ADOLESCENT GIRLS’ NUTRITION-RELATED PRACTICES IN THE AMHARA, OROMIA, SNNP AND TIGRAY REGIONS OF ETHIOPIA:

A report on formative research findings and recommendations for Social and Behavior Change Communication Programming

April 2018

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<td>Best Friend Interviews</td>
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<td>BMI</td>
<td>Body Mass Index</td>
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<td>Focus Group Discussions</td>
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<td>FMOH</td>
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<td>GAM</td>
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<td>MUAC</td>
<td>Mid Upper Arm Circumference</td>
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<td>RHB</td>
<td>Regional Health Bureau</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCI</td>
<td>Save the Children International</td>
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<tr>
<td>SNNPR</td>
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<tr>
<td>TMG</td>
<td>The Manoff Group</td>
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<td>USAID</td>
<td>United States Agency for International Development</td>
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Acknowledgements

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Save The Children: management, technical oversight, and technical reviews

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Glossary of Local Foods

Alicha (wot). A sauce usually made with turmeric, which gives the sauce (wot) a light-yellow color.

Ambasha. Round, white, wheat flour flat bread (about two inches thick). The top of the bread is decorated using a knife for easy portion control, similar to pizza slices. Originated in the Tigray region, where everyone eats ambasha for breakfast, usually with tea.

Areke. Local alcoholic beverage, clear white in color.

Atmit. Thin gruel made of whole grain flour.

Awaze. Red chili pepper powder mixed with water and areke or tej (honey wine), a condiment that accompanies meat and or injera.

Bula. False banana product. A white flour cooked with milk or water; similar to thick semolina.

Enset. False banana plant from which bula and kocho is made; builds the body.

Fafa. Local baby food combining soy and whole grain flour; locally factory-made baby food.

Firfir. Fried onions, oil/spiced butter, berbere (red chili pepper powder) and salt. Water is added to the thick sauce and simmered. Small, dry pieces of injera are combined with the sauce. Salt is added liberally to this spicy dish. It is popular because it is easy to make and requires few ingredients. Pregnant women perceive that it makes them thirsty: "It lets us drink lots of water." Considered a morning or breakfast food. Also perceived to increase breast milk production.

Fitfit. Similar to firfir, but made with sauce. A mild sauce is made with onions and either meat (if available) or potatoes and carrots. A lot of water is added to make a thin/watery sauce. Pieces of injera are soaked in the sauce and fed to children 6 months of age and older.

Gomen. Collard greens, a dark green leafy vegetable. Can be found in the "environment." Gomen is not allowed for pregnant women and babies in some places for 2 to 3 months. Some mention growing it in their backyard. Believed to contribute to health and contain vitamins, but also to cause cramps and diarrhea in breastfed infants, so traditionally avoided. Can be eaten during fasting. Considered food for poor people.

Injera. Thin teff flour pancake eaten with everything, often as a starch accompaniment to stew or other "wot"/sauce.

Keneto. Non-alcoholic barley beverage believed to help with breast milk production—same as keribo. Keneto is the Christian name of this beverage.

Keribo. A non-alcoholic barley beverage—same as keneto; believed to help with breast milk production. Keribo is the Muslim name of this beverage.
**Kita.** A dry flat bread with a chew consistency similar to a chewy pretzel (but without the salt topping). Sometimes mixed with sugar and fed to children; used to train children how to eat.

**Kocho.** A false banana derivative, cooked in a pan like flat bread. Has a rubbery consistency. Is traditionally eaten with collard greens, minced meat and dry cottage cheese. A staple food for SNNP region; mentioned as something that is easily acquired and available. Commonly eaten during fasting time. Babies should not eat it until they are more than 1 year old. Women generally harvest kocho.

**Kolo.** A whole barley grain, dry roasted in a pan, sometimes mixed with peanuts. A popular local snack, kolo is described as a food that upsets pregnant women's stomachs; also not something that babies can tolerate; associated with "poor" people; may also increase breast milk production.

**Miten.** A word used to describe a mix of a variety of different grains used to make the gruel flour; for example, miten flour or miten shiro.

**Muk** A thin smooth gruel made with whole grain flour and water; also called atmit.

**Nifro** Any boiled cereals and legumes.

**Shiro** Chickpeas or dry peas with spices, a little red chili powder, and garlic ground into flour. Shiro flour is cooked with water, oil and onions into a wot (sauce) and eaten with injera as shiro wot. Can be cooked with oil, onion, etc. Some women describe it as unappealing during pregnancy. Can be suitable for babies. Described as an inexpensive food. May be a substitute for meat.

**Teff** Teff flour is mixed with water, fermented for a few days, and cooked into a flat pancake known as injera, the staple food of Ethiopia. Prepared for consumption and sale. Perceived as helping with breast milk production. Besides use in injera, may be used to make gruel for a baby at least 6 - 7 months old.

**Tella** Germinated barley brew with alcoholic content. Very commonly mentioned as something that can contribute to production of breast milk. Some say pregnant women should moderate their intake, others that they desire it. Some say it's not for babies; others that it is may be an early drink for babies.

**Tella Kita** Tella kita consists of roughly ground corn, sorghum, teff, and barley, which is later baked, torn into pieces and mixed into the tella during the last stage of preparation to complete the fermentation. Kita made for tella is not eaten and different from the kita eaten as bread.

**Tsewa** A local alcoholic beverage, tsewa is the Tigrigna name for tella, a religious name used by Orthodox Christians to describe the symbolic ‘blood’/wine that Jesus gave to his disciples at the last supper. Since wine is expensive, a group of friends, neighbors or relatives traditionally meet once a month on a chosen feast day of an angel or St. Mary to eat/break bread together, pray, and drink ‘tsewa’ (usually tella). The name is understood to mean ‘local brew’ but has additional religious connotations.

**Wot** A sauce. There are several different types of wot: shiro wot, meat wot, misir (lentil) wot, alicha wot, potato wot, doro (chicken) wot.
I. BACKGROUND

Maternal and child undernutrition is the underlying cause of 3.5 million deaths, 35% of the disease burden in children younger than 5 years and 11% of total global disability-adjusted life-years (DALYs).¹ The situation in Ethiopia is not different from others. Even though the country has achieved major progresses in improving health and nutrition status of mothers and children across regions, the undernutrition rates in Ethiopia still remain high. The key child indicators of stunting, wasting and underweight are at unacceptably high levels nationwide.² The 2016 Ethiopian Demographic Health Survey (EDHS)³ estimated that 38% of children under the age of five years old are considered to be short for their age or stunted. Stunting is greater among children in Ethiopia’s rural areas (40 percent) than in its urban areas (25 percent). Twenty-four percent of all children are underweight (below -2 SD), and 7 percent are severely underweight (below -3 SD). Once again, children in Ethiopia’s rural areas are more likely to be underweight than their counterparts in urban areas (25 percent versus 13 percent). The main causes for such high rates of child malnutrition in the country are poor feeding practices, sub-optimal hygiene and sanitation in the household and community, as well as poverty, food insecurity and gender dynamics. DHS 2011 and 2016 measured the nutritional status of 15-19-year-old girls and boys using the Body Mass Index (BMI). The results show that 15-19 years old girls were in better position than boys of the same age. About 1 out of three (36.1%) adolescent girls of age 15-19 were found to be thin (BMI below 18.5) while this was so in about 2 out of three (65.9 %) adolescent boys in 2011.⁴ Similarly, three out of ten (29%) adolescent girls and about 6 out of ten (59%) Adolescent boys (age 15-19) are reported to be thin (BMI below 18.5) in 2016.⁵

According to the 2016 Ethiopia Demographic Health Survey (DHS), thirteen percent of adolescent girls between the ages of 15 and 19 years old have already begun childbearing. The proportion of adolescent girls who have begun childbearing rises rapidly with age: while 2% percent of girls who are 15 years old have begun childbearing, 28% of girls who are 19 years old have done so. Childbearing is more common among adolescent girls who live rural areas than it is among those living in urban areas (15% versus 5%, respectively). Meanwhile, education is inversely related to childbearing among adolescent girls: nearly 3 in 10 (28%) of adolescent girls between the ages of 15 and 19 years old with no education have begun childbearing compared to 12% of their cohort who have attained primary education, and 4% of their cohort who have attained secondary education. Wealth is also inversely related to childbearing among adolescent girls: 22% percent of those in the lowest wealth quintile have begun childbearing compared to 5 percent of those in the highest quintile.

Stunting, early pregnancy and childbirth among adolescent girls also impact the nutrition outcomes of their children and contribute to a cycle of intergenerational undernutrition (Salam, Hooda, Das et al, 2016). In Ethiopia mothers’ education and wealth quintile are both inversely related to their children’s stunting levels (Ethiopia Demographic Health Survey, 2016). More

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² USAID/Ethiopia Website. https://www.usaid.gov/ethiopia
³ EDHS 2016
⁴ EDHS 2011
⁵ EDHS 2016
than 4 in 10 (42%) children born to mothers with no education are stunted compared with 18 percent of children whose mothers have more than a secondary education. Similarly, stunting decreases from 42% among children in the lowest wealth quintile to 27% of those in the highest wealth quintile.

Adolescence, defined in this research study as between the ages of 10 and 19 years old, is characterized by a growth spurt as young people transition from childhood to adulthood and a window of opportunity to improve nutritional status (Stang and Story, 2005; WHO, 1993). Adolescent girls have unique nutritional requirements depending on their age groups. Those who are between the ages of 10 and 13 years old have different requirements than those who are between the ages of 14 and 18 years old, while adolescent girls who are older than 18 years have other requirements as well.

In a recent study in the SNNP region of Ethiopia among 822 adolescent school girls between the ages of 10 and 19 years old, body mass index (BMI) and height-for-age were used as proxy indicators of nutritional status. The three most significant behavioral predictors of adolescent girls’ BMI and height-for-age were the regularity of breakfast, having no episode of illness during the month prior to the interview, and hand-washing habit after toilet use. Other significant behavioral predictors of adolescent girls’ nutritional status included time spent on sedentary activities, consumption of sweet food items, and the consumption of cereal (Berheto, Astawesegn and Weji, 2017).

Formative research conducted by the USAID/ENGINE project explored influences on adolescent girls’ nutrition-related practices in Amhara, East Oromia, West Oromia, SNNP, and Tigray regions.¹ The research yielded preliminary information about factors influencing the nutrition practices of older adolescent girls who attend school, including some findings about adolescent girls and their relationships with their parents. Less information was generated around the out-of-school influences on the nutrition-related practices of adolescent girls and the influences of girls’ friends and peers on their practices. The USAID/ENGINE research sample of respondents did not include adolescent girls younger than 15 years old. The recommendations generated through the USAID/ENGINE research thus included ensuring that future formative research focuses on out-of-school adolescent girls and adolescent girls in the younger age group (9 – 14). This age range also represents the second window of opportunity for improved nutrition to have an impact on adolescent girls’ linear growth and on reducing intergenerational stunting.

Recommendations from the USAID/ENGINE research also included seeking more insights about the lives of adolescent girls outside of school: at home, with their friends and peers outside of school, their religious lives and attendance at churches or mosques, the work they may do outside of their home chores, such as tending home gardens, other farming activities, or other livelihoods activities, and what they do in their leisure time and for entertainment. In addition, given that menstruation can have some association with nutritional status, the research also generated the recommendation to explore the onset of menses and menstruation and how local knowledge and perceptions about these may impact any nutrition-related practices among adolescent girls and their families.

1. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND AREAS OF INQUIRY

1. Purpose, objectives and areas of inquiry

This research was designed to implement many of the recommendations from the USAID/ENGINE formative research on adolescent girls’ nutrition-related behaviors by addressing gaps in the evidence base around nutrition-related behaviors of adolescent girls and generate new insights, especially insights about younger adolescent girls, girls who are out-of-school, and the influence of girls’ relationships with their friends and peers. The purpose of this new research is to contribute to the development of strategic communication interventions, alongside non-communication interventions, to help improve adolescent girls’ nutrition outcomes. Specifically, the findings and recommendations from the research will be used to support the development of the USAID/Growth through Nutrition project’s social and behavior change communication (SBCC) strategy for improving nutrition-related practices among adolescent girls and those who influence these practices. Other recommendations generated through this research may help to identify interventions in homes, communities, schools or other platforms through which programs can improve nutrition outcomes for adolescent girls.

