



Tebes ka?
Imi aseita ho banin nia ko'alia?

Food, Frustrations, and Family Dynamics:

Assessing the use
of film to promote joint
household
decision-making

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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BACKGROUND

Improving women's nutritional status is essential to breaking the intergenerational cycle of undernutrition. A woman's labour load affects her ability to earn income, the time she has available for child and infant care, and the time available to feed and care for herself. Supporting male involvement in household tasks and childcare decreases women's labour burden, allows women increased time for optimal feeding practices, and increases fathers' emotional attachment to their children. In addition, joint decision-making between couples has the potential to increase the consumption of, and allocation of household resources to acquire nutritious foods.

Shifting awareness of gender dynamics in households and improving couple communication and joint decision-making can empower both men and women to contribute to improvements within the household. An existing body of research shows links between mothers' participation in household decision making and associated reductions in child stunting. In a

country like Timor-Leste where almost 50% of children under 5 are stunted, nutrition interventions should specifically support joint household decision-making (HHDM) to reach Sustainable Development Goals 2 and 5: Zero Hunger and Gender Equality.

Reflections on TOMAK's Social Behaviour Change (SBC) strategy with implementing partners in late 2018 revealed a lack of tools for use in community settings that promote HHDM around the allocation of household resources for nutritious foods. In 2019, TOMAK developed a low budget film in collaboration with a local organisation, *Ba Futuru*, which focuses on HHDM, the allocation of household resources for nutritious foods, and the important role of fathers and grandmothers in family nutrition. The Ministry of Health (MoH) was involved throughout the film development process from initial concept and identification of intended audience and key practices, to script development, rehearsals and the design of the assessment to evaluate the impact of the design.

INTRODUCTION

Film

The short video uses a 'reality style' where characters talk to the audience, with built-in provocative discussion questions.¹ The film is intended as a facilitated discussion tool for use within established community groups (e.g. agriculture, nutrition, savings and lending) where members know and feel comfortable with each other.

Key behaviours promoted in the film:

- Husbands initiate conversation with wives on a weekly basis at minimum on allocation of resources for weekly protein purchase
- Husbands/fathers assume some household tasks typically considered mothers' work (washing dishes/clothes etc.)
- Husbands encourage wives to be involved in decision-making around household resources
- Husbands/fathers purchase or encourage the purchase of beans, soy, eggs, fish, and tinned fish²
- Grandmothers encourage joint



Film Synopsis

The story centres around a woman who wants to kill a household chicken to make soup for her and her 8-month old daughter who is recovering from illness. Her mother-in-law disagrees, preferring to eat rice and greens and save the chicken for potential guests and income. Unbeknownst to the mother-in-law, the daughter convinces her husband that he looks tired and should eat chicken soup. The mother-in-law's anger subsides when she overhears the couple discussing how to allocate their limited funds to purchase nutritious foods, so that their child can do well in school in the future.

decision-making between couples on management of household resources

- Grandmothers purchase or encourage the purchase of beans, soy, eggs, fish, and tinned fish
- Grandmothers support mothers to fortify rice porridge with nutrient-rich foods (beans, eggs, soy product, and/or smashed peanut, shredded meat or fish, fruits, vegetables, oil).



**Oinsá Ita-Boot sira bele ajuda
Marta hamaus nia banin?**

How can you help Marta
convince her mother in-law?

The film depicts different family members' behaviours when negotiating for the use of family resources. Facilitators pause for discussion with the audience at set points throughout the film.

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dwy8jasRJyk&feature=youtu.be>

² Focus is on animal protein due to widespread deficiencies in protein and also because assessments show that mothers have to ask for permission for purchases over \$1 including one egg.

Objective and methods

TOMAK designed a film evaluation approach to assess whether viewing the film and participating in group discussions spurred discussions between spouses around the allocation of household resources for nutritious foods and whether there was a difference across nutrition groups, agriculture groups, and savings and loans (S&L) associations. The evaluation approach involved a questionnaire that was administered to community group members (mothers, fathers, grandmothers) prior to watching the film. The questionnaire was re-administered three months

later, following two film screenings and discussions in each group.

TOMAK Lead NGO partner staff from Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Mercy Corps (MC), and World Vision International (WVI) were oriented to the evaluation approach and 60 film screenings were carried out with 30 existing community groups across the three TOMAK municipalities³ from October to December 2019. CRS, MC and WVI conducted the pre-post assessment with a total of 195 participants.

