

Current Trends in the Gender Gap in Nutrition in Bombali Shebora Chiefdom Northern, Sierra Leone.

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ABSTRACT

The study generally aims at examining the current trends in the gender gap in nutrition and exploring ways of closing the gaps in Bombali Shebora Chiefdom, Northern Sierra Leone. The specific objectives are focused on the food types people consume in the study area, the factors that influence food choices in the chiefdom; the traditional trends of nutrition in terms of gender the feeding habits, and current trends in the gender gap in nutrition in the chiefdom, the challenges faced in an effort to bridge the gender gap in nutrition and recommendations on healthy eating habits to facilitate the closure of the gender gap in nutrition. These articles have clearly shown, statement of the problem research question. justification of the study, geographical area of the study and research methodology of the study including research design, population and sample, sources of data collection, methods, and area of study order to achieve the goals of this research, questionnaire were administered to some of the sample respondents. the presentation of data and discussion of findings in accordance with research objectives of the study and summary and recommendation for Nutrition directorate and others. Non-Governmental dealing with nutrition.

INTRODUCTION

Current trends in the gender gap in nutrition food trends are described as 'widespread changes in food preferences. such trends prove to be long-lasting. A food trend can also be regarded as something like healthy eating. Eating balanced diet which contains all essential nutrients in their right proportions, such diet should contain carbohydrate, fat and oils, proteins, mineral salts, vitamins and water. There have been traditional trends of nutrition that have been either useful or harmful to community people. Such trends are cultural modes or

patterns of food consumption. There were, and still are, there were, and still are, differences in the food consumption patterns among men and women in the same communities. Para group in Sierra Leone there have been past and current trends of food consumption or nutrition. Of course it is believed that the main foodstuffs generally consumed or eaten in those days are still eaten today. Those food stuff included rice, cassava, coco yam, potato, maize or corn, millet, yam and banana from crop produce. Meat from bush animals, fish and poultry were among the normally consumed items. It is evident in the culture and traditional practices of all the sixteen ethnic groups of Sierra Leone that there are gender differences and discriminatory practices between men and women and among women of different ages and statuses in communities. Gender stereotypes are upheld in communities especially among the highly illiterate populations in rural settings. There are prescribed eating habits and There are prescribed eating habits and food preferences or choices set aside for various categories of people- pregnant women, lactating mothers, members of secrete traditional societies, under five children, infants, etc. There are taboos that people hold in high esteem, especially in terms of what to eat and what not to eat; who to eat what; where and when to eat what. All of these have gender to eat what; where and when to eat what. All of these have gender implications involving discrimination leading to the creation of gaps in the nutrition aspect.

Since the study aims at examining the current trends in the gender gap in nutrition a number of limitations to the study were encountered. There existed limited local literature on the topic. The busy schedules of some key respondents made the researchers pay several visits to offices while retrieving questionnaires and conducting interviews

The mode of nutrition among people in Sierra Leone varies from one ethnic group to another. The changes in the food types preferred in a period of time always depended on the season and crop produce available. What men and women feed on in such circumstances depend, to a large extent, on what the community generally regards as suitable for men and women, pregnant women and lactating mothers. Rice has always been the staple food for the majority of Sierra Leoneans. Next to rice are cassava and potatoes. It is believed among the Themne, Limba, Loko, and other tribes in the District that are pregnant women. lactating mothers should not eat eggs or chicken soup which are very nutritious because of taboos and traditional believes that their children will get malnourished and have borne head when they are born. When women prepared family food with whatever kind of meat the best parts are reserved for men or husbands and boys and they believe they have stronger sex than women, this also accounts for discrimination and deprivation of females in accessing nutritious

foodstuffs as men. These are some of the problems responsible for the gender gap in nutrition that has always existed in communities of the study area. Global development issues have unveiled huge gaps in nutrition and other spheres. This led to the formulation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) in the year 2,000. The topic of research has bearing on two of these: MDG1 – Eradicate Extreme Poverty and hunger and MDG3: promote gender equality and women’s empowerment

In addition to culture and traditions been contributors to the creation of the gender gaps in all sectors of life poverty is also a catalyst. The UN’s millennium development goals one and three have born to the topic of research As the trends in poverty vary by region in Sierra Leone so does the gender gap in nutrition. The country’s successive progress reports of the MDGs throw light on the debate. It is stated in the 2004 Sierra Leone integrated survey (SLIHs, 2004) that 70 percent of the population is poor (live on less than US\$ 1 per day). A survey A survey conducted in 2007, using the CWIQ approach indicated a fall in poverty to about 60%. According to the 2010 MDG progress report (P13) the PRSP 2 estimate was 66% (47% in urban areas and 79 in rural areas. That is rural areas have the largest proportion of the poor (73% and 61%. It is important to note that the state of poverty of a people has a great influence on the nutritional partners and trends. This is because access to foodstuff is highly dependent

. SOME DIETARY NEEDS OF SPECIAL GROUPS OF PEOPLE

Humans require certain types of food at different stages of their lives. This is because what people eat affects their mental and physical growth. This can be seen in many cultures of the world and it is the basis for the emergence of taboos and gender stereotypes in communities.