Specific areas of inquiry addressed through this research include:

1.1 Societal expectations about adolescent girls and their roles, particularly how gender influences these expectations and may also influence girls’ nutrition-related practices.

1.2 The day-to-day life (activities and relationships) of adolescent girls.

The research aimed to describe the daily lives of adolescent girls between the ages of 10 and 19 years old outside of their school environment school. Specifically, the research will describe the day-to-day lives of adolescent girls:

- at home (describe interactions with parents and other family members);
- with their friends and peers outside of school (look for influences)
- in their religious lives and attendance at churches or mosques;
- during the work they may do within their home and outside of their home (e.g. tending home gardens, other farming activities, or other livelihoods activities); and
- during their leisure time and what they do for entertainment.

1.3 Adolescent girls’ ability to exert some power, control or influence over aspects of their lives or other people (known as “agency”)

The research sought to describe the daily activities in family life where adolescent girls have actual or potential power or control over certain aspects of their lives, or the ability to influence others in ways that can help them to improve nutrition outcomes for themselves or their families. Examples of activities where insights were explored include:

- raising or growing food (crops, agriculture) for household consumption and/or for sale;
• planning and preparing meals for the family;
• at meal time—can they skip foods; get more food; ask for certain foods?
• eating meals or snacks with friends;
• purchasing food for themselves and purchasing other household necessities at the market;
• establishing or maintaining home gardens;
• building tippy taps and handwashing stations, and monitoring their use by family members; and
• food preservation; and
• adolescent girls’ relationships and communication with (or influence on) their parents, other family members, or others.

1.4 Fasting.

The research also sought to describe the influence of fasting (and religion), social expectations on the roles of family members, and gender on girls’ nutrition-related behaviors (including diet and eating practices).

1.5 Menstruation

Another area of inquiry in this research was around exploring how menstruation (including the onset of menses) and local knowledge and perceptions about menstruation-- impacts adolescent girls’ nutrition-related practices (e.g. diet, eating practices).

1.6 Exploring potential messaging, positioning and platforms to reach adolescent girls.

The research was also designed to explore possible messaging and positioning for adolescent girls’ nutrition, including options for future positioning communication that promotes improved nutrition for adolescent girls in ways that would resonate with girls and their influencers (e.g. concepts, messaging, tone or approaches. The inquiry also covered potential platforms through which adolescent girls can be reached and adolescent nutrition can be promoted. Informal and formal platforms considered in the research included schools, health facilities, places of worship, cultural ceremonies, festivals, coming-of-age celebrations, entertainment, community gathering places, existing government or private sector programs for adolescent girls.
II. RESEARCH METHODS

2. Study Design and Data Collection Tools

The research entailed a mixed method protocol which blended the more well-known qualitative methods (focus group discussions and in-depth interviews) with lesser-known qualitative methods (diagnostic role plays, pile sorts, best friend interviews, and direct observations).

2.1 Research methods

This section describes the methods that were included in the research design. The methods were a blend of standard qualitative research methods that are well-known in Ethiopia with more innovative and lesser-known qualitative methods. They are:

a) Focus Group Discussions;
b) Diagnostic Role Plays;
c) Pile Sorts;
d) Best Friend Interviews;
e) Direct Observations; and
f) Individual In-Depth Interviews.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), Diagnostic Role Plays (DRPs) and Pile Sorts (PS)

FGDs, DRPs and PSs are qualitative research methods that were used during sessions held with groups of 6 – 8 participants of the same gender and with similar age ranges. The FGDs, DRPs and Ps were all designed to explore the relationships between adolescent girls, their peers, their mothers and their fathers, with a special emphasis on when, how and where girls communicate with these influential people in their lives. The methods also helped generate insights around when, how and where adolescent girls may exert some influence over their parents’ nutrition-related decision-making and behaviors.

Diagnostic Role Plays (DRPs) are an innovative research technique used during focus group discussions to elicit information from research participants. The research team introduces a standard scenario and asks for volunteers to do a role play demonstrating a behavior, a relationship, or a chain of events based on a scenario. During the DRP, the research team observes and takes notes on information generated through the role plays, paying special attention to non-verbal communication/body language and specific terms used by the girls.

During some of the FGDs, the research team also introduced images on cards and ask participants to sort them into three separate piles. In this research, the Pile Sort (PS) method was used to gain greater insights into participants’ perceptions of gender and gender-bound mental categories. Other visual aids designed for use during the group discussion sessions were a menu planning game and several photographs of an adolescent girl talking with an older man, an older woman, and with a peer, respectively. Appendix 1 provides copies of the visual aids used in the group discussions.
Semi-structured discussion guides were developed to facilitate focus group discussions among the participants. In addition to the interview guides, observation grids and field notes were also used by the research teams who facilitated these sessions. All of the discussion sessions were also audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed.

**Best Friend Interviews (BFIs)**

Best Friend Interviews (BFI) are an innovative research technique in which an individual respondent is interviewed together with her best friend. BFIs resemble individual in-depth interviews, except that the interviews are conducted with pairs of respondents. In this research, the pairs were adolescent girls of similar ages who self-identify as each other’s “best friend.” The design planned for two girls to be interviewed together at the same time by one data collector using a structured interview guide. The BFIs were also designed to include photographs of an adolescent girl talking with a peer, an older man or an older woman, which were used as visual prompts during the interviews.

The BFI is a research methodology developed by The Manoff Group specifically to interview children or adult participants who are shy or uncomfortable in large groups or in one-on-one situations with people they do not know well (i.e. researchers). Although new to Ethiopia, the methodology has been used successfully in other countries. Best Friend Interviews were selected specifically in light of the observations made during the analysis of the qualitative data from the USAID/ENGINE project’s formative research with adolescent girls. The data generated from focus group discussions (FGDs) and in-depth individual interviews (IDIs) with adolescent girls indicated that the girls were not as responsive as adults are when they participate in these research methods. Girls’ responses, especially during in-depth interviews, were brief and not very informative. The sparseness of the girls’ responses led the data analysis team to suspect that shyness and being uncomfortable in a large group of peers (FGDs are typically comprised of 6-10 participants) or in a one-on-one IDI with a researcher may have negatively influenced their participation. A recommendation for future research thus included trying other research methods with adolescent girls as a way to overcome the shyness girls may experience if they are being interviewed in large groups or alone.

**Direct Observations (DOs)**

The DOs were designed for research teams to directly observe adolescent girls in their daily routines over a period of several hours. The design planned for researchers to select girls who they had interviewed in a BFI for direct observation. An observation checklist, prepared in advance, was designed for the research teams to record their observations of a girl’s activities, who she interacts with, where she goes, what foods or beverages she may consume, and estimated quantities of food/beverages she consumes.

**In-Depth Interview (IDIs) with mothers and fathers of adolescent girls**

Individual in-depth interviews were designed for research teams to use with some of the mothers and fathers of the adolescent girls who participate in the Best Friend Interviews and/or the Direct Observations. The IDIs were designed to help confirm information provided by the girls’ reports.
and directly observed behaviors. A structured interview guide was designed to facilitate the in-depth interviews.

Table 1 below presents an overview of the participants and research methods planned in the design of this study.

### Table 1: Research participants and methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTICIPANT PROFILE</th>
<th>TOTAL FGD/DRPs</th>
<th>TOTAL BEST FRIEND INTERVIEWS</th>
<th>TOTAL DIRECT OBSERVATIONS</th>
<th>TOTAL IDIs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10-14 year-old girls (students)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10-14 year-old girls (out-of-school)</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19 year-old girls (students)</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19 year-old girls (out-of-school)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers of adolescent girls</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fathers of adolescent girls</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTALS</strong></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
<td><strong>80</strong></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
<td><strong>50</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>20 FGD- girls + 10 FGD- parents</strong></td>
<td><strong>BEST FRIEND INTERVIEWS</strong></td>
<td><strong>DIRECT OBSERVATIONS</strong></td>
<td><strong>IDIs (25 with fathers, 25 with mothers)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>

#### 2.2 Ethical review of research protocol and data collection tools

The Manoff Group designed a set of draft data collection tools for each of the research methods in English. These included semi-structured discussion guides for the Focus Group Discussions, semi-structured guides for the Best Friend Interviews, structured interviews for the in-depth interviews, and observation checklists and guides for the direct observations. Informed consent forms were also prepared for use with every research participant.

Ethical clearance of the research protocol and data collection tools was secured from Save the Children’s Research Ethics Review Board in Washington, DC. BDS-CDR and SCI Growth through Nutrition also informed the Federal Ministry of Health (FMOH) about the research, who in turn provided approval and a letter of support to each Regional Health Bureau (RHB). The RHBs, in turn, wrote letters of support to their respective Woreda Health Offices and informed their woreda and kebele officials whose communities were selected for the study.
2.3 Pretesting the data collection tools

These tools were reviewed and translated from English into local languages (Amharic, Oromiffa and Tigrigna), and visual prompts, including photographs (picture codes) for use during the FGDs, IDIs and BFIs, and images for the pile sorts. The translated tools were again back-translated from the local languages to English by the data collection teams and their supervisors during their training. This step was considered important to ensure quality and reliability of the translations as well as in ensuring that the data collection teams are consistent in their use of specific vocabulary, terminology and questions respondents asked, regardless of the local language they are using.

Pretesting of the instrument and the data collection process was conducted by trained research team members from August 10 to 12, 2017 in one kebele of Koka woreda, East Shoa zone of Oromia Region.

Findings from the pretest were used by the research team to improve and finalize the tools immediately after the preetest. Questions that were unclear for pretest participants were later modified. For example, the question “How could programs help families and girls of your age to improve their nutrition?” was rephrased to become “What ideas do you have about how to help families and girls of your age to improve their nutrition?” and the question “Who observes fasting?” was changed to “Who fasts?”

2.4 Research teams and training

Three research teams were used for the data collection. In each of the three teams, there were three female researchers, one male researcher, and one male supervisor. These fifteen team members were trained over three days, from August 7 to 9, 2017, in Addis Ababa. The training included an overview of the Growth through Nutrition project, a briefing on the adolescent and maternal nutrition situation in Ethiopia, the research purpose and objectives, the research methods, research ethics, the research protocol, and the data collection tools. All of the research team members had a minimum of a Bachelor’s Degree in a health-related or nutrition area of study.

Training was delivered through mini-lectures, power point presentations, group and individual reviews of each data collection tool, and time to practice administering the tools and employing the research methods (especially the DRPs, BFIs and pile sorts, which most of the researchers had not used previously) through small group work and role plays. The training was designed and facilitated by an international consultant engaged by The Manoff Group, working in collaboration with the Growth through Nutrition team in Ethiopia and BDS CDR.

Immediately after the training, the teams had additional time to practice using the data collection tools by pretesting them in a nearby community. Following the pretest and finalization of the tools, the tools were then photocopied in sufficient quantities for the research teams to use during their field work.
2.5 Study sites (food secure/food insecure communities)

Save the Children’s technical team and regional teams working in the Growth through Nutrition project selected a total of ten different sites in five woredas, with two sites in each woreda (one woreda in each of the five regional groupings). Each of the two sites was selected based on the nutritional status of each kebele; one food-secured and / highest ENGINE endline rankings of MUAC and BMI while the other food insecure and / lower ENGINE baseline rankings of MUAC and BMI. The regional groupings, woredas and each kebeles (one vulnerable kebele and one non-vulnerable kebele) in the same woreda selected by the Growth through Nutrition (SCI) are indicated in Table 2 below.

Table 2: List of regions, woredas and kebeles selected for formative research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Woreda</th>
<th>Kebele 1 (Non-Vulnerable kebele)</th>
<th>Kebele 2 (Vulnerable kebele)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tigray</td>
<td>TahtayKoraro</td>
<td>Semema</td>
<td>Tahatay Adigabro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amhara</td>
<td>Habru</td>
<td>Srinka</td>
<td>Dire Roka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Oromia</td>
<td>Dodola</td>
<td>Genata Hara</td>
<td>Baka kebele</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Oromia</td>
<td>Wonchi</td>
<td>Meti Walga</td>
<td>Warabu kebele</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNNPR</td>
<td>West Azernet</td>
<td>Jiro</td>
<td>Lera Kenema Kebeles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.6 Research participants—recruitment process

All individual households in the food secure kebeles were categorized as “non-vulnerable kebele” while those from food insecure kebeles were categorized as “vulnerable kebele.”