Table 1: Number of groups and groups types included in the sample by NGO

	# S&L Groups	# Farmer Groups	# Nutrition Groups	Total per NGO
CRS	5	5	0	10
MC	5	0	5	10
WVI	0	5	5	10
Total	10	10	10	30

Data Analysis

Hypothesis testing was conducted on most variables to see whether differences between the pre and post samples were statistically significant or not. STATA software was used to perform these tests and the standard $p < .05$ was used to see whether there was a less than 5% probability that any difference between pre and post samples was due to expected natural variation (i.e. chance). If $p < .05$ it means there was a statistically significant difference.

The data was disaggregated between groups (S&L, farmer, nutrition) and/or status categories (father, mother, grandmother/mother-in-law) when (i) there was already found to be a statistically significant effect between pre and post samples at the aggregate level (i.e. for all groups); (ii) when the effect size was quite large; and (iii) when that large effect size was found to be statistically significant.

³ Baucáu, Bobonaro, Viqueque.

Limitations

For a relatively small study, the findings would be considerably more robust if data were paired, using the same respondents for pre and post-testing. That is because it is not possible to be sure that both samples would have been identical at the baseline. Even with the best efforts of the study team to have a similar proportion of respondents with the same observable characteristics (such as location, implementing NGO, group type, and gender of respondent), natural variation will always exist. Despite this, TOMAK is confident that there was no other intervention or environmental factor contributing to the effects observed because the pre and post surveys were conducted within a short timeframe of each other. Furthermore, TOMAK has no

knowledge of existing SBC products used in these locations that specifically promote HHDM for nutrition.

Notwithstanding consultation with implementing partners and field testing of the survey tool, the way in which the response options were structured for the attitude questions (strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree) may not have been well understood by respondents. Furthermore, analysis of these responses would have been strengthened if there was a 'neutral' option, so that the distance between each category is more-or-less similar, allowing statistical tests for ordinal data to be run.

