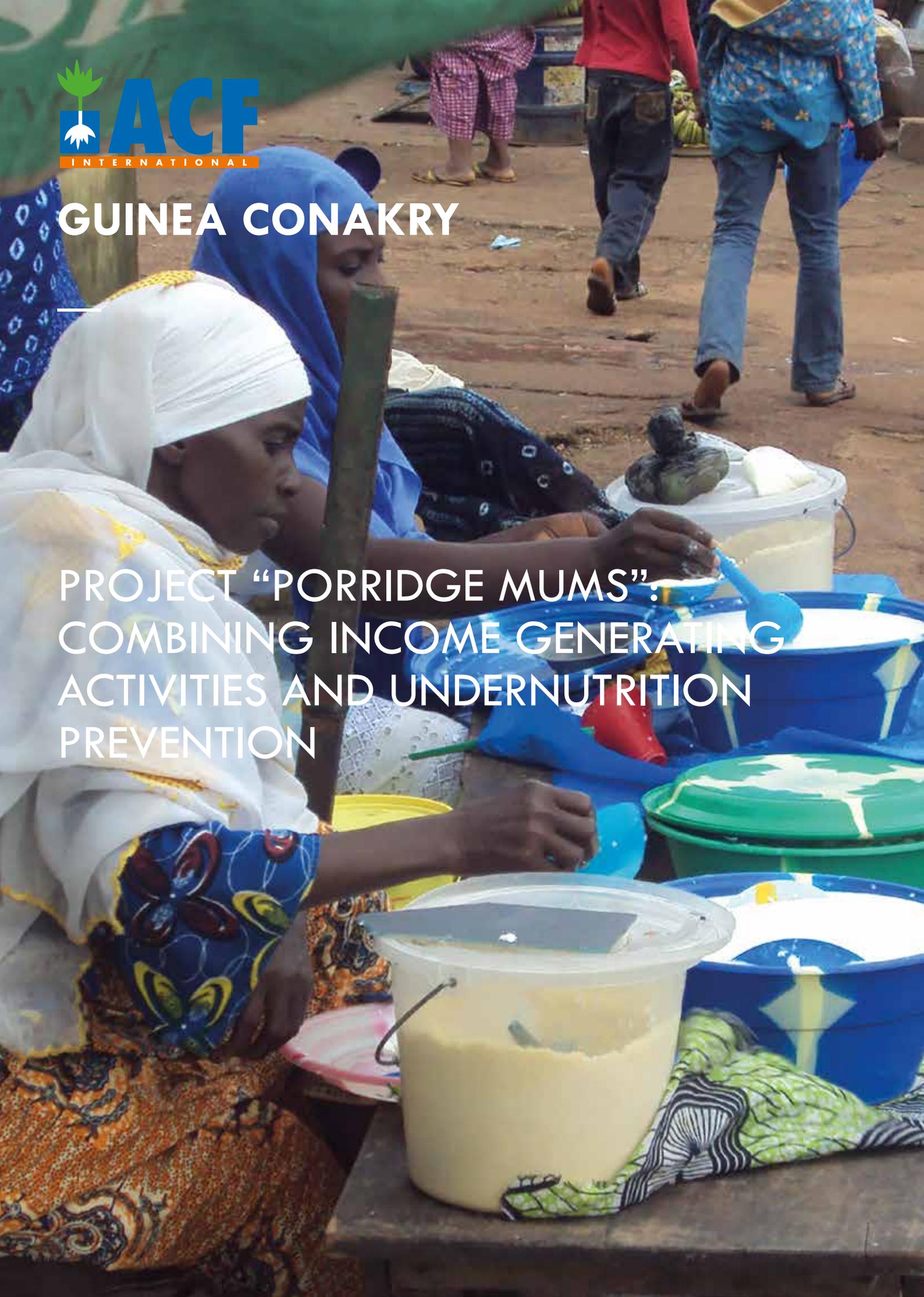




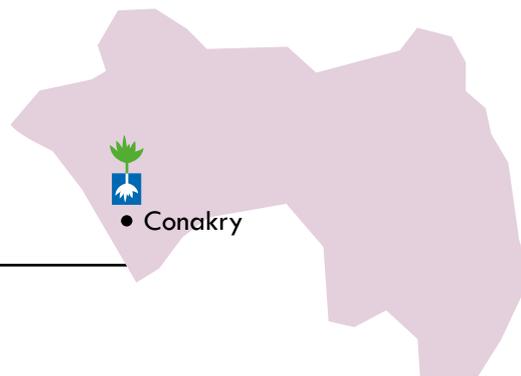
# GUINEA CONAKRY

PROJECT “PORRIDGE MUMS”:  
COMBINING INCOME GENERATING  
ACTIVITIES AND UNDERNUTRITION  
PREVENTION



In response to high acute malnutrition rate, ACF Spain with PRIDE and KDF partners have set up a support program for women who produce and sell nutritious foods (also called “Porridge Mums”) in urban communes and Matoto Ratoma (Conakry). By supporting these income-generating activities, ACF’s goal is to contribute to poverty reduction and malnutrition prevention in a sustainable way with local solutions.





## Humanitarian context

### Background

Despite its vast agricultural, fishing and mining potential, Guinea remains a poor country (172nd in the world rankings HDI) and the political and economic decline situation since 2008 has led to a sharp deterioration of the households food situation. A survey by the World Food Programme (WFP) conducted in 2009 in Conakry shows that 6.4% of the capital residents are food insecure. Finally, the national survey (MICS / UNICEF) of January 2008 on the nutritional status of children under 5 years estimated acute malnutrition at 8.3%, chronic malnutrition at 40% and underweight at 20.8%.

Since 2008, ACF Spain (ACF-E) is overseeing a malnutrition treatment program by supporting five health centers integrated in the Matoto in Conakry. Around these health centers and in neighboring markets, local initiatives have been developed. This is the case of “Porridge Mums” who produce and sell nutritious food (mainly for babies and young children), and even though they carry this activity primarily for profit, they are involved, often without being aware of, in the prevention of malnutrition. ACF-E and its partners PRIDE Guinea and KDF support “Porridge Mums” by strengthening their capacity to ensure a sustainable improvement in income and participate, through their action, to malnutrition prevention.

### Assessment

ACF-E rapid investigations showed that “Porridge Mums” activities were seldom structured. From the poorest social strata, these women often work alone and they lack means and knowledge in management, nutrition and hygiene to expand their activity. ACF-E has achieved in April 2010 a survey of knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) of those in charge of children under 5 years