW and family members
- Food demonstration

Community mobilization

- Husband forum (HF)
- Orientation of community health worker (CHW), & local influential person

Mass communication

- Community level: short videos
- Popular theater

Social and behavioral change communication (SBCC) package

Recommended food groups		1. Fish/meat
		2. Egg
		3. Milk/milk products
		4. Dark green leafy vegetables
		5. Yellow/orange fruits & vegetables

Expectation: To increase dietary diversity of the PLW

Rationale and objective

Reality

Though consumption of recommended foods for PLW under MNI project has a modest increase over the period, the result was not up to the level of expectation

Particularly, consumption of egg, milk/milk products, and yellow/orange fruits & vegetables was low



Objective

To explore the reasons of the low intake of these foods among PLW in MNI intervention areas

Methods

Methods (I)



Study design and sites: Explorative qualitative study employing an ethnographic approach in Rangpur (Mithapukur) and Mymensingh (Tarakanda) districts of Bangladesh



Data collection: Face-to-face interviews and observation and documented through audio recordings, field diaries, and photos during April-May 2017



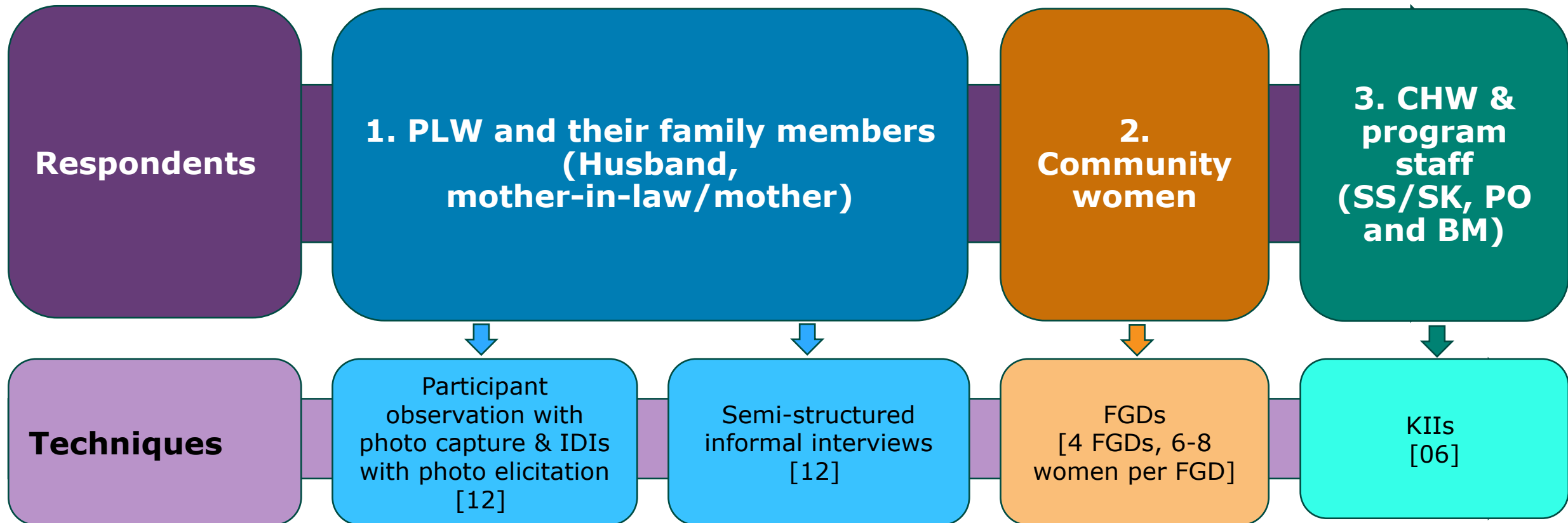
Data analysis: Manually by applying thematic framework analysis method (Gale et. al., 2013)



Ethical consideration: a) Ethical approval from Ethical Review Committee (ERC) of Research & Evaluation Division (RED), BRAC and b) Written informed consent and assent (for <18 years respondents) for interview and photo capturing

Methods (II)

Ethnographic approach



Methods (III)

Data collection process

Step 1

- **Community visit for participant selection**
- **Focus Group Discussion (FGD)** with married community women to understand socio-cultural beliefs and dietary practices during pregnancy and lactating period

Step 2

- **Observation & photo capturing** at household level [3 days: 12 hours/day] for deep understanding of the dietary practices of PLW, decision making process & power dynamics within the family sphere

Step 3

- **Photo assisted interviews** with PLW to increase data richness following SHOWed techniques (Lopez et. al., 2005; Wang 1999)
- **Informal discussion** with family members

Step 4

- **Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)** with program staff/CHW

Methods (IV)

Different categories of respondents: individual, family, community, organization

Data triangulation

Methodological triangulation

Investigator triangulation

Several methods: IDIs, informal interview, FGD, observation, photo capturing

Three researchers: Anthropologist, nutritionist and implementation researcher

Triangulation

- Increased validity & reliability
- Enhanced data completeness & richness

Findings

Findings (I)

SBCC intervention has **not been translated into action**

Expected



Recommended
meal for PLW

VS.