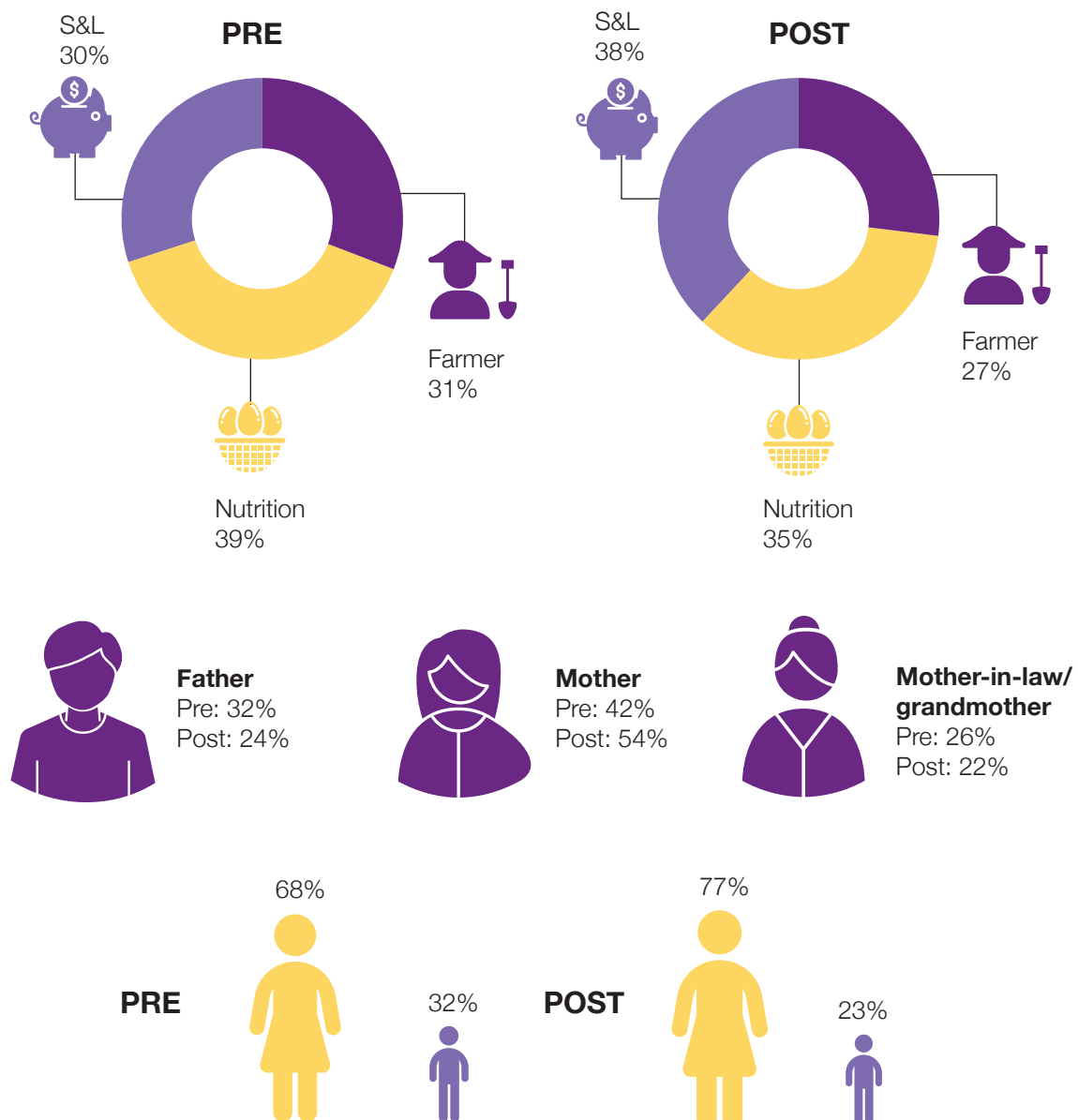
RESULTS

Respondents were asked a series of knowledge, attitude and behaviour questions. There were more attitude and behaviour questions asked because these

were the areas where TOMAK intended to see change over a three-month period after watching the film and participating in discussions.

Sample Characteristics

Figure 1: Percentage of pre-post assessment respondents by group type, status category and sex



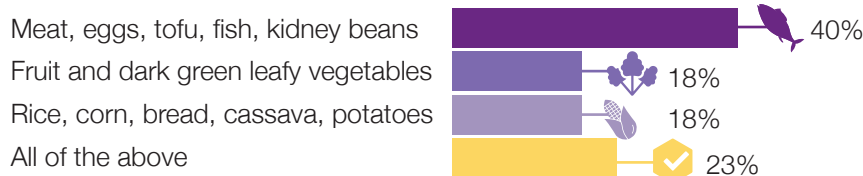
Knowledge

While the film promoted dietary diversity, it specifically focused on the promotion of protein-rich foods as these foods are the least consumed in Timor-Leste. Respondents were asked “What are some examples of protein-rich foods?”. There was found to be a large increase in the proportion of respondents reporting that examples of protein-rich foods are ‘meat, eggs, tofu,

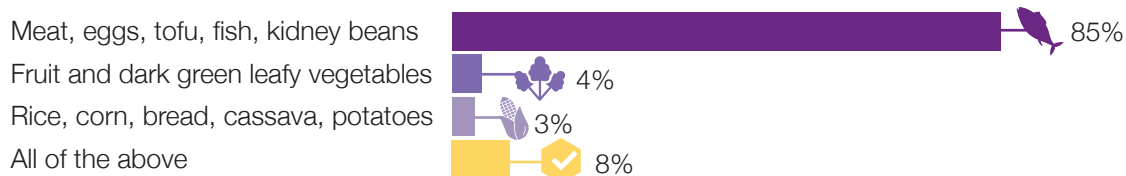
fish, kidney beans’. This effect was large across all group types, particularly for the S&L and nutrition groups. The effect was also large across all respondent types, and found to be particularly large for the ‘father’ and ‘mother-in-law’ groups, which started from a lower baseline than the ‘mother’ group.

Figure 2: Examples of protein-rich foods

PRE






POST



***Highly significant

Results by status

		pre	post	
	Father	Meat, eggs, tofu, fish, kidney beans	30%	87%
		Fruit and dark green leafy vegetables	17%	7%
		Rice, corn, bread, cassava, potatoes	22%	2%
		All of the above	32%	4%
	Mother	Meat, eggs, tofu, fish, kidney beans	55%	87%
		Fruit and dark green leafy vegetables	18%	5%
		Rice, corn, bread, cassava, potatoes	16%	4%
		All of the above	11%	5%
	Mother-in-law / grandmother	Meat, eggs, tofu, fish, kidney beans	28%	79%
		Fruit and dark green leafy vegetables	22%	0%
		Rice, corn, bread, cassava, potatoes	18%	2%
		All of the above	32%	19%

⁴ Respondent groups: mothers, fathers, mothers-in-law/grandmothers.