The participants’ recruitment process was conducted by Save the Children field coordinators. The process included the identification of households with adolescent girls who met demographic criteria specified in the research protocol, which included age, religion, and “vulnerable kebele/non-vulnerable kebele” classification. The recruitment and selection process also identified mothers and fathers of adolescent girls as research participants using similar criteria.

Recruitment of FGDs participants

In each of the ten kebeles, an average of six girls between the ages of 10 and 14 years who are students/enrolled in school, five girls between the ages of 15 and 19 who are not students/not enrolled in school, and seven mothers or fathers of adolescent girls between the ages of 10 and 19 years were recruited and participated in the study.

During the selection of the FGD participants, the research teams ensured that:

- Participants were not related to one another (i.e. in the girls’ FGDs, none of the girls were sisters or cousins; women participated in the mothers’ FGDs were not married to any of the men participated in the fathers’ FGDs).
- Participants were not living in the same household.
- Participants were not next-door neighbors.
- Participants who participated in the FGDs were not selected to participate in the BFIs.
All FGD participants gave their informed consent prior to participating in the research. Informed written parental consent was also attained for all adolescent girls participating in the FGDs.

Recruitment of Best Friend Interview (BFI) participants

In each of the selected kebeles, the research teams recruited eight adolescent girls who met the selection criteria. The selection process included:

- asking each adolescent girl to name her “best friend” and to indicate where this best friend lived;
- locating the parents of the girl’s “best friend” and asking permission to speak with the “best friend”;
- confirming the “best friend” status once the pairs of girls had been established;
- ensuring that the two “best friends” were not related to one another (i.e. none of the girls were sisters or cousins);
- ensuring that the two “best friends” were not living in the same household; and
- ensuring that the girls participating in the BFIs were not also participating in the FGDs.

Informed parental consent, as well as the girls’ own informed consent, was attained for all adolescent girls participating in the BFIs.

Recruitment of participant for Direct Observations (DO)

In each BFI pair of adolescent girls between the ages of 10 and 14 years old, one girl was selected for direct observation. In half of the BFI pairs of adolescent girls between the ages of 15 and 19 years old, who were also out-of-school, girls were also selected for direct observation.

Informed parental consent, as well as the girls’ own informed consent, was attained for all adolescent girls participating in the direct observations.

Recruitment of participants for In-Depth Individual Interviews (IDI)

IDI participants were selected among the mothers and fathers of the adolescent girls who participated either in FGDs or BFIs. In each of the selected kebeles, five mothers and five fathers were identified and selected. The recruitment process including ensuring that none of the IDI participants were related to one another (i.e. none of the women participants are married to any of the men participants), and that none of the IDI participants were living in the same household or were next-door neighbors. Additionally, none of the IDI participants were selected to participate in the FGDs. All IDI participants gave their informed consent prior to participating in the research.

Steps used in the recruitment of research participants at each household in each kebele

The research teams followed the same general process to recruit research participants:
1. Self-introduction and explaining the purpose of the visit to local officials;
2. Self-introduction and explaining the purpose of the visit to heads of household;
3. Administering screening questions on the recruitment sheet and discussion with heads of household and family members on the recruitment criteria;
4. Attaining informed consent, using the consent forms established as part of the research protocol and ethical guidelines;
5. Consulting parents and local officials to set appointments for a follow-up participation in the research, either in the household or in a designated meeting place in the community.

2.7 Data collection

All FGD, BFIs, and IDIs were conducted in local Ethiopian languages spoken by the research participants, and were audio recorded. The data collection teams also took field notes while conducting these methods with the participants. Direct observations were not audio recorded. The data collection teams used a pre-designed checklist to document their observations.

2.8. Data management, processing and analysis

All FGDs, BFIs, and IDIs were audio-recorded using digital recorders and transcribed in local languages (Amharic, Oromifa and Tigregna). The transcribed data was entered into Atlas.ti based on preliminary list of broad thematic codes provided in a codebook developed by The Manoff Group. The collected data was organized with identification numbers that described the respondents’ category, region, woreda and kebele. Transcribed data were also arranged and organized with their codes and types of respondents. Data analysis of the transcriptions from the FGDs, BFIs and IDIs was conducted manually and with Atlas.ti.

2.9. Informed consent process

All adolescent girls and their parents were given an explanation of the purpose of the research, a description of what their participation would entail and the duration of their participation. Participants were also advised on the measures to ensure the confidentiality of information they would provide, and were advised that their participation was not required, was to be voluntary, and that they could opt-out anytime. Written consent forms were translated into the local languages and used to secure the written informed consent of each participant.

All interviews and group discussions were conducted in settings that ensured participants’ privacy.

2.10. Limitations of the study

Most qualitative research studies use a relatively small sample of participants and therefore have the inherent limitation of not being designed to yield statistically significant findings. In this study, 371 participants, including adolescent girls between the ages of 10 and 19 and the parents of adolescent girls. The study design overcame this standard challenge by ensuring a diversity of geographic locations, and the careful selection of respondents who were representative of ENGINE’s general beneficiaries. Although the sample size was small, the fact that the study was carried out in different regions and communities increases the reliability of the findings—in other
words, increases the likelihood that the findings from this research would be similar to the findings of other studies using a similar design.

2.9. Efforts to ensure data validity and reliability

To ensure collection of quality data, qualified data collectors with prior experience conducting qualitative research methods were engaged for this study. All of the data collection team members were trained on the methodologies and tools and participated in the pilot testing of the tools. Data collectors were assigned to the communities who speak the same local language. Data collectors also conducted the research methods with participants whose gender matched their own. FGDs with adolescent girls or with mothers of adolescent girls were conducted by trained female facilitators and female note-takers while FGDs with fathers were conducted by male facilitators and male note-takers. IDIs with mothers were conducted by female interviewers, while IDIS with fathers were conducted by male interviewers. Finally, BFIs and Direct Observations (which were always with adolescent girls) were conducted only by women interviewers. Each BFI with adolescent girls was conducted by one trained woman interviewer who also directly observed adolescent girls on shadow observation and meal preparation.

Data collection supervisors were assigned to each team for daily oversight. In addition, research managers from BDS-CDR and the Growth through Nutrition project conducted spot checking on completed questionnaires, to review preliminary data and findings, and to provide feedback. Feedback provided to the data collection teams included reminders to make field notes, correcting labeling, and addressing information gaps in completed questionnaires.

All FGDs, IDIs and BFIs were audio-recorded and transcribed. The written transcripts were checked for validity and reliability through a random selection of 10% of the transcripts that were then compared to the audio-recordings.
III. FINDINGS

3.1 Description of the Research Participants

A total of 371 individuals participated in the research, among whom 259 were adolescent girls (137 young adolescents aged 10-14 years; 122 older adolescents aged 15-19 years) and 112 were parents (61 fathers and 51 mothers) of adolescent girls.

The 371 participants were distributed among the various research methods: 169 participants were in FGDs (105 of whom were adolescent girls and 64 were parents of adolescent girls), 154 participants were in BFIs, 30 participants were in Direct Observations, and 48 participants were in IDIs (Table 3). Muslims, Orthodox Christians, and Protestants accounted for 43% 30% and 9% respectively of all research participants, while 18% of participants did not disclose their religion.

Table 3: Distribution of study participants by data collection method

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>Amhara</th>
<th>Oromia</th>
<th>SNNPR</th>
<th>Tigray</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FGD 10-14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD 15-19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD mothers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD fathers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total FGD</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BFIs 10-14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BFIs 15-19</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total BFIs</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDIs Mothers</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDIs fathers</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total IDI</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Total</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>83</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Focus Group Discussion Participants

The number of focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted nearly as planned in the research design. A total of twenty-nine (29) FGDs, rather than the 30 FGDs planned, were conducted. The discussions included the use of Diagnostic Role Plays (DRPs), pile sorts and picture codes to generate additional insights around the girls’ family dynamics and relationships with their parents, especially through non-verbal communication.
Table 4: Focus Group Discussion Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Profiles</th>
<th>Number of Focus Groups</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adolescent Girls 10 – 14 years old in school</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescent Girls 15-19 years old out-of-school</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers of adolescent girls</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fathers of adolescent girls</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Best Friend Interview Participants

Eighty (80) Best friend Interviews were planned in the research design; 77 BFIs were actually conducted, with 77 pairs of girls who self-identified each other’s as “best friend” with an overall total of 154 participants.

Table 5: Best Friend Interview Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Profiles</th>
<th>Number of Pairs</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adolescent girls</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Direct Observation Participants

Thirty (30) Direct Observations were conducted as planned in the research design. A total of 30 adolescent girls, 20 younger (10-14 years old) in-school girls and 10 older (15-19 years old) out-of-school girls were directly observed during meal preparation and daily activity across all the five regional groupings. Observations provided some information about the frequency of certain practices.

Table 6: Direct Observation Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Profiles</th>
<th>Number of Observations of</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adolescent girls (10-14 years old; in-school)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescent girls (15-19 years old; out-of-school)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In-Depth Interview Participants

Fifty (50) in-depth individual interviews (IDIs) were planned in the research design. A total of 48 IDIs were actually conducted with the mothers (23) and fathers (25) of the adolescent girls who participate in the Best Friend Interviews and/or the Direct Observations. The IDIs were used to confirm information provided by the girls’ reports and directly observed behaviors.
Table 7: In-Depth Interview Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Profiles</th>
<th>Number of Interviews</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mothers of adolescent girls</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fathers of adolescent girls</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2 Gender-bound categorizations of girls, boys and their roles

Pile sorts were used during focus group discussions (FGDs) with parents to gain insights around the gender-bound perceptions of mothers and fathers of adolescent girls and boys, and what it means to be female or to be male. During the FGDs, mothers and fathers were asked to sort a set of 20 images into three piles: (1) “BOY”; (2) “GIRL” and (3) “UNDECIDED. The images were: a flower, a tree, a horse, a lion, a sheep, the sun, the rain, meat, rice, eyes, a mouth, money, a hand, a waliya (monkey), water, a fish, a monkey, a bird, a cat, and a dog (Appendix 2). Participants were then asked to explain why they placed each image in one of the given piles. Responses, along with the general discussion around perceived gender characteristics and roles of adolescent boys and girls were part of the qualitative data analyzed in this research.

Figure 1: Distribution of pile sort images

Gender-bound categorizations of “GIRL” (female)

Across all regions, parents participating in the FGDs nearly unanimously placed images of the bird and the flower into the “GIRL” pile. Participants most often explained their reasons for categorizing these images as belonging to the “GIRL” pile because they perceived them to
represent beauty, softness, and fragility. In several instances, participants also associated the flower with women’s fertility.