ADOLESCENTS-

These require more food than adults. Give extra bodybuilding and energy-giving foods to males. Give foods rich in iron and vitamins to both males and females and more so to females. ‘ ’According to the authors, nutritional deficiencies arise when females skip meals. ‘ ’ youths and young adults should be taught about nutrition to enable them to appreciate the need for correct nutrition.

EXPECTANT AND NURSING MOTHERS –

Pregnant Women and lactating mothers highly need plenty of bodybuilding and energy-giving foods. Therefore, they should be provided with meals containing iron and vitamin substances. These should be balanced and in the correct quantities.

THE ELDERLY –

The aged or elderly require fewer calories than younger people as they {the aged} expend less energy. They also need far less starchy and fatty foods than younger ones. They need cellulose foodstuffs in good quantities to enhance their bowel movements. They also need vitamins and minerals to keep their bodies functioning orderly. “There foods should be soft and easily digestible and served regularly in small quantities.

It is important to note and re-echo that gender stereotypes are upheld in communities, especially among the highly illiterate populations in rural settings. There are prescribed eating habits and food preferences or choices set aside for various categories of people-pregnant women, lactating mothers, members of secrete traditional societies, under five children, infants, etc.

There are taboos that people hold in high esteem, especially in terms of what to eat and what not to eat; who to eat what; where and when to eat what. All of these have gender implications involving discrimination leading to the creation of gaps in the nutrition aspect-“Understanding Malnutrition and Health Choices in Sierra Leone” There have been trends or changes in the intake of food by living organisms, especially among humans. Culturally, people believed that food was taken merely to fill stomachs and sustain lives. According to the Wikipidia, food trends are described as “widespread changes in food preferences.” Some such trends prove to be long-lasting. A food trend can also be regarded as something like healthy eating. There have been traditional trends of nutrition that have been either useful or harmful to community people. Such trends are cultural modes or patterns of food consumption.

AIM OF THE STUDY

The study aims to examine the current trends in gender gap in nutrition and explore ways of closing the gap in Bombali District and Sierra Leone by extension.

To identify the factors that used to influence food choices in the

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To find out the food types people normally consume in communities of Bombali Shebora chiefdom?
- To identify the factors that used to influence food choices in the chiefdom.
- To map out the traditional trends of nutrition in terms of gender in Bombali Shebora chiefdom.
- To explore the feeding habits of the people and discover the current trends in the gender gap in nutrition in the chiefdom

To proffer recommendations for eating habits that will close the gender gap in nutrition

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What foodstuffs people normally consume in communities of Bombali Shebora Chiefdom?
- What factors influence food choices in the chiefdom?
- What are the traditional trends of nutrition in terms of gender in Bombali Shebora Chiefdom?
- What are the feeding habits and current trends in the gender gap in nutrition in the chiefdom?

METHODOLOGY

Bombali is a district in the Northern Province of Sierra Leone. Its **capital and largest city is Makeni**, which is also the largest city in the north. The district of Bombali occupies a total area of 7,985 km² (3,083 sq mi) and comprises thirteen chiefdom

The population of Bombali District is ethnically diverse, although the [Temne](#) and [Limba](#) form the largest ethnic groups. The population of Bombali District is predominantly [Muslim](#), though with a large [Christian](#) minority. The sample was selected randomly and purposively. The random technique gave every member equal opportunity and was used to guide the selection of appropriate samples to ensure that the generalization of sample findings is representative of the population. The other technique used was purposive sampling as Bryman, (2008) pointed out that it is used to select subjects based on their relationship with

the research questions. This technique was employed to identify key respondents in the various categories of people in the study area. Considering the gender sensitivity, gender equality, and equity aspects implicated in the study equal numbers of males

METHOD OF DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS:

The quantifiable data from the questionnaire was analysed statistically using tables with frequencies and percentages while the qualitative data from the interview was analysed qualitatively using simple description or narration. That is data collected from the interview and questionnaire we represented and analysed separately.