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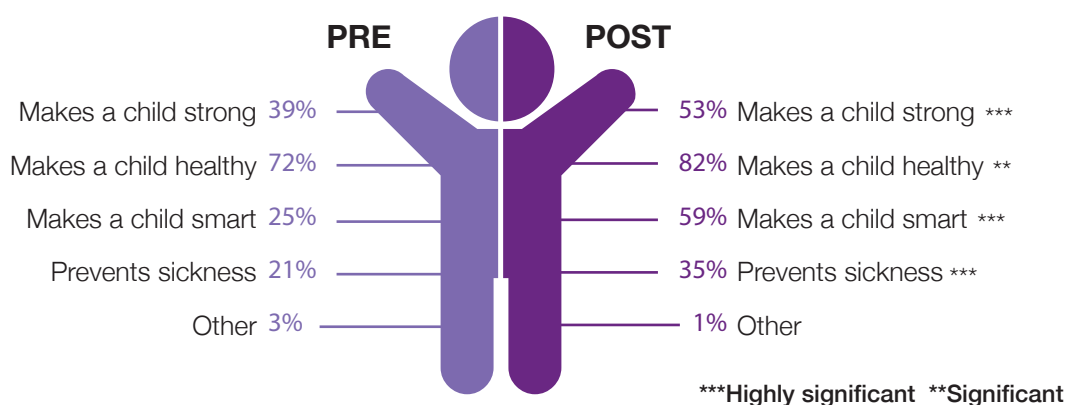


Respondents were asked an open question “What are the benefits to a young child if they eat foods like eggs, beans, and tofu?” Respondents gave a greater number of responses in the post-test than in the pre-test, which accounts for the increase in all categories. There was a large increase in the proportion of respondents who said it ‘makes a child smart at school’. This positive effect was observed in all group types (nutrition, farmer and S&L groups) and in all respondent types (fathers, mothers, grandmothers/mothers-in-law). While all the responses to this question

are correct, the film largely focused on the benefit that protein consumption ‘makes a child smart in school’.

There was a moderate increase in the proportion of respondents who said it ‘makes a child strong’ and a small increase in proportion of respondents who said it ‘makes a child healthy’. This category received the most responses in both pre and post-tests. There was also a moderate increase in the proportion of respondents who said it ‘prevents sickness’.

Figure 3: Benefits of protein-rich foods for children

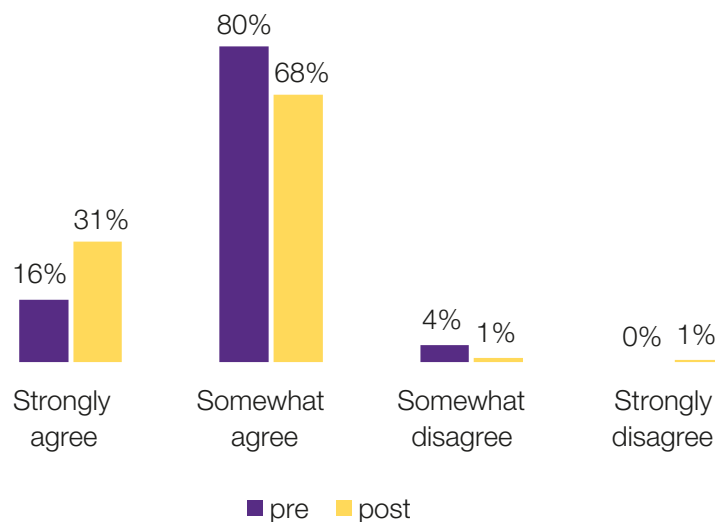


Attitudes

Respondents were read the statement: *“Fathers have a responsibility to purchase protein-rich foods such as eggs, beans and fish for their children’s health and nutrition”* and asked their level of agreement with the statement. A small-moderate increase was observed in the proportion of respondents

who reported ‘strongly agree’ and a corresponding decrease in the proportion of respondents who reported ‘agree’. In the post-test, almost no respondents said that they ‘disagree’. The biggest change in the ‘strongly agree’ category was observed for S&L groups and for fathers.