Meanwhile, the majority of fathers and mothers also placed the cat and the sun into the “GIRL” pile. The most frequent explanations around categorizing these two images as representing the female were that the cat, who participants describes as being primarily inside of the home, and the sun, that participants perceived to be nurturing and caring for everyone. In many instances, participants also associated the bird with these feminine characteristics:

We said this flower is female because this flower is pretty, beautiful and it describes more female/ girl. (Mother, FGD/Amhara)

Its (the flower’s) physical appearance looks like female; females are beautiful, pretty and they are important for us anywhere. We marry female by taking their prettiness into consideration. (Father, FGD/Amhara)

Flower is soft, aromatic, bright, beautiful. Flower is attractive and girls and women are too. We buy and give flowers to girls and women. (Father, FGD/SNNPR)

(We call Birds female) because their sound is thin like a women... A bird is very light, and very small so she is thought of as a women. (Fathers, FGD/Tigray)

We told you that Bird is female. When we say ‘Mr. X’s daughter looks like a bird’ we mean she is beautiful. Therefore, we said that Bird is female. (Father, FGD/Oromia)

Birds collect food and feed their children just like mothers. Birds also deal with household works just like female and therefore represent girls. (Father, FGD/SNNPR)

Because a bird is always hard worker, always thinks about her child. A male bird may bring food for one time for his child after he has had enough. The female always flies in search of food because she thinks for her children. As a women dedicated for her home, she is also dedicate like her. She thinks and contributes like making a house, preparing food, laying eggs and hatching them. (Mother, FGD/SNNPR)

A flower is like women because it blooms. The reason why we called the flower a woman is because she is fertile. But a man not. (Mothers, FGD/Tigray)

A cat is called by female sex because cat and female spent their time going kitchen to kitchen. (Father, FGD/Amhara)

Mothers FGD participants from SNNPR “A cat is honest housekeeper but can’t keep outdoor issues like dog (who can keep your cattle). She will keep the house from rat. (Mother, FGD/SNNPR)

Sun is like a girl because sun reaches every place and females are capable of doing everything. (Mother, FGD/Oromia)
We say the sun is a mother. Sun gives light for all; reaches everywhere even to the moon. A mother is a feeder for all and the best of the best. (Mother, FGD/SNNPR)

A woman who receives a stranger, for example, if she treats them well, she is called a woman like the sun. (Fathers, FGD/Tigray)

Because the picture of the sun has a ray and it looks like a mother’s womb, she is considered as a woman. (Fathers, FGD/Tigray)

Gender-bound categorizations of “BOY” (male)

Across all regions, parents participating in the FGDs nearly unanimously placed the images of the lion and the dog into the “BOY” pile. The majority of parents also placed the image of a horse into the “BOY” pile. Participants most often explained their reasons for categorizing these images as belonging to the “BOY” pile because they perceived them to represent strength, power, forcefulness, aggressiveness, protectiveness, and bravery:

The Lion is male because a lion is terribly forceful. (Father, FGD/Amhara)

The Lion is king of all wild animals. It is a monitor of all of them (animals). It lives in a forest or in wired fence due to its fierce manner; as it may cause danger if released. So it is male. (Father, FGD/Oromia)

The Lion represents power. The Lion is the hero, the Lion is brave, and the Lion is fast. As such, the Lion represents a male / boy more than a female / girl”. (Father, FGD/SNNPR)

The black lion is strong. Because of his power, no one provokes him. It is a man. (Mother, FGD/SNNPR)

Wow the Lion! It is the symbol of bravery, so we would say it is a man. (Mother, FGD/Tigray)

A dog barks, stands up, fights against enemy just like men. (Father, FGD/Oromia)

Dog is described to be a guardian, a soldier, a powerful and scary creature and represents a male/Boy. (Father FGD/SNNPR)

The Horse is in the (“BOY” pile) because it is a bully! Because it has power.” (Father, FGD/SNNPR)

The majority of participants also placed money into the “BOY” pile. Most participants explained that this is because money belongs to men, that men are the ones who control money, and that men are the ones who make financial transactions. For example, fathers in FGDs conducted in Amhara region said:
Money is male because money belongs to male again if the money is more and is not controled by men it is terrible.

Money is categorized under male because a man brings the money and females ask a money from a man.

Fathers in an FGD conducted in Oromia region said:

Money, mostly belongs to men. (People will often say) ‘The building is built by Mr. X., a mill planted by Mr. X. Mr. X bought a car.’ Since the payment is settled by the male, money tends toward the male.

Mothers participating in FGDs across the region had gender categorizations of money that are similar to their male counterparts:

Why we said money is a man is that we don’t say it is her money but only it is his money. (Mothers’ FGD/Amhara)

I think mostly males own money. (Mothers’ FGD/Oromia)

Gender-neutral or gender-mixed categorizations of “GIRL” and “BOY”

Fish, meat, and lips were generally more gender-neutral, with nearly equal numbers of participants placing these in the BOY, GIRL or UNDECIDED piles. Reasons for assigning the images to one or the other gender category were similar to those given for the more gender-bound images. On the occasions when parents assigned the fish to the BOY pile, it was because they associated it with the same characteristics they attributed to the lion, dog and horse: large size, power and strength. When parents assigned meat and lips to the GIRL pile, they gave the same reasons that they gave when they assigned the flower and the sun to the GIRL pile: because they associated these images with softness or sweetness.

The rice and the tree were similarly mixed-gender categories. While rice was uniformly perceived as being the source of strength and sustenance, these attributes were sometimes perceived as male (BOY) and other times perceived as female (GIRL). A tree was sometimes perceived as having the attributes of large size and being a source of protection (BOY) and other times was associated with the perceived feminine trait of fertility (GIRL):

When any cooked food is eaten, it becomes a power for everyone. Similarly, since rice gives us power when we eat it, it is named by a male. (Fathers, FGD/Tigray)

I consider it as female. Rice is important; female is also important for infants and children. Rice is a female. (Mothers, FGD/SNNPR)

Since it is cultivated by a male and like a male it is big and shades all. As such the tree represents the male. (Fathers, FGD/Amhara)
There is something with trees. Females are identified by their fruits and female bears fruits; so tree is female. (Fathers, FGD/SNNPR)

With some of the images, participants focused more on visual cues—for example, the picture of the monkey had a beard, therefore it must be placed in the BOY pile; the picture of the sheep appeared to have a penis, and therefore it must also be placed in the BOY pile.

In some instances, participants paid attention to the perceived functions of the image and placed the images in piles based on gender roles related to these functions. For example, rice is cooked by women- therefore rice must be placed in the GIRL pile. A tree is made into lumber which is used by construction, therefore a tree must be placed in the BOY pile.

Plants are being planted by male. It is male who cultivates, develop, and provide care for a tree. Mostly trees/plants are used by males for construction, making various doors, a carpenter who makes good things and bed at various places is male. So it is male. (Fathers, FGD/Oromia)

In a few cases, participants focused their attention on the glass containing water, rather than on the water itself—in these cases, they assigned the image to the “GIRL” pile because they perceived the glass to be fragile, easy to break (i.e. their perception of feminine characteristics).

This glass is for example weak in its nature. It is being broken by small things. Females are feeble like that. Therefore, I call it in female gender. (Fathers, FGD/SNNPR)

3.3 Adolescent girls’ day-to-day life (activities and relationships)

Household chores and duties outside of the home

Information on adolescent girls’ day-to-day life was collected through FGDs and BFIIs among the adolescent girls, and through IDIs with their mothers and fathers. Additionally, selected adolescent girls who participated in the BFIIs were directly observed.

Across all five regional areas, and across all religions, age groups and school status, adolescent girls reported engaging in household chores as well as in duties outside the home. Caring for younger siblings (washing, dressing, and feeding their younger siblings), preparing and serving breakfast, preparing and serving lunch, preparing and doing coffee ceremonies, cleaning the house, and washing clothes were some of the most common household chores reported by the adolescent girls. Meal preparation often includes preparing injera or bread and making wot. Girls from SNNPR also commonly reported preparing kocho.

Early in the morning, first I clean the house, then I prepare breakfast and make coffee, and serve the family members. Then I wash the plates, dishes and cups and other household utensils we used and put them in order; prepare lunch and carry out other household chores up to 12 am. In the afternoon, I go to school. After school, I fetch
water; and help in other household chores. After all these, I do my homework and go to bed. (Adolescent Girl, Amhara/Sirnka)

I fetch water, collect animal dung, prepare breakfast, help my mother either in baking Injera or in preparing ‘wot’ (soup), undertake coffee ceremony. Additionally, I help my father in ploughing land, sewing, weeding, and harvesting crops. (Adolescent girl, 13 years old girl, Oromia/Baka kebele, Dodola woreda, West Arsi)

I clean the house, prepare breakfast, prepare lunch, and dinner. I take care of my younger siblings including cleaning, feeding, washing their clothes and entertaining them. I also help my father in weeding or harvesting based on the season. (Adolescent Girl, 15-19 years old, Baka Kebele, Dodola Woreda, Out-of-school)

Washing herself [personal hygiene], she cleans the house and makes coffee. Then she fetches water from the river. As in our country (locality), we eat Enset (Ensete Ventricosum). The processing of this Enset involves several tasks. She grinds that Enset, washes it and then cooks it. (Mother of Adolescent Girl, West Oromia)

Girls reported that their most common chores outside of the home include helping their parents in cultivating home gardens, other farming activities, fetching water, collecting cooking fuel (firewood and cow dung), bringing lunch to their fathers working in the fields; selling agricultural products and running errands.

I help my father in every farm-related activity including land preparation, weeding, and doing whatever my father orders me to do. Additionally, I have fruits (Mango and Orange) in the garden to take care of. (Adolescent girl, 17 years old, out-of-school, Amhara/Dire Roka, vulnerable kebele)

Collecting firewood, fetching water, cleaning manure. (Adolescent girl, 10-14 years out-of-school, BFI/Oromia, non-vulnerable kebele)

I collect fire woods, clean the compound, plant crops and water them. (Adolescent girl, 10-14 years, FGD/SNNPR, out-of-school, vulnerable kebele)

I get up at 6 o'clock, then I fetch water, eat my breakfast and go to school. After school I eat my lunch and go to Kuran. After that I fetch water and collect woods. At evening I read the Koran. (Adolescent girl 10-14 years old, BFI/Amhara, Muslim, in-school)

My mother and I do all the household chores. All my family members are male. It is me who pulled the cattle out, cutting the wood and cutting grasses.” (Adolescent girl, 15-19 years old, BFI/SNNPR, out-of-school)

The findings from the direct observations of selected girls reveal that nearly all adolescent girls observed are engaged in household chores and activities outside of home. This finding was consistent across all region, age group, and status of kebele. Activities include food preparation, coffee ceremonies, fetching water and fetching wood. Younger adolescent girls
(10 – 14 years old) are generally more likely to do household chores than their older counterparts (15-19 years old) in all but the Tigray region, where older adolescent girls are more likely than younger girls to do household chores (Figures 2 and 3). In West Oromia, adolescent girls of all ages are less likely to be doing household chores than their counterparts in Amhara, SNNP, East Oromia and Tigray. The analysis did not, however, explain the reasons why West Oromia was different in this regard.

**Figure 2: HH chores and outside activities of 10-14-year-old adolescent girls (in school and out-of-school)**

![Figure 2](image_url)

**Figure 3: HH chores and outside activities of 15-19 year-old adolescent girls (in school and out-of-school)**

![Figure 3](image_url)
Findings of observed household chores and outside activities of adolescent girls were compared by vulnerability status of kebeles across the regions. Adolescent girls in vulnerable kebeles generally seem to be doing more household chores and outside activities than their counterparts in non-vulnerable kebeles in Amhara and east Oromia region. The opposite is true, however, in Tigray region where adolescent girls in non-vulnerable kebeles are doing more household chores and outside activities than their vulnerable kebele counterparts. In SNNPR, while adolescent girls were not observed doing household chores in non-vulnerable kebeles, those in the vulnerable kebeles were doing more than their vulnerable kebele and non-vulnerable kebele counterparts in the other regions.

Coffee ceremony preparation was observed only among adolescent girls in the non-vulnerable kebeles in Amhara and East Oromia and only among adolescent girls in the vulnerable kebeles from SNNPR and West Oromia while it was observed in both categories of kebeles in Tigray. More adolescent girls were observed doing coffee ceremonies in non-vulnerable kebeles in Tigray than in any other study area. Findings around most of the other chores and activities of adolescent girls were inconclusive and variable, as shown in Figures 4 (girls in non-vulnerable kebeles) and 5 (girls in vulnerable kebeles) below.

**Figure 4: HH chores, outside Activities, Leisure and entertainment among Adolescent Girls 10-19 years old from Non-Vulnerable Kebeles**
Leisure and entertainment

After household chores are completed, in-school adolescent girls do their homework or spend their leisure time with their peers, while their out-of-school peers carry out their errands outside of the home and also spend their leisure time with their friends. The majority of the adolescent girls in the study reported that they usually complete their chores around 3 pm and will then play with their peers as their main leisure and entertainment activity. Some girls also reported watching television and listening to the radio. Leisure and entertainment activities depend on the season: during the rainy season and during harvest time, girls do not have time for leisure and entertainment as they spend most of their time in the fields helping their parents.

Figure 5: HH chores, outside Activities, Leisure and entertainment among Adolescent Girls 10-19 years old from Vulnerable Kebeles

Religious life

The majority of the participants reported being either Christian (Orthodox or Protestant) or Muslim. The Muslim girls reported going to mosque for Friday prayer and during major holidays; some reported performing the five daily prayers at the mosque. The majority of the Christian girls reported attending church on Sundays and major holidays.