old on nutrition, health and hygiene in the Matoto. The results confirm a relatively small knowledge on these subjects. In urban areas (where the population is consuming more than producing food), income (to a sufficient and balanced diet) and nutritional education are the pillars in the fight against malnutrition. ACF-E and its partners have focused their activities on these two pillars.





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## Program overview and rationale

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ACF-E and its local partners PRIDE and KDF have established this 18-month program that aims to:

- 1. Increase the income of «Porridge Mums» from the sale of nutritious foods;**
- 2. Develop their involvement and role in the malnutrition prevention.**

The action is to organize into associations women producing food for children to improve the income of these «Porridge Mums» by strengthening their technical skills and their entrepreneurial and partnership spirit.

Indeed, development support to «Porridge Mums» associations is an important lever to the prevention of child malnutrition. These women are in regular contact with families and can raise good nutritional practices awareness, identify undernourished children and refer them to the appropriate health centers.

### Project partners

ACF-E led the project in partnership with two Guinean NGO, PRIDE Guinea (Integrated Program for Enterprise Development) and Kanya Donse Fanyi (KDF Well Eating Kindia).

Each NGO has brought its expertise to the project, whether for training and nutrition awareness activities for ACF-E, for entrepreneurial and associative techniques for PRIDE Guinea and for processing techniques and local products conservation for KDF.

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## Implementation

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### Selection and targeting of beneficiaries

ACF-E has selected Matoto and Ratoma communes in Conakry to implement its program. This choice is justified by the fact that Ratoma has the most food-insecure individuals and Matoto, most populated municipality of Guinea, which faces pockets of moderate food insecurity<sup>1</sup>. Moreover it is in these two towns that UNICEF has observed the capital highest rate of global acute malnutrition (7.4% in Matoto; 8.5% in Ratoma)<sup>2</sup>.