Figure 4: Responsibility of fathers in purchasing protein-rich foods

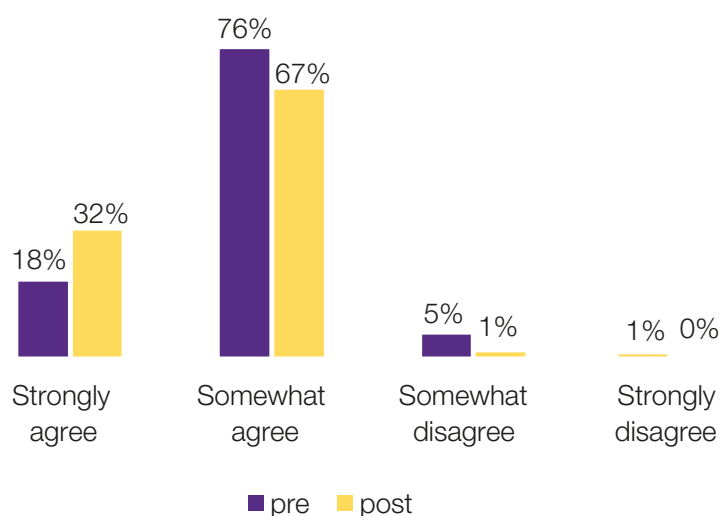


***Highly significant

Respondents were also read the statement: *“Mothers have a responsibility to purchase protein-rich foods such as eggs, beans and fish for their children’s health and nutrition”* and asked their level of agreement with the statement. Respondent sentiment was found to be very similar to this question

for fathers. There was a small-moderate increase in the proportion of respondents who reported ‘strongly agree’ and a corresponding decrease in the proportion of respondents who reported ‘agree’. In the post-test, almost no respondents said that they ‘disagree’.

Figure 5: Responsibility of mothers in purchasing protein-rich foods



***Highly significant

These results are important as they show increased acceptance among respondents that fathers have a responsibility to support family nutrition. Also important is stronger acceptance that mothers can (and should) take responsibility for purchasing protein-rich foods, as previous TOMAK research showed that women need to ask permission to make purchases over \$1.⁶

The film addresses the strong influence of grandmothers/mothers-in-law over household nutrition and promotes not only the importance of communication between spouses around the purchase/use of resources for nutritious foods, but also the grandmother's role in supporting spousal communication. In the pre and post-tests, respondents were also



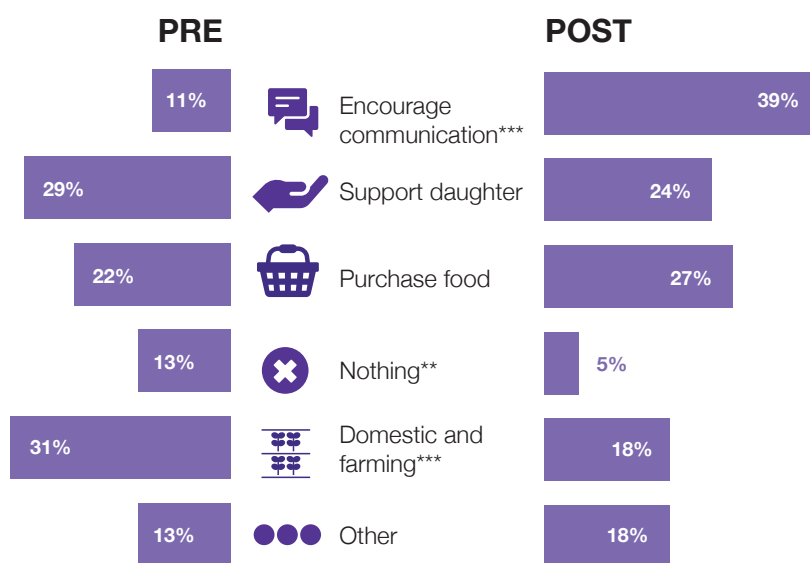
The film demonstrates both parents (mother and father) showing an interest in family nutrition and discussing together how to allocate limited resources for food consumption.

⁶TOMAK Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Analysis (2017).

asked, “What is a grandmother/mother-in-law’s role (responsibility) in supporting household nutrition?” This was a multiple-choice question. Across all respondent status groups, there was a significant increase in the proportion of respondents who reported a role for grandmothers in encouraging communication between



couples (from 11% to 39%), and a significant decrease in the proportion who said that a grandmothers’ role is to carry out domestic tasks/farming. There was a significant decrease in the perception that grandmothers do ‘nothing’ to support household nutrition (i.e. no role).

