



PHOTO: MARTIN KHARUMBA, SAVE THE CHILDREN

FLAGSHIP 4 | Supporting Policies, Programs, and Enabling Action through Research (SPEAR)

Highlight 2: Stories of Change in Nutrition: A *Global Food Security* Special Issue

Storytelling plays a key role in human development. Throughout history, as stories are handed down, each generation passes knowledge on to the next, and children learn from the successes and mistakes of their parents. Learning from storytelling—experiential learning—can be a powerful tool in many situations. When addressing malnutrition—a complex, multisectoral challenge—learning can be exponentially more powerful when it links evidence like that found in published studies with the stories people tell about their own experiences—with details that allow the listener to make greater connections and remember more easily.

The Stories of Change in Nutrition initiative, developed by Transform Nutrition, responded to the growing demand for experiential learning. The initiative has built a resource base of experiential knowledge by exploring drivers of change in six countries that have succeeded in improving nutrition: Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Odisha in India, Nepal, Senegal, and Zambia. Through interviews and group discussions, researchers drew upon experiences and memories of stakeholders, including policy makers, government officials, representatives from NGOs and the private sector, and those living and working in the communities, to tell structured stories of change in nutrition.

What emerged from story after story was an ingredient list for change: commitment, coherence, accountability, data, leadership, capacity, and finance. While the recipe, like the catalyst for change, varied from place to place, these interlinked factors were present in each success story.

Recognizing the importance of this learning to the body of knowledge on nutrition, *Global Food Security* devoted its June 2017 issue to Stories of Change. The national case studies were published alongside papers looking at quantitative drivers of change, community-level perceptions, and commentaries from stakeholders at the global and national levels.

This innovative initiative—together with a growing number of policy briefs, consultations, and efforts to apply lessons learned in other countries—is shaping the global discussion on how to improve nutrition. The success of Stories of Change demonstrates the need for this type of information and has garnered attention from stakeholders around the world.

“‘Learning by doing’ is important for all of us, sometimes succeeding, sometimes failing,” remarked Stuart Gillespie, a senior research fellow at the International Food Policy Research Institute and project leader for Stories of Change. “But it’s important to remember that learning from someone else’s ‘doing’ is also possible, so long as it’s documented and conveyed. Drawing on that potential is what Stories of Change was all about.” New studies are underway or planned in Viet Nam, Tanzania, Rwanda, Ghana, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, and in several Indian states. The long-term goal is to bring together a living library of experiences in driving success in nutrition from around the world.

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