**Women supported by the program were 300, divided into fifteen groups.**

The direct beneficiaries are women from vulnerable households who are engaged in the porridge production for children or in the food transformation of highly nutritional value. Outside the «Porridge Mums», the program includes the mothers of children in rehabilitation in health centers who were sensitized of nutrition and trained to prepare baby food. Similarly, were also concerned associations or groups of existing women active in the processing of nutritious foods, but unstructured, or others wishing to produce food for children but whose ambitions are limited for reasons of financial resources or technical knowledge.

### Associations' establishment, training in associative life, and registration

Once the women gathered in groups of 20, training in associative life was carried out by PRIDE's team in local languages or French according to women's groups.

Training in associative life, spread over a period of 5 days, relied heavily on pictorial illustration in order to facilitate understanding of all women on the concepts of community life, associations' legal framework, organizations tools basic management etc. After training each association organized general meetings to draw up the statutes, rules of procedure and an action plan, based on the concepts learned in training.

<sup>1</sup> PAM, ESAC 2009.

<sup>2</sup> National Survey of nutritional status and child survival monitor key indicators. UNICEF, May 2008.



### Training for entrepreneurship

Participants in this training series were the most literate women of each group and who were designated by the other members of associations for their ability to retain and convey key concepts. The training in entrepreneurship had for aim to consolidate entrepreneurial spirit of Mums, in order to help them to well-manage their businesses. This series of training consisted of three parts, each with a duration of 5 days:

- **Entrepreneurship:** definition of entrepreneurship concept, the characteristics of a good business idea, the company and the developer, etc.
- **Management:** the targeted individuals were composed of associations' presidents and treasurers as they are responsible for managing accounts.
- **Training in marketing:** strengthening knowledge in terms of advertising methods, products and sales techniques promotion.

### Improved food processing techniques

Different trainings have been implemented with KDF: they associated theoretical and practical aspects, and facilitated experience exchange, with the aim to teach "Mums" to prepare enriched porridge using local produce (rice and cowpea). Topics have been chosen following the preliminary assessment, based on both group discussions with women beneficiaries and knowledge questions about the nutritional value of food:

- Porridge preparation for children over 6 months;
- Porridge preparation to family and commercial purposes;
- Drying and storage of lumps of rice, millet or corn;
- Cowpea cakes manufacture;
- Improved yogurt.

During training, it was observed that despite great skills for porridge preparation and food processing that the associations had they were not used to measure and mix ingredients.

Women have received practical lessons on porridge enrichment from the leaves of Moringa; the consortium has also tested some processing methods useful to women beneficiaries, both for their food supply base and for income diversification:

- *Drying and storage of cassava leaves, sweet potatoes and sobon;*
- *Drying and conservation of millet, maize and rice lumps: they represent an important raw material for the porridge preparation and allow "Mums" to store important quantities rather than relying on the mill every day;*
- *Jams: their cooking allows women to avoid wastage of fruits during the period of abundance and extend the time of consumption of fruits out of season.*

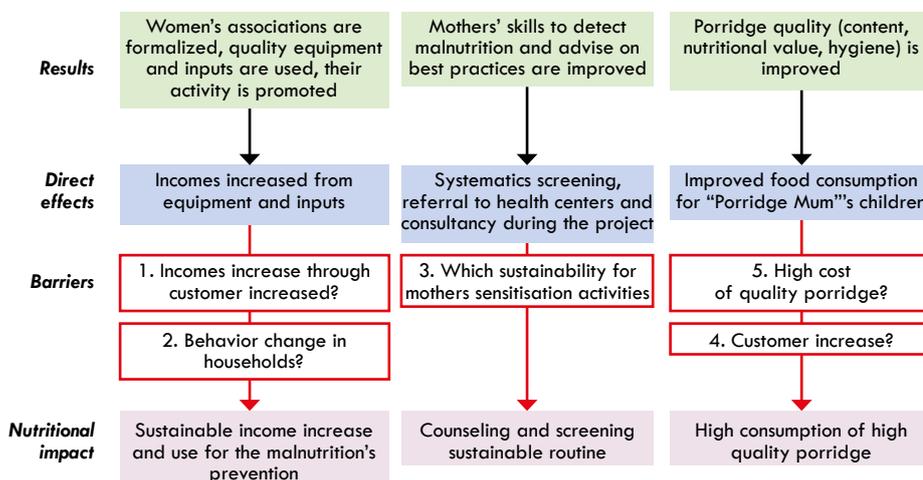
### Training "Mums" on the bases of malnutrition