Figure 6: Grandmothers’ role in supporting household nutrition



***Highly significant **Significant

Results by status

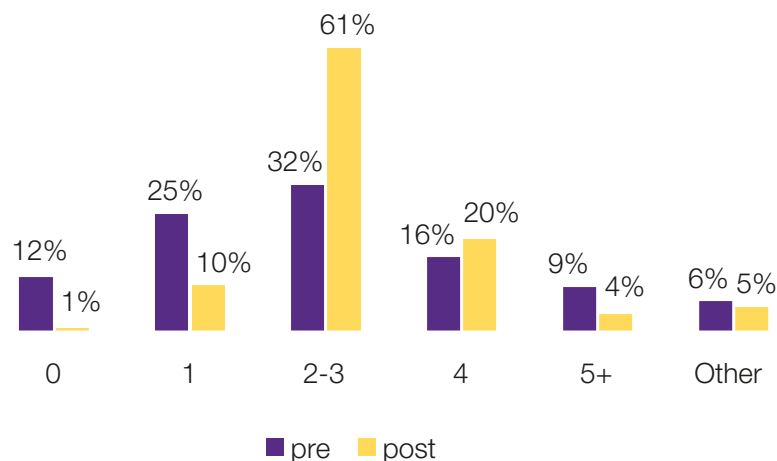
		pre	post
 Father	Encourage communication	12%	43%
	Support daughter	20%	15%
	Purchase food	12%	15%
	Domestic and farming	35%	20%
	Nothing	18%	2%
	Other	17%	24%
 Mother	Encourage communication	8%	34%
	Support daughter	20%	21%
	Purchase food	23%	28%
	Domestic and farming	30%	13%
	Nothing	16%	9%
	Other	16%	21%
 Mother-in-law/ grandmother	Encourage communication	14%	49%
	Support daughter	54%	40%
	Purchase food	34%	40%
	Domestic and farming	26%	28%
	Nothing	0%	0%
	Other	2%	2%

Behaviour

In terms of practices, respondents were asked, “*In the last month, how often did you and your family eat protein rich foods (like eggs, chicken or fish)?*” There was a moderate-large increase in the proportion of respondents reporting that they eat protein rich foods 2-3 times per month. This increase appears to come from

decreases in those who do so either ‘never’ (0 times) or one time per month. There was no significant increase in the proportion of respondents reporting that they eat protein-rich foods 4 and 5 times per month. The effect was fairly consistent across all respondent types (fathers, mothers, and grandmothers/mothers-in-law).

Figure 7: Frequency of protein consumption in the past month



***Highly significant

Given the focus of the film is on communication around household resources for nutrition, respondents were asked, “*In your household, who will decide whether to consume eggs from home production?*”. Differences in the pre and post samples were not significant, however an increase was observed in the post-test for the desired response ‘husband and wife together’.

Another key message in the film is that young children are a priority group for nutrition and that limited resources can

be used to purchase smaller quantities of nutritious foods more frequently. Respondents were asked, “*What do you normally do when there is limited money to buy food like: eggs, beans, soy, fish or meat?*”.

A moderate increase was observed in the category ‘buy a small amount’, which likely comes from a significant decrease in the ‘do nothing’ category. This effect was more evident for the S&L group type, and for father and mother respondent types.