Interactions and relationships with family members

Data on adolescent girls’ interactions and relationships with their family members were collected in different ways. In FGDs and BFIs, adolescent girls were shown a picture of “Abeba”, a fictional
adolescent girl, as a visual prompt for discussions about adolescent girls and their relationships with friends and family members. Many adolescent girls in the FGDs said that the older woman with Abeba in the photograph is Abeba’s mother and thought that they were most likely discussing household chores or Abeba’s school or her studies. Meanwhile, girls said that the older man with Abeba in another photograph was most likely her father, and that he was probably advising her to study well at school, or telling her how to behave, or asking her to help him with the farm work.

Adolescent girls were asked with whom they pass most of their time in and outside of their homes, and what they usually do with the other person or people with whom they spend the most time. When asked what they think Abeba does outside of the home, many adolescent girls responded that Abeba might help her father with farming, or fetch water, or perhaps play with her friends.

In some FGDs, girls were also asked to do role plays to demonstrate how they would interact with either their mother or their father in a given scenario. Girls were also directly observed in their home environments by a woman research team member over extended periods of time. The observation data included information about who the girls were with, what they were doing, as well as quantitative and qualitative assessments of the quality of the interactions (e.g. recording non-verbal communication such as facial expressions, laughter, how many minutes the girls were engaging with another family member, etc.).

Almost all the adolescent girls participating in the study reported that at home they are usually with their mothers, sisters or brothers. Fathers are usually at work (primarily farming and agriculture activities) and are therefore less likely to be with at home, except at meal times or at night. Very few girls reported spending much time with their grandparents or aunties. Girls reported doing many of their household chores, including cleaning house, washing household utensils, or clothes, preparing food, or coffee ceremonies, with their mothers. Some girls also reported to going to the market with their mothers.

*I spend time with my mom and my sister in the house. I work, cleaning and cooking with my mom. I work in collaboration with my sister, for example, if she washes utensils, I will cook, make coffee and she will bake injera.* (Adolescent girl, 10-14 years, BFI/Amhara, in school/non-vulnerable kebeles)

*At home I spent most of the time with my mother. We prepare kocho, wash utensils, clean house. We are not living with my father and other siblings. My sisters and brothers are living in another area.* (Adolescent girl, 15-19 years old, BFI/SNNPR, out-of-school/vulnerable kebele)

*We talk about our house and sanitary issues with my mother. If I become a good student, she promised me that she would provide me with an award. We stay together from 2 to 3 hours.* (Adolescent girl, 15-19 years old, BFI/Tigray, out-of-school, vulnerable kebele)

*Most of the time ‘Abeba’ does not meet her father because he goes farming. She frequently meets with her mother because she goes nowhere. She works with her mother. Her mother tells her to study. She attends her school. Sometimes she fetches water by donkey but not carry it herself. Most of the time she studies till 4 pm and plays till 6 pm.*
Then comes back to home and may discuss about her education. They may talk about the difficult subjects. (Adolescent girl, 10-14 years old, FGD/SNNPR, in school, Muslim, non-vulnerable kebele)

Mothers participating in FGDs were asked to look at a photograph of an older woman talking with an adolescent girl, while fathers participating in FGDs were asked to look at a photograph of an older man talking with an adolescent girl. Researchers facilitating the FGDs then asked the participants about the photograph: what they believed the two people were talking about, what their relationship is, if such discussions and relationships are common in their community, and what they discuss with their own adolescent daughters.

Mothers uniformly reported that the older woman in the photograph was the mother of the adolescent girl. Most mothers also believed that the mother and daughter in the photograph were discussing household chores, and many also believed that the mother was advising the girl about good and bad behaviors, what to do and what to avoid. Most mothers reported that they themselves commonly discuss similar topics with their own adolescent daughters and advise them to be good students. While some mothers said they discuss everything with their daughters, including menstruation and topics related to sex, other mothers reported that it is not common in their communities for mothers and daughters to discuss these topics.

I discuss everything with my daughter. I told her menstruation is a normal thing in female and that she shouldn’t be surprised or get ashamed if it happens to her. I told her this before my daughter started to get menstruation. I purchased a dozen pairs of underwear and gave her. (Mother, FGD/SNNPR, 54 years old)

I never have openly discussed the issue of menstruation with my daughter. I don’t want her to know that I am on menstruation and she has never told me about hers. I fear openly discussing such issue with girls might indulge them to early sex. (Mother, FGD/SNNPR, 32 years old)

Mothers and fathers alike reported that many of their conversations with their adolescent daughters are around their giving advice for their daughters to have successful futures. Parents frequently reported that they advised their daughters of the importance of studying and staying in school. Others reported that they urge their daughters to avoid the early onset of sexual activity, and counsel them on how to avoid situations that could put them at risk of rape.

I think the girl and the mother are talking about the hope/future plan of the girl. She is advising her. I also advise my girl in a similar way. I advise her if she studies hard and does well at her school she can achieve the highest possible results. (Mother, IDI, Lerra).

I advise her not to indulge herself in risky behaviors and to be away from risky places that put her at risk of rape which hurt both the body and spirit. I advise her to have good conduct and study hard and that she can become a doctor or married to well to do husband and live a good life. (Father, FGD/Jiro, SNNPR)
Interactions and relationships with friends and peers

During the FGDs, the research teams showed the adolescent girl participants photographs of two girls talking to each other and asked them what they thought the two girls were talking about. Younger girls across all of the regional areas typically said that they thought the two girls in the photograph were talking about household chores, about school, or about their secrets. Some of the younger girls also reported that they talked more with their friends than their mothers about menstruation and related topics.

*There is no family member who advises or teaches me about menstruation. It is only my friend who tells me about it. We have never talked about menstruation with my mother. I am afraid of talking with her about such issues—I never tell her. It is a taboo after all.* (Adolescent girl, 14 years old, BFI/Jiro, SNNPR- non-vulnerable kebele)

Older girls across all of the regions also reported talking about household chores, school and menstruation with their friends. In addition, the older girls more frequently reported talking about intimate topics- especially romance and related secrets—than younger girls did, and they discuss these intimate topics with their friends rather than with their mothers or fathers.

*Whenever I meet my friends, we talked about our aspiration to join a campus after we complete high school; these are the things (we discuss). We do have lots of things to talk.* (Adolescent Girl, 15-19 years, in school BFI/SNNPR, non-vulnerable kebele)

*Most of the time, I spend my time with my friends. When I meet my friend, we talked about menstruation and other things.* (Adolescent girl, 15-19 years old, BFI/Tigray, non-vulnerable kebele)

*As she said, they (the two girls in the photograph) may be talking about love. They may also be discussing menstruation and about their respective families. I also discuss such matters with my friends. I meet up with my friends in the neighborhood and in the church as well. Whenever the piped water has stopped, we also meet at the river.* (Adolescent girl, 15-19 years old, BFI/Amhara-out-of-school, non-vulnerable kebele)

*They (the two girls in the photograph) may be talking about themselves, family matters, or about other people. I talk about such things when I meet my friends. As an example, we might discuss what a particular person has done. I usually meet up with my friends at home in the weekends, at the shop, in the neighborhood, or in our house. When we meet, we usually clean our houses or the (compounds) together, and we also sometimes meet at the river where we wash clothes. We enjoy talking when we meet. We may like talking about things we bought, about marriage, the neighborhood, household matters.* (Adolescent girl, 15-19 years old, out-of-school BFI/SNNPR- vulnerable kebele)

*They meet after they finished their tasks (household chores) usually after 1 pm. They discuss her lover or a man who loved her; about the gift he gave her or any other secrets.* (Adolescent girls, 15-19 years old, FGD/Tigray, non-vulnerable kebele)
3.4 Adolescent girls’ agency (ability to exert some power, control or influence over aspects of their lives or other people)

Girls’ influence on their families’ agricultural production of food

In general, adolescent girls reported having little influence on household decision-making around what foods families would produce. Agricultural decisions are reportedly made by male household members, especially fathers. Fathers decide the kind of foods their households will produce, although mothers do apparently participate in some of this decision-making. The trend of fathers having the main say in a family’s agricultural production decisions proved common across all regions and religions.

It is our father who decides about the household’s food and what type of crops to cultivate for sale. (Adolescent girl, 12 years old, BFI/Lera Knema, SNNPR, student, vulnerable kebele)

I have never suggested an idea and influenced their decisions because they are more knowledgeable than me in this regard. Adolescent girl, 18 years old adolescent girl, BFI/Dire Roka, Amhara – Out-of-school, vulnerable kebele)

I have never suggested an idea. Males’ activities are not my concern. (Adolescent girl, 14 years old, BFI/Dire Roka, Amhara, out-of-school, vulnerable kebele)

While some adolescent girls reported having a good relationship with their fathers, who they perceived as loving and supportive, many raised the limited amount of time that fathers spend at home as a constraint on their relationships with them. Because they do not spend as much time with their fathers, the girls have limited influence on their fathers’ decision-making around agriculture and food production.

Most of the time, I influence my mother to do some things I suggest because the only person whom I find at home is her. I cannot influence my father because he does not stay at home most of the time. (Adolescent girl, 17 years old, BFI/Dire Roka, Amhara, out-of-school, vulnerable kebele)

Nevertheless, there were instances where adolescent girls do seem to have some influence over decisions about what their families would produce through farming. This unusual finding appears to be independent of whether the adolescent girls are in school or out-of-school. Several participants’ comments suggest that parents when listen to their adolescent daughters’ advice on agriculture it is because they believe the girls possess information about new or modern approaches to agriculture. While some of the findings suggest that this influence may be greater with older girls, the research did not yield conclusive evidence that a girl’s ability to influence her parents’ farming-related decisions increases with age.

There are Debero and Wedehakre sorghum species. Wedehakre ripens faster but is commonly affected by birds. So, I told him to cultivate Debero which takes longer time and
he (my father) cultivated Debero. (Adolescent girl, 17 years old, BFI/Dire Roka, Amhara, out-of-school, vulnerable kebele)

There are fertilizers called UREA and DAP that are used in the cultivation of wheat and barley. Whenever they think of cultivating one of the crops, both types of fertilizers have to be used. Since I thought we could get better yield, I influenced them so they could cultivate it. Moreover, I suggested that we could get better yield if we cultivated selected seeds. In this way, I influenced them and made them cultivate the selected one. (Adolescent girl, 17 year old, BFI, Lera Kenema, SNNPR, out-of-school, vulnerable kebele)

Yes, since the adolescent girls understand more than us and have got modern ideas, they say ...it is better to eat this kind of food; that kind of food for ourselves; we will give this kind [of food] for little kids and we agree to their suggestion. Regarding production, we discuss we have to plant this crop on this land; on this kind land we have to sow wheat; on this kind of land, we have to sow maize; on this kind of land, we have to sow potato. We talk to each other saying we have to plant various vegetables. (Father, IDI/Genata Hara, Oromia, non-vulnerable kebele)

Planning/preparing meals

Adolescent girls have much more influence in their households over the planning and preparation of meals, and on health and hygiene, than they do over the types of food their families produce on the family farm. This influence is related to girls’ close relationships with their mothers, who are the lead decision-makers in food preparation. Still, girls’ ability to influence their families on planning and preparing meals is constrained by the actual availability of a given food.