The section on nutrition concepts addressed the following topics:

- Food Groups;
- Malnutrition;
- Breastfeeding;
- Diarrhoeal diseases.

In the part about screening, the session was essentially practical and focused on the mid-upper-arm-circumference measurement (MUAC), the deferral and the results' interpretation.

Figure 1 : Program theory of "Porridge Mums" project



### Needs Assessment and material endowments

These grants were intended to allow associations to establish a common property management, reduce costs and work to launch other activities to provide additional sources of income and improve their time management. They were carried out in 3 stages:

1/ The first kit unconditioned, consisting mainly of raw materials for porridge, was delivered to each association: rice, millet, corn, sugar, milk powder, plastic bucket and apron. The objective of this first concrete support was to encourage women to participate actively in the program (attendance at training).

2/ The second material support was made later in the project, after the application of lessons learned during the training, in order to support

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## Programme impact

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the launch of associations collective activities. This support was conditional on both upstream (minimum conditions in order to obtain the kit) and downstream (signing of an agreement at the association level with the commitments of good management). It was mainly food and preparation materials, the content were determined by the women beneficiaries.

3/ In parallel of activities and performances' monitoring, last donations were based on needs analysis aimed at preparing associations empowerment. These donations were given on:

- *Dryers: for drying without contamination millet, maize, rice lumps and leafy vegetables;*
- *Additional food protection umbrellas during sales activities;*
- *Tables for associations which sell milk to protect food for sale;*
- *Grain mills: established and made available to the beneficiaries ( porridge saleswomen) to facilitate grain milling. For beneficiaries, the mills are the only new Income Generating Activity (IGA). Around mills management committees are formed and trained in the use and maintenance of the asset.*

### Associations' promotion activities

Three specific activities were undertaken to promote associations:

- **Days "open doors" in Conakry**  
Considered as small fairs products exhibition, open days were focused on three main activities: associations and products presentation, food tasting, product distribution, and mass awareness through small plays, to educate the public on topics such as breastfeeding, nutrition and weaning.
- **Leaflets presentation of each association**
- **International Fair of 9 to 15 April 2012 in Conakry**

The consortium, through KDF, has involved associations in the 3rd International Fair 2012 held in *Guinea Palais du Peuple*. A booth was occupied by women to expose their food. They took the opportunity to get known by distributing leaflets to different customers and traders.

### Outreach and undernutrition screening

To animate awareness sessions, women have used the image box at their disposal (developed by ACF-E and approved by the Ministry of Health). After being equipped, women beneficiaries were not only carried out malnutrition awareness activities to customers but also referenced malnourished children to health facilities.

The implementation of screening activities and SEO by beneficiaries need some prerequisites including contact and awareness of health facilities so that "Mums" associations are recognized as full-fledged actors of active screening of malnutrition. Under the project, 5.179 children were measured and 9 children suffering from severe acute undernutrition, 175 suffering from moderate acute undernutrition and 196 children at risk were screened.

A follow-up survey conducted to measure activities' effects on the beneficiaries and to ensure the achievement of project indicators shows that the socio-economic impact of the project on women beneficiaries' family is positive.

An increase in the income of most women was found: incomes increased from 15,000 FGN<sup>3</sup> (about 1.6 euros) to 21,600 FGN (about 2.3 euros) per woman per day, that is to say an estimated 40% increase. These incomes were used largely to meet the family's needs, such as food, education and clothing, items of expenditure which women contribute largely through the activities they develop.

87% of the women beneficiaries report that there have been changes in their diet. Greater consumption of fruits (especially after meals), diversification of food diet enrichment of household's recipes. 92% of beneficiary households have a diet deemed "acceptable", rating based on the Food Consumption score greater than 38.5 for 7 food 4 groups .