Figure 8: Decision-making regarding egg consumption

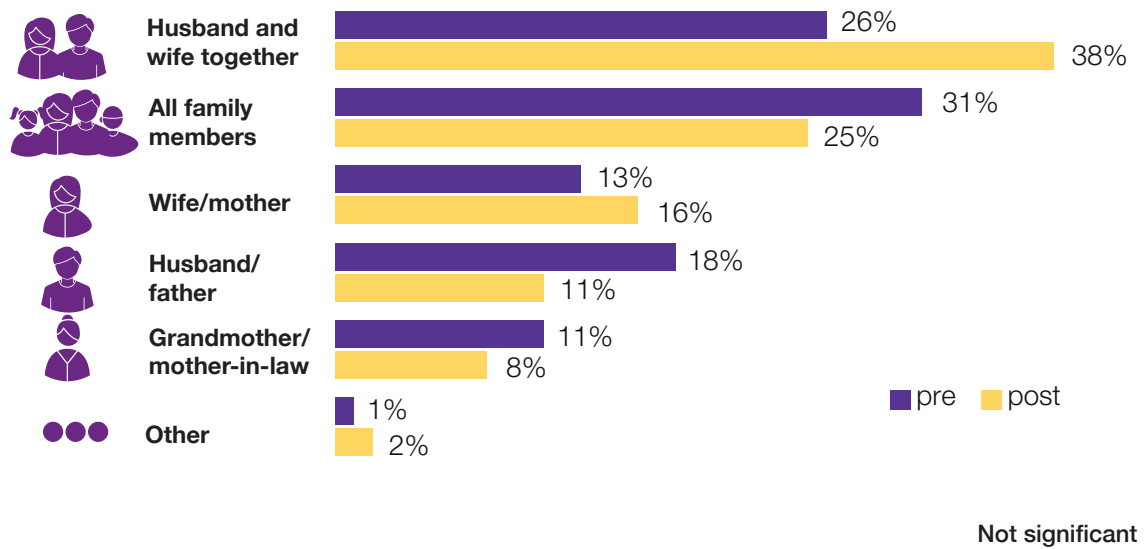
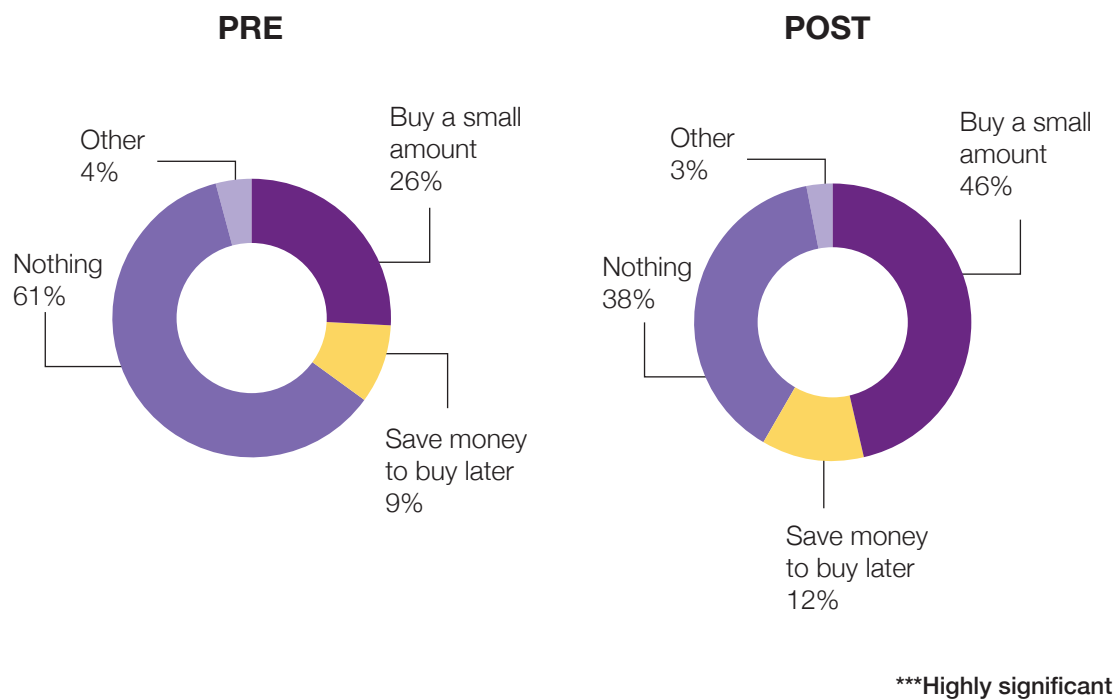


Figure 9: Practice when there is limited money



Post survey

Respondents were also asked if they learned something new from watching the film, to which 92% responded that they did. The most frequently cited learnings were: to cook and eat nutritious meals that include foods from the three food groups (34%); to make decisions within the household about the family eating nutritious foods (21%); that grandmothers/mothers-in-law should support mothers to eat nutritious foods, breastfeed their baby, and give nutritious food to children (21%); to eat chicken meat and eggs to keep healthy (15%); and to use savings to buy nutritious food (9%).

Respondents were also asked, “*Did you discuss the film with someone who is not in the group?*” Sixty-eight percent (68%) of respondents said they discussed the film with others. There were no clear differences between the three community groups.