Real life practices



Mixed vegetable (potato
and brinjal)



Mixed vegetable with egg



Mixed vegetable (potato
and brinjal)

Lunch of a pregnant woman for three consecutive days in Mithapukur, Rangpur. She also consumed the same food during dinner (from observation)

Findings (II)

Women are cared for their 'reproductive role' not as an individual



Pregnant women vs. Lactating women



- The perceived importance of consuming these foods was primarily focused on the pregnancy period, rather than the lactation period
- The current pattern of dietary intake among PLW mirrored this prioritisation of importance
- Restriction to different nutritious foods during post-partum period
- After post-partum period focus on child (not the mother)

"I think women need to eat these nutritious & good foods more during their pregnancy for baby's physical and mental development. After delivery, these are not that important".

[Community woman,
Mithapukur, Rangpur]

Findings (III)

Household's financial capabilities and food price shaped dietary practices of PLW

Many PLW could not afford some recommended foods due to high price

- **Husband:** Day laborer
- **Monthly HH income:** BDT 6,000 (74 USD)
- **Husband forum (HF):** Could not attend any single HF (to avoid loss of income)



Lunch (rice with dark green leafy vegetables and onion-red chili mixture) of a pregnant woman, Tarakanda, Mymensingh



Lunch (rice with lentils, mashed banana, potato-fish curry and duck roast) of pregnant woman, Tarakanda, Mymensingh

- **Husband:** Businessperson
- **Monthly HH income:** BDT 20,000 (247 USD)
- **Husband forum (HF):** Attended the HF twice (no loss of income)

Findings (IV)

Food consumption influenced by the **availability of storage facility at household level**



"We do not buy milk everyday. On the other hand, it is not possible to store milk (after buying large amount at a time) if there is no refrigerator at household level".

[Pregnant woman, Mithapukur, Rangpur].

"We cultivate potato, and we could easily store it at the household level. When we cannot arrange any other foods, we just cook potato in various ways like alu vaja (fries), alur dal (curry), alu vorta (mashed) and dim-alu torkari (curry); alu-palong torkari (mixed vegetable)".

[Pregnant woman, Mithapukur, Rangpur].



Additionally, it was evident that PLW drank milk regularly if milk was available at the household level

Findings (V)

Consumption of yellow/orange vegetables & fruits highly influenced by **seasonal availability**



- ✓ Yellow/orange vegetables and fruits are highly seasonal in Bangladesh. During summer, colored fruits and vegetables are widely available
- ✓ Usually, women consumed banana, papaya and pumpkin from yellow/orange fruits and vegetables group

"Though we suggest women to eat yellow/orange fruits, many women cannot arrange these due to seasonality. However, they (PLW) consume mangoes and jackfruits regularly during the season".

[Program Organizer/PO, Tarakanda, Mymensingh].

Findings (VI)

Food purchasing practices and distance of the marketplace can influence food consumption even after having knowledge and financial capacity

- ❑ In rural areas, male family members are usually responsible for purchasing foods from the marketplace
- ❑ Despite having knowledge about the importance of milk/egg consumption along with financial capability, women could not eat milk/egg during pregnancy and lactation because no one in the family to go to the marketplace for purchasing milk/egg everyday

"Money is not a big problem for me. But I do not have anyone in my family who will bring milk from the marketplace for me regularly. Moreover, the distance of marketplace is almost 1 kilometer from my home."

[Lactating woman, Tarakanda, Mymensingh]

Findings (VII)

Social and gender norms, intra-household power dynamics, and personal choices/preferences also influenced the dietary practices of PLW

Food taboos and misconceptions during pregnancy and lactation period were still there

Clear gender norm existed regarding food activities such as food purchasing (male dominated, particularly in rural areas), decision related to food cooking (mother-in-law)