Table 3: Sexes of respondents based on questionnaire and interview

SAMPLE SIZE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUES:

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Considering the gender sensitivity, gender equality, and equity aspects implicated in the study equal numbers of male (20) and Female (20) respondents were selected

THE PERSON-TO-PERSON INTERVIEW:

All the respondents for this tool were selected as key informants. A total of eighteen respondents were randomly selected and interviewed. Such interviews enabled interviewers get in-depth information on the issue as interviewees spoke for themselves and probing questions were further asked by the interviewers.

RESULT AND DISCUSION

Table 1: Categories and number of participants:

CATEGORIES	PARTICIPANTS		
	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Pregnant Women	-	4	4
Lactating Mothers	-	4	4
Pregnant Women	-	4	4
Medical Personnel's	4	4	8
Soweis (Female Traditional Societal Heads)	-	4	4
Males Traditional Societal Headers	4	-	4

The total sample of forty (40) was allocated to the two tools of questionnaire and person-to-person interview as shown in

Source : Field Research

Table 2: Sexes of respondents based on questionnaire and interview

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Males	20	50
Females	20	50
Total	40	100

Source: field data

Table 2 shows that all the males (20) and females (20) participants selected for the collection process participated in full. twenty-eight (28) interviewees and twelve respondents to the questionnaire tool, fully participated. A total of 50% male and female 50% female participants.

Figure 1 Type of food consume in shebora communities , Bombali

DISTRICT

The following food are consumed in these communities: rice, cassava, potato, groundnut, sorghum, oranges, mango, banana. Bush yam, pumpkin, rap on (carved out of the cortex of palm trees), me at, cassava, potatoes yam millet pineapple, salt, sugar, kola nuts, lime; these were foods the inhabitants consumed in various occasions of their social lives. This included home meals, food for work sessions, secrete society ceremonies, marriages, burial ceremonies, feeding visiting personnel from government or other feeding pregnant and lactating women, babies, infants and children. A combination of two, three or more of these food items were used predominantly by women in the preparation of meals. In addition to consuming those traditionally accepted foodstuffs stated above following are those that are of great demand: imported foods like butter, tinned milk, bread, mayonnaise, bulger, vegetables, cheese vitamins

FIGURE 11 FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE FOOD CHOICES IN SEBORA COMMUNITIES

. It was discovered, that, most of the foods consumed in this communities in those days are still eaten today. Secondly the influx of modern or genetically modified foodstuffs in the market is affecting people's eating habits in the communities. Respondents highlighted two debatable categories of foodstuffs now a day consumed in the communities-that is cultural and modern. The following are the factors that influence the choices of food taken in by different categories of community people at various stages and occasion in their lives:

ILL HEALTH -When people were sick they chose to eat some foods that are not of nutritional value, they eat food according to their taste

RELIGION -In sierra Leone Muslims did not eat pork as a practice. Christians did not eat food offered as sacrifice to the gods or spirits.

TRADITIONAL OR SECRETE SOCIETIES: Some leading members of the PORO and BPND secret societies do not normally eat some foodstuffs like "TA SOR"

Traditional trends of nutrition refer to changes in the food intake among people according to their cultural practices whatever changes that occurred affected both males and female as

they relate in the communities. In the past those changes in food consumption went along with differences between the gender gap in nutrition. According to the respondents the traditional changes in the gender gap in nutrition are seen in the following the best parts of food was served to men during meals. The largest part or quantity of the family food was reserved for boys and men. During farm work food prepared for worker was all served to the men while the girls and women ate the left overs or remnants after wards it was commonly held by the respondents that the taboos and cultural practices in terms of food intake by men and women in the community were up held or main trained in the communities.

FIGURE 111 CURRENT TRENDS IN NUTRITION OR FEEDING HABITS OF THE PEOPLE

The current or changes in the feeding habits of people in Bombali Seboria chiefdom are closely linked with the current factors that influence food choices in the chiefdom these factors are foreign handouts; education or training; medical advices; and new crop breeds. the introduction of foreign foodstuffs in the nutrition system of the community people has been accompanied by some changes in the existing nutritional systems. Nowadays women make good use of magi in food preparation and its fine taste has made many people grow to love having it in their meals many respondents revealed that a lot of citizens have abandoned drinking palm wine and have adopted beers and other imported beverages like marina, Fanta, coke, sprite and tinned milk. Pieces of Advice from medical practitioners have made many people adjust or changed their dietary pattern. Some community people prefer eating bulgur, corn mill or other import end foodstuffs than our staple foods –rice, cassava or potato. the data collected also revealed that there is a growing affinity and desire for imported foods and this happens especially among the educated people to the communities.