It is me who decides. If I want to prepare food, I do so. I can prepare porridge, various fruits, based on my decision. I can also ask for the things that aren’t available at home to be purchased. (Adolescent girl, 15 years old, BFI/Genata Hara, Oromia, out-of-school, non-Vulnerable kebele)

I influence them in the areas of family health and food. For example, I ask my father to buy soap and I wash his clothes. And regarding food, whenever she (my mother) suggests cooking potatoes, I prepare cabbage or kale. I influence them in such matters. This is because we grow kale in our garden and I tell them (to cook) what’s available. Therefore, they accept my suggestions. (Adolescent girl, 16 years old, BFI/Lera Kenema, SNNPR, student, vulnerable kebele)

I have never influenced them in the area of family health and food, but if I tell (my mother) to buy soap so I can wash clothes, she will do it. Regarding food, she may not accept my suggestion even though I make suggestions because she may not have the money. However, if I tell my father to cultivate potatoes, he will accept it. (Adolescent girl, 15 years old, BFI/ Lera Kenema, SNNPR, student, vulnerable kebele)

She (my daughter) does not know about seeds. If there is food, I tell her to cook it for us, but if it is not available, I tell her that we do not have food. I accept her suggestions
regarding sanitation and implement them. The one she influences is me. (Mother, FGD/Dire Roka, Amhara, vulnerable kebele)

She has never talked to her father about seeds. If she told him about seeds, I do not think he will object it that much as far as it can improve our feeding habits. We normally accept her suggestions regarding food as long as we have the capacity. She mostly influences me concerning the things she needs though she also asks her father. (Mother, FGD/Dire Roka, Amhara, vulnerable kebele)

I influence my mother. Whenever there are things that need to be bought we discuss and make decisions. If I tell her to buy soap, she buys it. I do not give any suggestion concerning the family’s feeding habits. We have never discussed issues of food with my mother. (Adolescent girl, 14 years old, BFI/Jiro, SNNPR, vulnerable kebele)

She always talks about hygiene and sanitation. Regarding meals, if she learns something new, she will immediately put it into practice. (Mother, FGD/Semema, Tigray, non-vulnerable kebele)

Decisions on the use of household income to buy food or other household items, home gardens

The findings suggest that decisions on whether to use household income to buy food or other household items are often made by mothers. Across all of the regions, participants reported that adolescent girls are influential in these decisions.

Sometimes, when there is teff only in the house, I tell them to sell half of it and buy sorghum instead and they conform to my suggestion. (Adolescent girl, BFI/Amhara, out-of-school, non-vulnerable kebele)

We cultivate kale that generates income for the household with my mother. We sell it and use it for household expenditure. (Adolescent girl, 13 years old, BFI/Jiro, SNNPR, non-vulnerable kebele)

Since I have my own chicken, I go there to sell the eggs. And whenever my mother sends me for shopping, I go there and buy food. I buy whatever I want with the money I get from the sale of eggs. (Adolescent girl, 12 years old, BFI/Lera Kenema, SNNPR, vulnerable kebele)

Since I have chickens I sell their eggs and buy all the things my parents and brothers need. (Adolescent girl, 16 years old, BFI/Dire Roka, Amhara, vulnerable kebele)

3.5 Girls’ food consumption and practices

Foods girls consume

Across all regions, it is reported that girls eat similar foods with other household members except some who reported there are variations for fathers and adult males. Commonly, they eat injera with shiro wot, or kale, bread or Kita, and few reported meat, or egg. Kocho is commonly reported
by participants from SNNPR while pasta, macaroni and Ambasha (type of bread) are reported by participants from Tigray.

Asked about the types of food their daughters like to eat, fathers and mothers of adolescent girls commonly reported animal products (meat), fruits, vegetables. Few reported dry foods such as kita and bread.

*She likes eating all the animal products. She also likes vegetables like carrots and fruits.* (Mother, IDI/Jiro, SNNPR, non-vulnerable kebele)

*My daughter likes to eat eggs, meat, lentils and shiro.* (Mother, IDI/Sirinka, Amhara, non-vulnerable kebele)

**Foods girls avoid**

Participants across the regions reported a variety of foods that are avoided by adolescent girls for different reasons. Some participant from the Amhara region, regardless of their religion, reported that if adolescent girls eat animal source foods or spicy foods they will have an early sexual debut and/or be sexually promiscuous. A few also associated eating animal source foods with becoming too fat. Some participants in SNNPR alluded to similar associations, but also noted that these perceptions were generally considered outdated, as nowadays families focus on counseling their daughters about their sexual conduct, rather than on prohibiting them from eating certain foods.

*Feeding animal source foods to girls is not good in our culture because if girls eat and drink good foods, they don’t stay put, they go after men.* (Mother, FGD/Amhara, Muslim, vulnerable kebele)

*In our culture, animal source foods are not good for females because they arouse them and they look for men.* (Mother, IDI/Amhara, Orthodox Christian, vulnerable kebele)

*As our area is of hot climate, it is not advisable for adolescent girls to eat animal products. It increases their sexual need and they go for male; it facilitates their sexual maturity (early onset of menstruation). Though we know vegetables and fruits are good, it is not habitual and also we lack the capacity to do so.* (Mother, FGD/Dire Doka, Amhara, vulnerable kebele)

*We were told not to eat red pepper ‘Wot’ but no one is listening. If she (my daughter) eats red pepper, I don’t forbid it. But since she has begun to menstruate, she might start to go after men and bring bad things.* (Mother, FGD/Amhara, vulnerable kebele)

*In the past, they used to tell us not to give eggs, meat and the like to girls because these foods make them fat. But there is no problem these days, and there is nothing that forbids eating of such foods. These days, we are encouraging them to eat these foods. Whenever the girls become pregnant, mothers feed them such foods since they know the benefits of the foods.* (Father, FGD/Jiro, SNNPR, non-vulnerable kebele)

Nevertheless, these types of food taboos were less common. The majority of participants reported no particular taboos against animal source foods or other foods for adolescent girls.
My girl avoids chicken meat, she hates it. Otherwise there is no any cultural issue associated with it. (Father, IDI/Sirinka, Amhara, Orthodox Christian)

She avoids dry injera with chilli, she simply doesn’t like it. But there is no any food culturally forbidden. (Father, IDI/Dire Roka, Amhara, Muslim)

Girl’s food consumption practices during family meals (quantity, family member priority for food quantities, types of food, order of being served)

During family meals, respondents reported that there are differences among family members in terms of the quantity of food, types of food, and order of being served based on the gender and age of the family members. Nevertheless, these variations were not uniformly reported across regions and vulnerable kebele/non-vulnerable kebeles.

Concerning variations in the amount of food, girls tended to report that fathers in particular, and sometimes other male relatives such as brothers, receive the largest servings of food. Girls explained that this is because fathers and other males in the household exert more energy through hard work and so need the additional quantities of food. Other reasons for fathers receiving larger quantities of food to eat were because men have more power and hold the highest position of respect in the family. This finding was consistent across regions and across vulnerable and non-vulnerable kebeles.

Whenever he comes from work and since he is a man, my father eats more than me and my mother. However, I think I eat similar amount with what my mother eats because when we serve Injera, we eat and finish at an equal pace. (Adolescent girl, 15-19 years old, BFI/Amhara, Christian, out-of-school, non-vulnerable kebele)

It is my father who eats. There is no one who forbids him if he wants to eat varieties of food. (Adolescent Girl, BFI/Warabuu Massii, Oromia, in school, vulnerable kebele)

Since we are children, we eat a small amount of food. Most of the time our father and mother eat more, since we are young we eat one slice while they eat two slices. (Adolescent girl, 10-14 years old, BFI/Oromia, Christian, out-of-school, vulnerable kebele)

For men it is a lot, since they are working hard work, they eat a lot. This is what is said. (Adolescent girl, 15-19 years old, BFI/SNNPR, Muslim, non-vulnerable kebele)

More is always given for my father. He comes back from a hard day’s work of farming and chopping wood. He exerts a lot of energy so he has to be served with more food. (Adolescent girl, 18 years old, Lera Kebele, SNNPR, vulnerable kebele)

My father and brother are served without any limit. My mother and I eat together at the same time equally. The reason why their food is greater is because they are men and they can eat a lot. (Adolescent girl, 15-19 years old, SNNPR, vulnerable kebele)
The family member who eats the most is my father because he is the head of the house. (Adolescent girl, 14 years old, BFI/Senema, Tigray, in-school, non-vulnerable kebele)

All the family members eat the same type of food. The amount may vary. My daughter eats small amounts but eats frequently. (Mother, IDI/Sirinka, Amhara, non-vulnerable kebele)

While fathers reportedly consume more food than their adolescent daughters and other family members regardless of the region or kebele, in vulnerable kebeles families also tend to reserve the most nutrient-rich foods for fathers, while adolescent daughters and other family members had less access to these foods.

Family members eat the same type of food but sometimes what fathers eat can be different from others. (Adolescent girl, 10-14 years old, FGD/SNNPR, vulnerable kebele)

Sometimes different food, kotcho with cheese, is prepared for father while kotcho with cabbage is prepared for me and my mother and my father eat first. Because he is a father and is respected. (Adolescent girl, 10-14 years old, FGD/SNNPR, vulnerable kebele)

I eat the same type of food as my mother does. But, sometimes, something different is made for my father. For example, if we are eating Kocho with kale, he might be served with Milk or cottage cheese. But at other times we all eat the same type of food, like injera or other foods with protein and carbohydrates. (Adolescent girl, 17 years old, BFI/Lera Kenema, SNNPR, out-of-school, vulnerable kebele)

As to the habit of eating together and order of meals being served, commonly, girls eat together with their mother and boys eat together with their father. Fathers or father and mother are also reported to take the first order to eat.

The family members eat food together. But girls eat together with females and boys eat together with males. (Father, FGD/Dire Roka, Amhara, vulnerable kebele)

We all eat together but my girl eats with her mother. Males eat with males. However, if she (my girl) reach home during the meal, she can eat with them (males). (Father, FGD/Amhara, Muslim, vulnerable kebele)

... My father is served alone, the rest of us, me, my mother and brother eat together. (Adolescent girl, 15-19 years old, SNNPR, vulnerable kebele)

My father and mother eat first because they are respected. (Adolescent girl, 10-14 years old, SNNPR, Muslim, out-of-school, vulnerable kebele)

... My father eats first. Because he is a father and is respected. (Adolescent girl 10-14 years old, FGD/SNNPR, vulnerable kebele)

With the exception of families sometimes reserving the more nutrient-rich foods for fathers, the findings suggest that most family members eat the same types of food.
Yes, (we eat the) same food, because in one house the same food is prepared. (Adolescent girl, 10-14 years old, FGD/Oromia, vulnerable kebele)

We eat the same, I eat till I am full. (Adolescent girl, 10-14 years old, BFI/Tigray, in school, non-vulnerable kebele)

We eat similar foods. But my father is served alone, the rest of us, me, my mother and brother are eating together. (Adolescent girl, 15-19 years old, SNNPR, vulnerable kebele)

Girls in non-vulnerable kebeles generally reported more frequently than their counterparts in vulnerable kebeles did that their family members generally receive the same amount of food.

We all eat the same amount of food. (Adolescent girl, 10-14 years girl old, Amhara, in school, non-vulnerable kebele)

Only me and my mother live together at home. We eat similar and the same amount of food. (Adolescent girl, 15-19 years old, BFI/Amhara, out-of-school, non-vulnerable kebele)

We eat together and the same. (Adolescent girl, 15-19 years old, BFI/Tigray, out-of-school, non-vulnerable kebele)

Yes, we all eat together and the same food because it is our culture. (Adolescent girl, 15-19 years old, BFI/Tigray, out-of-school, vulnerable kebele)

Fasting practices and perceptions

With the exception of those who were Protestants, all of the adolescent girls participating in the study reported that they practice fasting during fasting periods or days. Orthodox Christian and Muslim adolescent girls follow their parents’ fasting practices. Protestant girls, meanwhile, reported that they never fast.

Among the Orthodox Christian girls participating in the study, most reported that generally, those who are fasting do not eat meat, eggs or other animal source foods during the fasting period. The fasting period includes every Wednesday and Friday throughout the year, Easter fasting over (2 months), Sene fasting (1½ months), Filseta fasting (16 days in August), Tsige (1 month and 12 days), Gena fasting (1 month 14 days), and Nanawe fasting (3 days). However, the majority of these girls reported fasting only during the Wednesday and Friday fasting, Easter, and Filseta.

Among the Muslim girls participating in the study, almost all reported fasting during the month of Ramadan fasting where all types of food and drinks are avoided during the daytime (4-5 am to 7 pm, or sunrise to sundown) every day for one month. A few girls also reported fasting on Mondays and Thursdays.

Among both religions, the older girls (15 – 19 years old) tended to report that they have similar fasting practices as those of their parents. The younger girls (10-14 years old) tended to report that
their families sometimes discouraged them from practicing fasting for the full duration, because they believed would be harmful to their health or to their ability to do well in school.