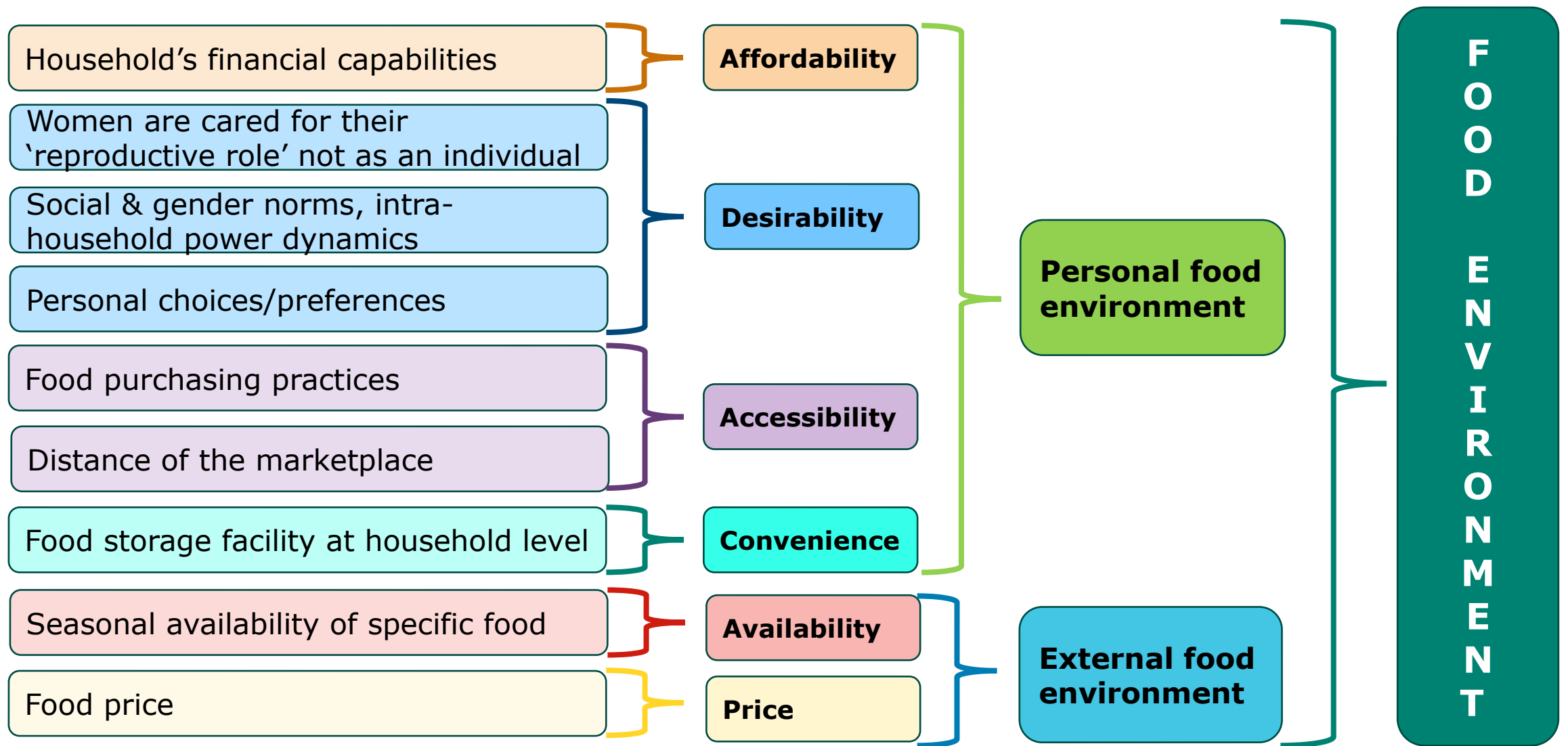
Consumption of recommended food influenced by personal taste and choices (e.g., PLW perceived green leafy vegetables as monotonous food and do not like its taste)

Sometimes, PLW had specific food intolerance (e.g., lactose intolerance) and food indigestion problem (e.g., leafy vegetables, egg etc.), particularly during pregnancy

"My mother-in-law does not like pumpkin at all. So, pumpkin was not allowed to cook in this house".

[Pregnant women, Tarakanda, Mymensingh].

Implications



Summary: reasons for low consumption

Food environment

External food environment

1. Availability
 - Seasonality
2. Prices
 - Food prices
3. Vendor and product properties
4. Marketing and regulation

Personal food environment

1. Accessibility
 - Food purchasing practices
2. Affordability
 - Household's financial capabilities
 - Distance of the marketplace
3. Convenience
 - Food storage facility at household level
4. Desirability
 - Social & gender norms
 - Personal choices/preferences

Food system

Acquisition and consumption

Take home messages (I)

1. SBCC is essential, but is insufficient as a solo intervention to deliver the desired outcome/impact

- SBCC primarily focuses on **desirability domain** of the whole food environment
- Leverage social and gender norm insights in crafting norm-responsive SBCC interventions and continue for better dietary practices

Take home messages (II)

2. To improve healthy diet consumption, we **need to address both external and personal domains of food environment**

Personal domains (short and medium term)

- Improve physical accessibility of food for women (either empower women to go to marketplace or bring the marketplace to the women)
- Increase the purchasing power through short-term (e.g., social safety net) and medium-term (e.g., income generating activities) initiatives

External domains (long term)

- Market regulation and price control to make the healthy diet affordable
- Making agriculture nutrition-sensitive to produce nutritionally important foods available all year round

Thank you 😊