SUMMARY

The male and female respondents chosen were between ages of eighteen (18) and sixty (60). These belonged to the seven categories considered by the researcher to be useful stakeholders on the issue of research, “the gender gap in nutrition” those stakeholders included pregnant women, lactating mother’s other women that are neither pregnant nor lactating, medical personnel, and other men of different social standing. They were able to supply appropriate information that facilitated the preparation of this report

Long ago and nowadays the staple food, rice maintains its prominence over the years. So it is with cassava, potato, corn, sorghum, mango, orange, palm oil, fish, poultry and bush meat and cows and goats. That is, they are almost the same demand as before and now. Many other foodstuffs have become preferences for many people. Some people argued for their food value and others say it is attributed to the taste or palatability they add to meals that implies that not only principal meals are considered but breakfasts and other minor meals like milk on a tea or coffee break, butter on boiled cassava or potato or dry res (cooked rice without sauce). According to data collected from the field meals are not equally shared among males and females in the family or communities. Men are usually at the advantage position. At other times men enjoyed the most nutritious portion of foods The women in this communities believe that the best food should be given to their husbands as they are the broad winner whilst and

CONCLUSION

: The biological determinants (example hunger appetite). Attitudes belief and knowledge about food, Economic determinants of costs, prices, income and commodity availability. Physical determinants like access education, skills and time. Social determinants like culture, meal patterns and psychological determinants moody, stressful or guilty. A critical examination of the above factors revealed that the biological determinants of hunger will limit someone's food choice as a "bigger has no choice. People may also have very little or no knowledge about food type that are balanced diet. food elements. Such a. That is having negative attitudes toward it

If a household head very poor economic status or limited income, such a person buy food that are cheap and are of poor value. If for instance. Women cannot access education facilities then loose the opportunity of reading about some useful foodstuffs or educate themselves on the gender equality and equity issues. There by missing the important knowledge of gender equality.

The data from the field indicated the factors that influence food choices to be ill health, religion, traditional; or secret society, food sacrificed to the spirit or gods; seasonal changes affecting production of various food types; geographical location or environment. This almost dictates the foodstuffs available for which inhabitants have limited options; taboos and poverty or economic status.

As explained in chapter four respondents saw these factors as major causes of food choices that inhibit the exposure of female to equal food consumption chances that will faster the closure of the gender gap in nutrition.

Trends in nutrition are changes that occur in the food intake systems in communities. There are influenced by environmental and cultural phenomena as discussed above. Traditional trends in nutrition imply the changes in food consumption by males and females in the communities as regards their traditions. Such trends occur during wars period or seasons. In rural setting. During these periods certain food stuffs are more available than other and are eaten almost always. Such foodstuffs include ‘kondobela , garri , snails , rapon , palm oil” other whole grains such as roots or tubers’ as part of meals . Other like poultry meat, milk and egg

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HEALTHY FEEDING HABITS TO CLOSE THE GENDER GAP

Respondents made the following recommendations:

1 inculcate healthy eating habits: that is one must make a habit of eating foods that will enable one get a balanced diet.

11 That is endeavouring to eat nourishing foodstuffs quite often. This should be done equally and equitably for the benefit of all members of the family, organization and unit people have the same or common entitlement. There should be no discrimination in sharing or distributing food. If this is done and sob-stained the gender gap in nutrition will certainly be narrowing to closure. the six classes of food must be included in people’s diet. Quite often as the human bodies need to grow the dietary needs of special groups of people be always considered by food providers

111 Training of community people on food processing and preservation must be done. Mass education on the maintenance or avoidance of stereotypes and unnecessary cultural practices to be given in communities and must be given to both males and females.

Special training be given to communities on the factors that can influence food can possibly be eaten to acquire a balanced diet in consideration of the several food items available in any one season. Respondents were of the opinion that the gender gap in nutrition was a human

construct. That is, it was community people that determined what women and men should eat and do not eat; the part and quantum of food item of a meal male eat and female females eat.

They all agreed that there will be no harm if they do most things in common for instance men and women do cook in turns they equally share or eat the best and worst parts of meals. Equal and equitable awareness raising to be given to men and women, boys and girls,

In this way, the gender gap in nutrition is bound to be freely closed or reduced. Family and community diets always include the principal food nutrients of proteins, fats, and oil, carbohydrates, mineral salts, and vitamins.

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