The three food hygiene basic measures (cleaning and disinfection of equipment cleaning, hand washing with soap at critical moments during the preparation and sale, and the status of containers selling products) are respected by 91% of the women.

Other indicators showed an improvement of entrepreneurial skills along the lines of the target groups empowerment: early in the project, only one association could keep a cash book without knowing measure production costs and benefits; 30% of women beneficiaries are now able to manage cash and all associations have at least 15 members who know how to evaluate production costs and profits for their business.

This also leads to the conclusion that women have improved their ability to manage the household, both in economic terms and in terms of knowledge and practices.

To achieve this, a consortium has been established whose value was the technical complementarity of each of the three partners in the communication system, local support as well as mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating implementation. Positive synergies have been created throughout the project and the institutional capacities of each partner are seen improved.

<sup>3</sup> FGC : Guinean Francs

<sup>4</sup> The Food Consumption Score (FCS) tool serves as a proxy of household dietary adequacy. The FCS is a composite indicator measuring 3 separate elements: 1) dietary intake, 2) food frequency – the number of days on which a particular food group is consumed over the reference period, and 3) the relative nutrient quality of the different food groups.



## Lessons learned and recommendations

However, the nutritional effect of the project is rather limited to beneficiaries' direct family members: 67% of the beneficiaries say enrich their porridge for family consumption but only 47% of beneficiaries are doing it for the sale. Women have improved their knowledge and applied the lessons learned primarily within their own family: food diversification, porridge improvement, food and personal hygiene are the most mentioned aspects.

Finally, the screening activity has encountered a number of difficulties, especially related to:

- Illiteracy of the beneficiaries;
- Other multiple occupations of women in their sales and home management;
- The lack of legitimacy that some women were facing in their community;
- The integration difficulty of the community screening system in some facilities

- To improve the impact of this type of intervention, it is necessary to work more on the integration of direct beneficiaries (saleswomen) and indirect (their clients) in malnutrition prevention both within the family and the community.
- It is recommended to review and refine the beneficiaries' identification methodology of malnutrition's causes. To do this it is advisable to make a joint effort between the nutrition teams and food security in order to better understand the characteristics of "Mums" meeting the desired nutritional profile and then decide if and how this category can be included in "Porridge Mums" IGA strategy.
- To improve awareness of customer and families living in "Mums" district of residence or sell, it must be planned from the beginning of the procedure how to identify and monitor throughout the project a group of clients to see what type of change may occur at the end of the project, on the food and nutrition situation of clients' children. External factors must be taken into account and isolated when possible.
- It is also necessary to better involve local health facilities in the identification of potential beneficiaries who meet the required profile of malnutrition. It's also important to consider the possibility of including community volunteers in the IGA program.
- Finally, being labeled as "Porridge Mum" may be considered against-productive because they do not allow women to be recognized as other food vendors. Furthermore, the term "Porridge Mum" may make it difficult to men to participate in associations.

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## For more detailed information, please refer to:

- Final external evaluation report of the project "Programme d'appui aux activités génératrices de revenus des associations féminines de Conakry" - in French only
- Baseline survey Report (August 2011) and Endline survey report (May 2012) - in French only
- Fact sheet project description: "Porridge Mums" in Guinea-Conakry





This document is part of a series of case studies of ACF Food Security and Livelihoods interventions aimed at reducing and/or preventing undernutrition. These case studies are developed by the ACF Working Group “Aligning Food security with Nutrition” in order to share experiences and lessons learned on the subject.

All the existing case studies can be downloaded in English and in French here:  
<http://www.actioncontrelafaim.org/fr/content/aligning-casestudies>

The objective of the Working Group “Aligning Food security with Nutrition” is to promote and strengthen nutrition sensitive food security interventions within ACF and partner organizations. The Working Group supports these operations by collecting and disseminating lessons learned, conducting research, developing tools and guides, and capacity building.

For more information on the “Aligning” approach, refer to the ACF manual: *Maximizing the nutritional impact of food security and livelihoods interventions. A handbook for field workers.* <http://www.actioncontrelafaim.org/fr/content/maximising>