Yes, she indeed observes fasting. She observes all the fasting including the ones on Wednesdays and Fridays. She observes all the seven fasting (periods) including Tsige fasting. We observe the same fasting occasions. (Father, IDI/Sirinka, Amhara, non-vulnerable kebele)

I usually fast, but my parents advise me to eat so that I am not too impacted physically. (Adolescent girl, 14 years old, FGD/Tahtay Koraro, Tigray – student, vulnerable kebele)

Most of the time, Abeba’s parents forbid her (not to observe the fasting) because they think that she may get tired at school. (Adolescent girl, 11 years old, FGD/Tahtay Koraro, Tigray, student, vulnerable kebele)

Nutrition-related practices and perceptions during menstruation

Nutrition-related practices during menstruation varied among the participants- even those in the same kebele. Some participants reported that hot drinks, such as coffee and tea, increase the menstrual flow, and are thus to be avoided. For other participants, the same hot beverages are believed to facilitate the discharge of perceived bodily impurities through menstrual blood, and are thus to be prioritized. For example, three out-of-school adolescent girls in Sirinka, Amhara region reported varying perceptions of drinking hot tea during menstruation:

I take a lot of tea because it is said to facilitate the blood discharge. (14 years old)

I often avoid tea and food rich in oil because it worsens blood discharge. (14 years old)

I drink tea because it is said to facilitate the discharge of dirty blood from my body. (19 years old)

Adolescent girls from Amhara and Tigray also mentioned avoiding certain types of foods, including oily foods, meats, milk, and mango, and chillies, because they believe these increase the menstrual flow.

I avoid foods that have too much oil; I avoid meat and chillies because these are said to cause discharge of too much blood. (Adolescent girl, 14 years old, BFI/Sirinka, Amhara, out-of-school, non-vulnerable kebele)

I do not take soft drinks, tea, milk, and mango because they increase the blood discharge. (Adolescent girl, 14 years old, BFI/Tahtay Adigebaro, Tigray, student, vulnerable kebele)

They tell me not to drink tea and coffee and advise me to eat ‘kollo’ so that the blood discharge does not worsen. (Adolescent girl, 15-19 years old, FD/Dodola, Oromia, out-of-school, non-vulnerable kebele)
In addition to avoiding foods which they believe increase the amount of their menstrual flow, some adolescent girls also reported avoiding eating at all due to nausea and menstrual cramps (dysmenorrhea) they experience while menstruating.

3.6 Platforms for reaching adolescent girls

Most in-school adolescent girls participating in the study recommended schools as the best way to reach adolescent girls with nutrition-related information and materials. Health centers, community assemblies, and places of worship were also mentioned often as other platforms through which adolescent girls can be reached with nutrition-related information. A few girls suggested television. The out-of-school girls, meanwhile, recommended reaching girls through their communities (kebeles) or through health facilities. Many girls also suggested that it is important to include parents in any nutrition-related educational programming for adolescent girls.

"I think schools are the best place since many young people are found there. I also think it is best for women to be taught at health centers and meeting places." (Adolescent girl, 14 years old, BFI/Sirinka, Amhara, student, vulnerable kebele)

"It would be better if the religious fathers (imams/priests) teach us because many people may be there." (Adolescent girl, 15 years old, BFI/Jiro, SNNPR, student, non-vulnerable kebele)

"I would say it will be better if they are taught in the kebele because many youngsters who are out-of-school can be found there." (Adolescent girl, 17 years old, BFI/Lena Kenema, SNNPR, out-of-school, vulnerable kebele)

"We would prefer to be taught at school, mosque, and health center." (Adolescent girl, 14 years old, BFI/Woliso-Werabu, Oromia, student, vulnerable kebele)

"Awareness raising in the area where parents are found is good. Meeting areas and religious places are comfortable. Because if the perception of parents is not changed, the food system of youngsters would not be changed." (Adolescent girl, 15-19 years old, BFI/Amhara, out-of-school, non-vulnerable kebele)
IV. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Adolescent girls’ daily lives and relationships with family members and friends

Across all regions and religions, and regardless of whether girls were students or out-of-school, most adolescent girls participating in the study are engaged in household chores as well as duties outside of their homes. The data suggest that girls in vulnerable kebeles appear to be doing more household chores than girls in non-vulnerable kebeles in Amhara, Oromia and SNNPR. There is an exception in Tigray, however, where it appears that more girls in non-vulnerable kebeles are doing more housework than their counterparts in vulnerable kebeles. Younger girls (10-14 years old) appear to be doing more housework than older girls (15-19 years old), especially tasks such as cleaning house, washing clothes, and preparing and serving coffee (coffee ceremonies).

Outside of their homes, girls fetch wood and water, work with their fathers in the fields, and go to market with their mothers. After chores are done, girls who are in school will study. Leisure time may begin in the late afternoon around 3 or 4 pm, although during the rainy season and times of harvest, girls may be busy working with their fathers in the fields.

The research suggests that many adolescent girls enjoy a close relationship with their mothers. Mothers take time to counsel their daughters on life, making wise choices (especially when it comes to chastity), and doing well in their studies (for those whose daughters are in school). That said, many girls avoid discussing intimate topics with their mothers; romance, menstruation and sex are topics that girls prefer to discuss with their friends.

The data analysis revealed that many fathers are not at home as much as mothers are. Adolescent girls may only see their fathers briefly during meal times (when some fathers may eat alone rather than together with the girls and other family members). They may also see their fathers at night. Girls participating in the research raised the fact that they do no spend much time with their fathers as one of the main constraints for conversing with their fathers. Nevertheless, some girls reported working with their fathers during planting and harvest times or carrying meals to their fathers when they are working in the fields. Girls also reported that—similar to their mothers—their fathers counsel them on avoiding places, people and conduct that could lead to consensual sex or rape, and (for those in school) focusing on their studies.

Friends are an important part of adolescent girls’ lives. Girls reported going to worship at the local church or mosque with their friends, and doing housework and chores outside the home, such as carrying water, with their friends. Whether working or at leisure, girls enjoy talking with their friends. They talk about their lives, their aspirations, other people, and things happening in their community. As noted above, many girls also reserve their secrets and other intimate topics for discussion with their friends rather than with their parents.
Adolescent girls’ typical diets

Similar to research findings reported under the USAID/ENGINE project\(^1\), adolescent girls typically eat what the rest of the family eats, and usually share meals with their family members. Girls’ diets consist of injera with shiro wot, or kale, bread or kita. Kocho is a common part of girls’ diets in SNNPR while pasta, macaroni and ambasha are more commonly reported by participants from Tigray. Most of these foods are staple foods with low nutritional value other than calories. Kale and shiro (chick peas), however, are higher-nutrient foods. Some girls reported eating animal source foods, including meat (especially on holidays) and occasionally eggs.

As reported earlier in this section, girls may deliberately avoid animal source foods in some places, especially in the Amhara region, because they may be perceived to elicit promiscuity, or to make girls less attractive by making them “fat” or possibly too strong. The most common reason for not consuming animal source foods, however, was simply that they are not available in the household. In vulnerable kebeles, where animal source foods are difficult for families to afford to give to everyone in the household to eat, they are reserved for fathers alone.

Adolescent girls reported eating about the same quantities that their mothers do, although the younger girls (10-14 years old) may eat a bit less than their mothers. Girls also reported that their fathers often eat greater quantities than other family members, and the reason for this is that men are said to do harder physical work and also that men have the power, authority and respect in their families and are thus prioritized for larger quantities of food and animal source foods. Sometimes families eat together, sometimes meals are separated by gender: fathers may eat alone, or together with their adolescent sons, mothers and their adolescent daughters and younger children may all eat together. Adolescent girls and their mothers may eat together with the younger children.

Fasting

Older girls (15-19 years old) generally reported following their parents’ fasting practices. Like their parents, Protestant girls usually do not practice any fasting. Muslim girls follow the practice of fasting one month in the year. Orthodox Christian girls follow the weekly fasting practices, and the more common annual fasting periods that precede the major religious holidays. The younger Muslim and Orthodox Christian girls (10-14 years old) reported that while they tried to follow their parents’ fasting practices, they are not expected to be fully compliant, and indeed their families sometimes discourage them from adhering to the full duration of a fasting period because their parents believe this would be harmful to their health or their ability to do well in school.

Menstruation

Menstruation is the time to imbibe in- or to avoid- in hot beverages, depending on how an adolescent girl and her family or community perceive the menstrual flow. Where menstruation is perceived to be a way for the body to get rid of impurities, girls drink a lot of hot beverages

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\(^1\) Maternal Diet and Nutrition Practices: A report on formative research findings and recommendations for social and behavior change communication programming in Amhara, Oromia, SNNPR and Tigray regions of Ethiopia. April 2014.

\(^2\) Adolescent girls’ diet and nutrition practices and their determinants: a report on formative research findings and recommendations for social and behavior change communication programming. May 2017.
(especially tea, and also coffee) as these are believed to increase the menstrual flow. In these cases, drinking hot beverages is perceived to be a health-conscious behavior. Where menstruation is simply perceived as blood loss, adolescent girls avoid drinking hot beverages because they are believed to increase the loss of blood, and to exacerbate cramps and nausea from excessive bleeding.

Oily foods, animal source foods and spicy foods are also commonly believed to increase menstrual flow and may therefore be consumed or avoided by adolescent girls for the same reasons that they consume or avoid hot beverages.

Adolescent girls' agency and influence around the production, preparation and serving of food

The findings suggest that overall, fathers are the major decision makers when it comes to the agricultural production of food, and mothers are the main decision-makers when it comes to the preparation of food. Nevertheless, adolescent girls do have spheres of influence.

Overall, adolescent girls appear to have a good deal of influence in their families when it comes to deciding what to prepare for the family meals, although this influence is often constrained by what foods are actually available in the home. In many cases, however, adolescent girls across regions, religions and age groups reported having some influence on what is purchased outside of the home. Girls and fathers also occasionally reported that when girls ask their fathers to buy certain foods for the family, and if their fathers have the means, they will do so. When they accompany their mothers to the market, or go on their own, they may exert some influence on the decision of what foods to buy for the family to eat. Girls frequently mentioned being the ones who have the responsibility of raising chickens in the family and reported that they may sell the eggs and use the money as they wish. Few girls reported keeping the eggs for their own consumption or for family meals.

Girls appear to have less influence on decision-making about what crops will be grown by the family. Nevertheless, some girls reported that their fathers listen to their advice when they make suggestions about a particular variety of seed or fertilizer - presumably because their fathers believe they have received this new or modern information from school or from another reliable source. Although they did not frequently mention kitchen gardens, some of the data do suggest that these may be another potential avenue for adolescent girls to exert some agency over their nutrition and the nutrition of their families. The data also suggest that because families value school education and are willing to listen to the information that their daughter bring home from school, should their daughters suggest nutritious crops to grow in the kitchen garden, their parents would not object.

It must be emphasized, however, that the findings also suggest that the ability of adolescent girls to influence their nutrition and the nutrition of their families is constrained by the vulnerability of a particular kebele: food security and the availability of foods are important factors.
Gender-bound social expectations of adolescent girls and their roles

The pile sort methodology used during focus group discussions confirmed social expectations of adolescent girls and boys, and their roles. In the rural Ethiopian communities covered by the Growth through Nutrition project, adolescent girls are perceived to be fragile, weak, and soft. Much of the communication between girls and their parents involves their parents counseling their daughters to avoid the company of boys and men, who society perceives to be strong, aggressive, and potentially dangerous to girls. Parents want their daughters to remain chaste and modest, and fear that they will be promiscuous. In places where there are food taboos for adolescent girls, they appear to be have the function of controlling girls’ sexuality. Animal source foods in particular, as well as spicy foods, are associated in some places in Amhara region as foods that could provoke early sexual debut and promiscuity and are thus foods that adolescent girls should avoid. In other regions, such as Oromia, similar food taboos exist but are recognized by many of the study participants from these areas, as being old-fashioned taboos that are no longer followed in modern society.

As in many places around the globe, society places great pressure on adolescent girls to be beautiful. The pile sort exercises revealed that fragility, weakness and softness appear to be closely associated with social ideals of feminine beauty. For this reason, animal source foods are sometimes avoided by girls because they fear they will become “fat” or perhaps too strong, and thus not in line with societal expectations of feminine beauty.

