Indicators of Affordability of Nutritious Diets in Africa (IANDA)

Using government food price and market data, IANDA developed metrics of the availability and affordability of nutritious, diverse foods in markets and diets throughout the year.

The vision of this project was to transform food price monitoring to represent the foods people need for healthy and active lives. Abundant food price data are collected routinely in virtually all countries. Yet only the prices of starchy staples and economically important commodities have been widely used for decision-making.

IANDA aimed to harness existing food price data for nutrition, so that governments, agriculture projects, and researchers can track access to nutritious diets. Four innovative metrics were developed under IANDA:

- **The Cost of Recommended Diet (CoRD)** indicator shows the cost of meeting food-based dietary recommendations, which is the most intuitive way to understanding economic access to adequate food. It can also show which food groups are most expensive.

- **The Nutritious food Price Index (NPI)** is designed as a counterpart to a country’s consumer price index (CPI) for food. Closely related to CoRD, the NPI provides an alternative weighting system based on food group requirements and consumer preferences within food groups, thus providing an index of the food prices from a nutritional standpoint.

- **The Cost of Nutrient Adequacy (CoNA)** indicator can be used for advocacy and shows the minimum cost of achieving adequacy of energy and essential nutrients.

- **The Cost of Dietary Diversity (CoDD)** indicator is an index of the cost of meeting the Minimum Dietary Diversity for Women of reproductive age (MDD-W).

Researchers used a participatory process in Ghana and Tanzania, holding two workshops in each country with the people and institutions who collect food price data, as well as end-users of the data. This process was necessary to ensure that the metrics would be feasible with existing systems, and would serve the needs of national policymakers and program planners across agriculture, nutrition, and health sectors.

Price indexes developed by IANDA can guide public investment, policies and programs that make high-quality diets more accessible year-round. Institutionalized measurement of people’s access to nutritious diets, and not only calories, is important for consistency with our globally-shared value of “access by all people, at all times, to safe, sufficient food that meets dietary needs and food preferences for a healthy and active life.”

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1 FAO (1996). Rome declaration on world food security and World Food Summit plan of action.
Government success story

IANDA used existing data from food price monitoring systems in Ghana and Tanzania to develop the indicators. The researchers built strong partnerships with food price data collectors in the Tanzanian and Ghanaian governments throughout the project.

The project was designed to work within existing systems, and therefore started with initial workshops in Ghana and Tanzania in 2016. Food price data collectors were invited to present how they collect data, and other participants engaged in a discussion about how the data could be used for nutrition.

Realizing that data on more diverse foods would be needed for indicators about nutritious diets, the Ghana Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MoFA) decided to pilot an expanded food list in early 2017. IANDA researchers worked with workshop stakeholders to recommend a short list of commonly-consumed nutritious items to add. MoFA found that the expanded list provided valuable information with minimal additional costs, and decided to institutionalize the expanded food list nationwide.

In 2017 the indicators were presented at workshops in Ghana and Tanzania. There was significant interest in scaling up their use from the national government data collection agencies (NBS, GSS, MoFA-SRID and MoFA-WADI), national nutrition actors (TFNC), international end-users (WFP, GIZ, FAO), and academia (University of Ghana and Sokoine University of Agriculture – SUA). Following a CANDASA workshop with Ghana stakeholders in 2018, Ghanaian officials announced their interest in including two of the indicators (CoRD and NPI) in monthly reports.

Phase 3, the Food Prices for Nutrition Project, will help build capacity for governments to easily calculate the metrics. In addition to developing an online food price hub hosted by the World Bank to present how they collect data, and other participants engaged in a discussion about how the data could be used for nutrition.

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Catalysing further funding and research

IANDA was the first phase of what has become the larger Food Prices for Nutrition Project, led by Tufts University. This now 10-year research agenda totalling over $4 million USD started with this IMMANA grant.

The Cost of a Recommended Diet (CoRD), the Cost of Nutrient Adequacy (CoNA), the Cost of a Diverse Diet (CoDD), and the Nutritional Consumer Price Index (NPI), were developed through the IANDA project 2015-2017, funded by UKAid.

IANDA researchers secured an $800,000 follow-on grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and UKAid, renamed to incorporate an additional geographic region: Changing Access to Nutritious Diets in Africa and South Asia (CANDASA) 2018-2020. In CANDASA, the methodology for CoNA, CoRD, and NPI was refined through applying them to different country contexts, most notably applying CoNA and CoRD across countries for the UN State of Food Security and Nutrition 2020 report (SOFI 2020).

The Food Prices for Nutrition (FPN) project is a four-year, $3 million effort (2020-2024) funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and UKAid, led at Tufts in collaboration with the World Bank and IFPRI. The project seeks to scale up the use of the metrics so that they become a routine part of monitoring and input into decision-making. Training materials will be produced to enable governments, international agencies, and others to calculate them in a standardised way.

In 2020, CANDASA produced a Technical Background Paper for The UN State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI). Going forward, the Food Prices for Nutrition project will continue to work on data and methods for updating the cost of an energy sufficient diet (CoCA), a nutrient adequate diet (CoNA), and a Healthy Diet (CoRD).

Ongoing partnerships

IANDA researchers collaborated with WFP, Save the Children, and LSHTM to draft a summary brief of all available cost-of-diet indicators, including IANDA indicators as well as those previously developed, such as Cost of the Diet (CoD) and Optifood.

The Food Prices for Nutrition project is now in close collaboration with the WFP Fill the Nutrient Gap programme to use the metrics at country level.

The metrics were used in a CGIAR/A4NH workshop on Food Environments.

The World Bank Group used the CoRD and NPI indicators for a report and presentation on food and nutrition in the South Asia Region. They are collaborating the expansion of publications and uptake within the Food Prices for Nutrition Project.

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