



ATSAF - CGIAR++ Junior Scientists Program Final Report

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**Title: Factors influencing the implementation of a nutrition education project
using the CHP cascade model in Kisumu, Kenya**

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My exciting journey started in May 2023 when I received the positive answer from ATSAF that they would support me during my stay abroad. Just 3 weeks after I had received the grant, I had already left the country with my next destination – Nairobi, Kenya. I'm incredible lucky that The Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT offered me the opportunity to get insights into the organization and to join a nutrition education project which enabled me to collect data for my master thesis. An extra thank you goes to Dr. Irmgard Jordan who always supported me especially during my applications and prepared everything for my arrival at the office.

During my last three weeks in Germany, I organized my insurances, VISA, an AirBnB, said goodbye to my friends and family and packed my backpack for the next 6 months.

I spent my first days in the office and felt really welcomed by the Alliance staff. I got to know the team and their tasks. I also introduced myself to a lot of people not only from the Alliance but also from other CGIAR++ organizations which are located at the same compound as the Alliance. I attended a lot of meetings with Consolata Musita (PhD candidate from "HealthyFoodAfrica") and started reading a lot to get to know the project and worked my way into the subject. I had to get an overview about what had already been done, where we are standing and what the further steps are. In addition, I needed to see where my support comes in and where my role is. The next few days and weeks I worked on my proposal so that I would know exactly what I was doing, how I wanted to collect my data and what my research question and my objectives would be. After the team and I agreed on the topic and the research question for my thesis the question came up which method I want to use to respond to my objectives and my research question. So, I read a lot of literature, developed different data collecting tools and worked on perfecting my proposal with the helpful feedback from my colleagues.

Simultaneously, I was also able to join other group meetings and presentations to get insights about ongoing projects which was very interesting to me.

The project I'm attached to is an agri-nutrition education research project and health promotion project in Kisumu in Western Kenya. It is carried out within Food System Labs (FSL) of the "HealthyFoodAfrica" (HFA) project. The FSL in Kisumu aims to promote dietary diversity among families, with a focus on children aged 6-23 months and women of reproductive age (WRA). It especially centers on the importance of consuming African Leafy Vegetables (ALVs) and fish. The project will be implemented in four urban informal settlements in Kisumu City. The interventions include nutrition education, the implementation of kitchen gardens and

aquaponics. Community Health Promoters (CHPs) will be the disseminators of nutrition information after being trained on different nutrition topics by the research team. There will be individual household meetings to identify suitable beneficiaries. After that there will be five different group sessions with topics about appropriate complementary feeding, dietary diversity, food safety, and food preparation. To enhance skills, participatory cooking demonstrations will also be conducted with a focus on preparation of nutritious complementary foods and family foods. In addition to the group sessions there will be follow up visits on sampled individual households to clarify any questions if necessary and assess adoption of desired behavior, based on what was learnt during group sessions. Furthermore, the CHPs will provide the families with flyers or additional info material if needed.

In my master's thesis with the title: "Factors influencing the implementation of a nutrition education project using the CHP cascade model in Kisumu, Kenya" I will generate evidence-based data through qualitative and quantitative monitoring and process evaluation which allows me to identify factors which are influencing the implementation of a nutrition education intervention using the CHP Cascade Model in Kisumu, Kenya. With the monitoring and process evaluation I would like to see if the project was implemented as intended and how success was achieved.

For the data collection we worked on forms where CHPs will capture information about the household visits and the group sessions conducted. In addition, we worked on interview guidelines to supplement quantitative data with qualitative data to gain insights about the perception of CHPs who were working closely with the beneficiaries throughout the project. I also worked on a mobilization tool to capture the progress during mobilization phase.

Meanwhile we prepared ourselves for the CHP trainings in Kisumu as the first step of the project was to make sure that the CHPs have adequate knowledge about nutrition content and are familiar with the process and the steps of the project. Unfortunately, we had to deal with a lot of delays leading to a postponed start of the project and me spending the first 7 weeks in Nairobi. That enabled me to plan my intentions well. Also, we had more time to plan the training in Kisumu and developed all the materials needed for that.

After the first 2 months in the office, I was happy to finally go to Kisumu to have my first trip to the field. We had almost four weeks of training for the CHPs ahead of us and had to deal with "maandamano" which is the Swahili term for protests. The opposition leader, who is from

Kisumu, called for protests which lead to more delays because we were not able to leave the house and work in the urban informal settlement. To be honest, hearing how the police threw tear gas was truly terrifying. Nevertheless, we were able to finish the trainings successfully and worked with 118 motivated CHPs.



Figure 1: Training in Kisumu with CHPs

The training in Kisumu was a true highlight during my stay in Kenya to get authentic insights in the life in an urban informal settlement and to get in touch with friendly locals. During the training we did not only teach about nutrition and focused on topics like child nutrition, nutrition during pregnancy and breastfeeding, dietary diversity, and food groups, we also tried to enhance the practical skills and did cooking demonstrations. We improved traditional recipes to increase the nutritional value and invited community members to try and rate the recipes.



Figure 2: Children trying improved traditional recipes

After the training we had to catch up on a lot of work in Nairobi. I wrote a report about the training and also took some free days to get to know the country and to travel a little bit. Soon I planned my next trip to Kisumu to see the CHPs working. I managed to join some household visits and group sessions and quickly noticed that the CHPs are doing a great job. It made me happy to see how the CHPs put their gained knowledge and skills into practice.



Figure 3: Group session conducted by a CHP

During the second field trip, I was already able to collect some of the filled forms I will use for my master's thesis. Furthermore, I joined the home garden activity and saw how the ambassadors set up a kitchen garden in the demo site. I could notice the people's excitement about the garden. Furthermore, I had a lot of conversations with the CHPs in Kisumu which strengthened my opinion on having interviews with them as a lot of very interesting points came up in those dialogues.

Back in Nairobi I worked on the strategy for doing the in-depth interviews and prepared everything for my last stay in Kisumu. Additionally, I already started with data entry of the forms I had already collected. I noticed some errors, reached out to the CHPs again and clarified a few things.

The last stay in Kisumu was a few days before my flight back to Germany. I was happy to meet all those CHPs again for the last time and conducted twelve in-depth interviews. The interview was about their thoughts on the HFA project and to gain some insights into their work. Through the interviews I also had a clearer picture on how the community sees the program. I was able to learn a lot from the CHPs and was open for criticism, constructive feedback, and improvements for future projects. The interviews also enabled me to gain experiences in the field of qualitative data collection.

Leaving the country gave me mixed feelings but I was happy to see my family and friends. I still have a lot of work to do and hope to finish my degree next year. I will continue with the data entry for my master's thesis (almost 3000 forms are still missing), with transcribing and analyzing the interviews and putting all the data together for writing my thesis.

I really want to thank ATSAF for making the stay possible, for the staff at the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT in Nairobi for welcoming and supporting me and my friends and family who I can always rely on and who support me in every situation possible. Even if we are more than 6000 km apart.