The pile sort exercises also revealed important opportunities for concept testing and potential messaging around the symbolism of the sun. Study participants mainly attributed the sun to having feminine qualities that were unlike all others: rather than being fragile or weak, the sun is vibrant, bright, illuminates everything and everyone. The sun is above others. This research finding around perceptions of girls and women being sources of light (illumination) for their families is consistent with some of the other research findings that suggest that adolescent girls are able to influence their families in part because their parents perceive their daughters to have new information or modern and progressive thinking.

Platforms to reach adolescent girls with nutrition SBCC programming

The findings suggest that the mothers and friends of adolescent girls are important resources in nutrition social and behavior change communication (SBCC), including counseling. Girls spend a lot of time conversing with their mothers and friends, either while working or during leisure time.

Meanwhile, adolescent girls specifically recommended mosques and churches, schools, health facilities and health extension workers as the best platforms through which to reach them with nutrition SBCC. For out-of-school girls, the findings suggest that gatherings in kebeles, at health posts, and in the family are additional platforms through which they can be reached.

Interestingly, television was reported by a few respondents as a way to reach adolescent girls\(^1\). The research did not yield sufficient information to explore this suggestion, but it may be assumed that there are some homes in the communities where there is television. Anecdotal information also

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\(^1\) Only 2% of rural households own televisions (EDHS 2016).

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suggests that televisions and videos are also sometimes available in schools and in some health centers, although this information was not noted in the data from this research.
V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SBCC PROGRAMMING TO IMPROVE ADOLESCENT GIRL NUTRITION

In line with the Growth through Nutrition overall program goals, nutrition SBCC interventions should focus on helping to support overall program efforts to increase adolescent girls’ access to and consumption of nutrient-rich foods. The following recommendations are based on the findings and conclusions reported in the previous sections of this report.

1. Focus SBCC programming on the primary audiences and, where possible, secondary audiences

The research findings indicate there are four primary audiences for whom nutrition SBCC messages, materials and approaches should be developed:

(i) Adolescent girls (as individuals);
(ii) Pairs or groups of adolescent girls who are friends
(iii) Mothers of adolescent girls; and
(iv) Fathers of adolescent girls.

Although the research noted some differences among younger girls and older girls, the findings suggest that the majority of messages, materials and approaches developed for adolescent girls can be generic enough to appeal to all girls between the ages of 10-19 years old.

Where time and resources are available, nutrition SBCC programming should also target the secondary audiences that were identified through this research. Secondary audiences are:

(i) School teachers;
(ii) Health extension workers; and
(iii) Religious leaders.

Again, since the research did not reveal significant differences across the regions, most of the SBCC programming for these secondary audiences should be similar in terms of messaging and content.

Regional differences were generally not significant enough to merit the development of region-specific content and messaging for the same audiences across the regions. In other words, creative concepts, messaging, content and materials for adolescent girls should be similar across all regions. Concepts, messaging, content and materials designed for mothers of adolescent girls, should be similar for mothers in all regions, and so on.

Based on the research findings, the only major tweaking and tailoring needed for SBCC materials for the same audience across each region would be so as to ensure that languages, the style of dress, or other visual cues that signify a particular culture, region (e.g. hair styles, traditional jewelry, etc.) are taken into consideration. In the case of developing content,
messaging and materials for religious leaders, the specific religion would need to be taken into consideration.

2. Promote girls’ increased consumption animal source foods (ASF)
   a. Given that animal source foods (ASF), especially meat, have some taboos associated with them (i.e. these foods are sometimes believed to incite early sexual debut and promiscuity among girls, or to diminish a girl’s beauty because they may make her fat or possibly too strong), test creative concepts that will help to combat these taboos where they exist.

   b. Many adolescent girls reported having the responsibility in their family of raising chickens. The girls reported having access to eggs, and generally viewed eggs as a commercial product. Messaging can thus focus on eggs as a healthy option for girls to keep and prepare for meals for themselves and their families. In addition, when girls do decide to sell rather than keep eggs, messaging and materials can be developed to help girls make pro-nutrition decisions around what to buy with the money they earn from selling eggs.

   c. The most strategic approach to helping girls increase their consumption of animal source foods is to adopt a “whole family” approach in messaging and materials that capitalize on another social expectation: that, generally, families should eat together and should eat the same foods. That said, across the study sample, girls reported that when animal source foods, especially meat, is available in the home, the father is usually the one who is prioritized for this. SBCC strategy development will therefore need to consider this factor (i.e. the expectation that in some cases, especially in vulnerable kebeles, fathers are prioritized for nutrient-rich foods), as a realistic constraint.

   d. Fathers are clearly a priority audience for communications seeking to help increase girls’ consumption of animal source foods. Fathers control most of the family money. As the data suggest that fathers are receptive to suggestions from their adolescent daughters about what to buy, develop and test materials to promote communication between fathers and daughters about decision-making related to using agricultural income to purchase animal source foods for the family.

3. Promote girls’ increased consumption of a greater diversity of nutrient-rich foods in their daily diets
   a. ASF messaging: Messaging around ASF and other nutrient-rich should link these foods to the aspirations of parents and girls for adolescent girls to do well in school and to have successful futures. Since societal ideals of adolescent girls include being modern, progressive and possessing new information, messaging and materials should position nutrient-rich foods as helpful for adolescent girls’ concentration, intelligence and doing well in school and in life.

   b. Creative concepts, messaging and materials using the symbols of the flower and the sun: Given that the flower is unanimously perceived across all regions, religions, and participants (parents and adolescent girls alike) as symbolizing societal ideals of femininity, beauty and fertility, consider creative concept testing that uses the flower (and nourishing the flower) as a metaphor for adolescent girl nutrition. The USAID/Growth
through Nutrition project and its predecessor, the USAID/ENGINE project, have used the 
sunflower as a creative concept symbolizing children’s growth and nutrition during the 
first 1000 days in maternal and child nutrition SBCC programming. The sunflower (or another flower) may offer a potential launching pad for expanding this concept to include 
adolescent girls.

The widespread association of the sun with positive qualities of adolescent girls (i.e. 
illuminating the family), test creative concepts that use the sun in messaging and 
materials that promote improve agricultural practices for adolescent girls to adopt. These 
practices can include growing nutrient-dense vegetables in kitchen gardens, improved 
seed varieties and fertilizers for use in kitchen gardens, and improved planting techniques 
for nutrient-rich vegetables. “Be the sun in your family” is an example of a message that 
might be used to also promote girls’ improved practices in raising chickens, practicing 
good hygiene and encouraging family members to practice good hygiene (especially 
washing hands with soap and water/soap and ash at critical times), keeping some of the 
chickens’ eggs for family consumption, and making pro-nutrition decisions with income 
generated from selling eggs at the market.

c. Creating concepts, messaging and materials combatting negative stereotypes of girls (see 
also 4c below): The findings suggest that social expectations that girls are fragile and 
weak, and social perceptions equating feminine beauty and desirability with these 
characteristics and with being very thin, can negatively influence girls’ nutrition-related 
practices. In some cases, girls avoid eating meat and other animal source foods because 
the social perception of these foods is that they could make girls less docile and 
potentially make them promiscuous. Creative concepts and messaging that promote 
positive images of strong girls as “good” girls who make their families proud, and that 
equate eating animal source foods and other nutrient-rich foods as foods that strong, 
brave and successful girls should be developed and carefully tested with the different 
audiences. As this approach will counter existing social perceptions, it is important to tie 
new portrayals of girls (i.e. girls as strong, brave and well-nourished) to the findings that 
most families aspire for their adolescent girls to be successful and happy in school and in 
life, and to grow up to have happy families of their own.

d. Creative concepts, messages and materials for friends: The research findings revealed 
that adolescent girls prefer to confide in their friends, rather than their mothers or fathers, 
about secrets and intimate topics. Growth through Nutrition could explore possible 
creative concepts and messaging around “the best-kept secret” (i.e. eating nutrient-rich 
foods) and designing a fun and innovative set of interpersonal communication materials 
for adolescent girls to enjoy using with their friends. These may be games, songs, 
puzzles, riddles, comic books, or picture books that focus on nutrition information and 
improved nutrition practices conveyed in an entertaining way, and in formats that are 
designed for adolescent girls to use or carry with them as they do housework, fetch water, 
go to the market, or sit and chat with their friends.
4. Maximize adolescent girls’ healthy and supportive interpersonal relationships with their parents

a. Taking advantage of the role that mothers and fathers play as advisers and counselors for their adolescent daughters: The findings consistently showed that mothers and fathers are keen to counsel their adolescent daughters on how to stay safe, avoid misfortune, and to be successful in life and in school. Growth through Nutrition can capitalize on these family roles by developing interpersonal communication materials that help mothers and fathers integrate improved nutrition practices into their regular parental counseling sessions with their daughters. The materials should be simple and, given relatively low literacy rates in rural Ethiopian communities, they should be mainly pictorial in their design.

Messaging should position improved nutrition practices as one of the things adolescent girls should do to stay safe, avoid misfortune (e.g. specifically rape and/or early pregnancy), and to be successful in school and in life. This includes practices such as increasing the consumption of ASF and other nutrient-rich foods and making pro-nutrition choices around eggs (how much to keep for family consumption, what to do with the money earned from selling eggs).

As noted earlier in this section, adolescent girls and their families, especially in vulnerable communities and households where there is food insecurity, may face real constraints around some of these nutrition practices. Additional testing of messages and content will be necessary during the materials development phase. In addition, non-communication interventions will be important complements to any SBCC strategy so as to support adolescent girls and their families to overcome real constraints to nutrient-rich foods due to food insecurity, poverty, and lack of access to foods (e.g. markets are far away or inaccessible to girls or their families).

b. Leveraging adolescent girls’ existing influence in their families: The findings suggest that many mothers and fathers across the regions will listen to the advice and suggestions of their adolescent daughters when they believe that their daughters are bringing home new and modern information, which they appear to value and believe to be credible. Nutrition SBCC programming can emphasize the development of take-home materials that are designed to appeal to parents’ placing importance on information that is modern and credible.

Materials design ideas include:

- Branding with a credible information source, such as the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, or possibly a religious authority.

- Identifying and using a positive role model for adolescent girls in nutrition SBCC programming. This role model may be a well-known and respected local or national celebrity who is a young woman—or possibly the creative development of a fictional character who has the ideal qualities of a respected and credible young woman—as the source of information about adolescent girls’ nutrition.

c. Leveraging adolescent girls’ existing agency in their families: The findings reveal that adolescent girls already exert agency in making decisions about what food to prepare for the family meals, ensuring hygiene and sanitation in the home, raising chickens and apparently
having some freedom in deciding what they will do with the eggs, tending kitchen gardens, and
sometimes making purchases at the market on their own. Nutrition SBCC programming should
therefore focus on these areas where adolescent girls already have some authority and control
(see also 3c above).

Specifically, nutrition SBCC programming can include content, messaging, materials and
activities that include:

- Offering recipes and new cooking techniques to improve girls’ decision-making and
  preparation of more nutrient-rich meals for themselves and their families;

- Promote the use of handwashing with soap and water (or ash and water) at critical times,
  including after handling cow dung (used for cooking fuel), including making and
  using tippy taps, and encouraging other family members to adopt these practices (e.g.
  see above recommendations on creative concepts that employ the symbolism of the
  sun and “illuminating” the family);

- Specific information to help girls improve chicken raising and chicken egg production
  (information and materials promoting chicken raising should include a special
  emphasis on keeping younger siblings away from chickens and chicken feces)
  separated from young children); grow nutrient-rich vegetables in kitchen gardens
  using improved agricultural inputs and techniques, and improving decision-making
  around the use of income earned from selling eggs or other agricultural produce at the
  market (consider promoting the use of the “Earn & Buy” game in schools and through
  other platforms to reach adolescent girls (see next recommendation).

5. Prioritize platforms to reach adolescent girls, as identified in the research findings

Nutrition SBCC strategies aimed at improving nutrition outcomes for adolescent girls should
prioritize the following platforms:

- Adolescent girls’ households
- Schools/classrooms
- Churches and mosques
- Health centers and health posts
- Well-known, recognized gathering places for community assemblies or where adolescent
girls may be known to gather in their communities for special meetings, or for leisure and
entertainment.
APPENDIX 1: Photographs used to prompt discussion during Focus Group Discussions, In-Depth Interviews and Best Friend Interviews

PHOTOS
APPENDIX 2: Pile Sort images and tally sheet

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