Background

Poor diets are now recognized as one of the top global risk factors for disease, responsible for 10 percent of the world's attributable disease burden[1] yet data on diets are lacking for many low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). Further, many LMICs continue to face double and triple burdens with undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, and over-nutrition (reflected in overweight and obesity) evident within countries, communities, households, and individuals. The prevalence of cardiometabolic risk factors and diseases has risen accordingly in LMICs. Yet in addition to lack of basic data on diets, we also lack a sufficient set of diet-related metrics for capturing and effectively communicating these complex nutrition challenges in LMICs.

In 2016, the Global Panel on Agriculture and Food Systems for Nutrition launched a call to action for scientists, governments, and donors around the world to help transform the global food system to improve the quality of diets for all.[2] To help move the agenda forward, Haddad et al (2016)[3] proposed priorities for the global community, including: 1) increasing the availability of high quality data on dietary intake; 2) defining and reaching agreement on what constitutes a healthy diet; and 3) developing additional metrics. To help address these gaps, FHI 360, with funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, has recently established a Center for Dietary Assessment - *Intake*.

Objectives

Intake aims to contribute to improving nutrition for vulnerable populations in LMICs, through increasing the availability, quality, comparability, and use of dietary data and metrics. We hope that the availability of valid, concise, and effective diet-related metrics, along with *Intake* technical assistance for collecting, analyzing, and using dietary intake data, can play an important role in helping actors in LMICs to develop evidence-based nutrition and agriculture policies and programs to ensure high-quality diets for all.

Intake's primary objectives during the life of the current grant (November 2016-January 2021) are to:

- Build demand for the need for dietary data
- Provide flexible on-demand technical assistance to governments, survey implementers, and civil society organizations for collecting, analyzing, and using dietary intake data for evidence-based decision-making in LMICs;
- Support research to simplify and advance dietary assessment methods;
- Document best practices in dietary data collection, and share resources;
- Develop metrics and tools to help track progress in achieving healthy diets; and
- Convene partners for shared learning related to the collection, analysis and use of dietary data.

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[1] GBD 2016 Risk Factors Collaborators. Global, regional, and national comparative risk assessment of 84 behavioural, environmental and occupational, and metabolic risks or clusters of risks, 1990-2016: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2016. *Lancet*. 2017; 390 (10100): 1345-1422.

[2] Global Panel on Agriculture and Food Systems for Nutrition. 2016. Food systems and diets: Racing the challenges of the 21st century. London, UK.

[3] Haddad L, Hawkes C, Webb P, Thomas S, Beddington J, Waage J, Flynn D. A new global research agenda for food. *Nature*. 2016; 540 (7631): 30-32.

Measuring Diets for Health

*Intake***'s** long-term objective is to be widely recognized for providing technically excellent, flexible, and pragmatic solutions to help meet needs for actionable information on diets.

Approach

To achieve these objectives, *Intake* will:

- Collaborate with partners in country and at the global level;
- Innovate to help translate dietary data to action;
- Share innovations and new tools widely and freely;
- Convene partners and stakeholders to advance shared learning on measuring food intake; and
- Fill gaps and support partners by providing tailored and flexible technical assistance.

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