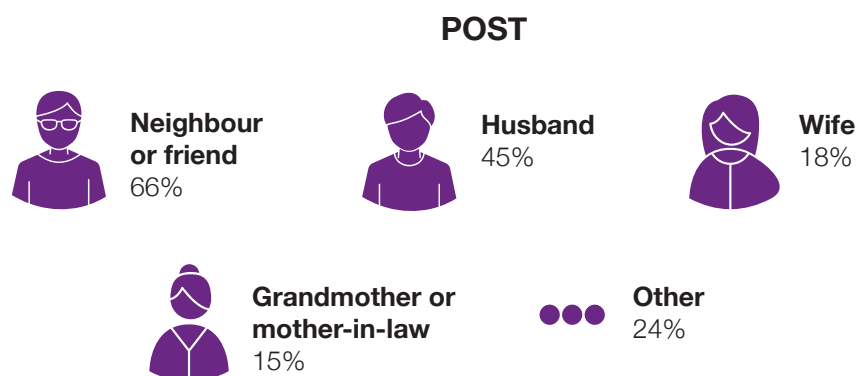
Of those who replied ‘yes’, respondents were asked a multiple-choice question with whom they discussed the film. The most frequent response was a neighbour or friend (66%). The categories ‘husband’ (45%) and ‘wife’ (18%) may be combined as ‘spouse’ (total 63%). Respondents were then asked if the person they spoke with was interested in talking with them about the film and its topics, to which 97% replied ‘yes’. The trend was fairly similar across group categories when disaggregated by group type or between respondent status.



Pre-test survey with a grandmother prior to the film screening.

Eighty-seven percent (87%) of respondents reported doing something differently since watching the film. The most frequently cited responses were: cooking nutritious foods from the three food groups (27%); eating protein foods (e.g. eat eggs, fish, chicken meat and beans) and eating vitamin-rich foods (e.g. amaranth, moringa) that are good for children (19%); eating chicken meat and eggs from chickens raised at home, not reserving only for guests and selling (11%); making decisions about nutritious foods (deciding frequency to eat meat during the week) (9%); encouraging husband/wife/son to buy nutritious food for the household (9%); saving money to buy nutritious food (buying meat every week) (7%).

Figure 10: Who was the film discussed with



DISCUSSION

This assessment demonstrates that the film is effective for use with its intended audience of mothers, fathers and grandmothers. There were increases in knowledge on identification of protein foods and benefits of protein consumption for small children. The majority of respondents stated they learned something new after watching the film and have done something differently in their lives since watching the film. The topics that the respondents reported learning and applying are related to the key messages in the film.

There was an improvement in attitudes around increased spousal communication and the role grandmothers can play in supporting household nutrition between pre and post-survey. In terms of changes to behaviours, there were increases in the frequency of protein consumption and improved practices around what households can do when there are limited resources for protein-rich foods (e.g. purchase small quantities at a time). Increased consumption of protein-rich foods and allocation of limited resources to purchase protein-rich foods are considered particularly important for improving household nutrition and the findings indicate that the film is an effective approach to influencing these behaviours.

Despite some outliers, there were no major differences observed in the effects seen

amongst the different group types. This indicates that the intervention is appropriate for various group types, despite the different focuses for the groups and types of information they are exposed to.

TOMAK and implementing partner staff that carried out the film assessment within their existing community groups overwhelmingly agreed that:

- The film resonated with community members and easily generated lively discussions;
- There was strong interest in watching the film and discussing the questions twice, with community members wanting to 're-hash' the story and the characters' actions;
- The built-in questions made it easy for the facilitator to lead the discussion, although participants had much to say about the film even without the questions.

There was such high interest in the film in a few CRS community groups that participated in the assessment, that non-selected groups threatened to withdraw their participation in agriculture groups if the film was not screened in their groups. TOMAK and partners plan to expand the film screening and discussions across their existing community platforms.

CONCLUSION

Many projects do not have an extensive budget for the development of a wide range of SBC products, let alone funding for large scale evaluations. For this reason, there is a need to develop cost-effective evaluation strategies that can be applied to individual SBC products to assess their effectiveness in promoting key behaviours to intended audiences. These approaches should move beyond pre/post methodologies conducted in a single setting (e.g. measured directly before/after watching a film) and should probe deeper than changes in knowledge alone to demonstrate the effectiveness of the SBC product in stimulating the desired behaviour change over time.

As this film is the first SBC tool being used by TOMAK and partners that specifically addresses household decision-making practices for improved nutrition, the assessment provided valuable insight into the effectiveness of the film within community groups. In particular within TOMAK, use of the film will be expanded across existing community groups (farmer, nutrition groups and savings groups). The results from this film assessment will also be used as a basis for discussions with Ministry of Health and partners on how to improve evaluation strategies for SBC materials going forward.

