Key Question: How can we ensure that the nutrition project/component will have the greatest impact on malnutrition in the target population?

Tasks for project appraisal

1. Evaluate the technical content of the project
2. Assess the monitoring and evaluation system
3. Appraise project targeting
4. Appraise training and supervision plans
5. Appraise institutional capacity
6. Finalize the economic analysis
7. Assess financial viability
8. Procure inputs

"Appraisal provides a comprehensive review of all aspects of the project and lays the foundation for implementing the project and evaluating it when completed (Baum, 1982)." The appraisal process examines the technical, institutional, economic and financial conditions of the project and the task manager must justify decisions regarding project design during this stage.

Task 1. Evaluate project technical content

The detailed technical specifications (inputs, activities) of specific nutrition interventions will be covered in forthcoming tools. These will serve as guidelines for project design and as references for technical appraisal. Examples of technical aspects of the project subject to review include:

• facility building plans (although nutrition services will often be delivered through existing facilities such as health posts and schools),
• the technical basis for selecting food and micronutrient supplements, supplementation and deworming protocols, and consistent, accurate nutrition education messages,

• equipment specifications (e.g., weighing scales, growth cards, biochemical/laboratory-based diagnostic supplies, logistical systems and supplies for micronutrient and food supplements and anthelmintics, storage facilities and on-site food preparation equipment, training materials, supply of high quality fortificants, fortification equipment, etc.),

• staff training programs and adequacy of supervision plans,

• the project communications strategy (looking closely at the emphasis, training, and support for counseling and devising a participatory process for identifying client-centered messages for behavior change), and

• industry protocols for fortification and the regulatory system for any national food fortification strategy.

Task 2. Assess monitoring and evaluation system

Strengthening the monitoring and evaluation (M/E) of projects is a Bankwide priority. Advancing borrower ownership of M/E systems, developing and sustaining Bank staff interest in/attention to M/E over the life of project, using data to effect change in project direction, and providing adequate technical M/E resources to staff and projects are central to improved performance.

During the appraisal exercise, the following questions will guide judgments about the plan for monitoring and evaluating project performance (management, finances, implementation, and impact):

• Is the aim of the M/E system clearly described and appropriate?
• Are the types and sources of information planned for collection, and proposed use of the data adequate and appropriate?

• Are the proposed indicators appropriate for project goals and objectives?

• Are the inputs for developing/strengthening the M/E system adequate and appropriate?

• Is the plan for collection, analysis and use clear?

• Is the administrative structure for the system functional?

• Is community participation planned for/apparent?

• Is the M/E budget adequate?

**Task 3. Appraise project targeting**

Increased project effectiveness and efficiency, lower costs, and increased impact have been attributed to successful targeting. Possible targeting strategies for nutrition interventions include:

- geographic targeting by poverty status or health risk (e.g., incidence of iodine deficiency or prevalence of helminth infections);

- seasonal targeting to address periods of insufficient food availability, high metabolic stress at planting or harvest times, unemployment, or increased morbidity due to climatic patterns such as monsoons;

- nutrition status (e.g., moderate and severe malnutrition);

- reproductive cycle targeting (i.e., women receive nutrition services and education at critical life cycle points such as menarche, pregnancy, lactation; the Bangladesh Integrated Nutrition project is piloting the targeting
of newly married women and their families from the time of marriage through the first two years after the birth of her first child); 

- gender targeting (e.g., all female-headed households in a community, all adolescent females); 

- age targeting (e.g., all children 0–24 months-old); 

- self-targeting of food (e.g., those commodities consumed predominantly by the poor such as sorghum and millet, processed cassava flour, and certain legumes). 

Appraise the rationale for the proposed targeting strategies: does project targeting link to the identified nutrition problems and the earlier assessment of institutional capacity? Make sure that the administrative costs of targeting do not exceed the savings realized through reduced leakage to unintended beneficiaries. 

Task 4. Appraise training and supervision plans 

For most community-based nutrition programs, appraisal of training plans would include technical content of the pre-service training curriculum, adequacy of course length and training facilities, staff/student ratios, and mixed, audience-appropriate teaching methodologies. Plans should also include regular, field-based, in-service training (one week semiannually in Tamil Nadu) throughout the course of the project to reinforce training messages, motivate workers, and engage in group problem-solving. (Refer to Tool #12, Management and Supervision: Strategy for Project Success, for in-depth treatment of the subject.) 

The Second Tamil Nadu Integrated Nutrition project delivered four types of training to staff at every level. Pre-service training for newly recruited nutrition workers, orientation training for existing staff in the project areas, regular in-service training, and problem-solving workshops. The new recruits at the
most peripheral level (community nutrition centers) received eight weeks of initial training. Project managers received two weeks of management training, doctors would receive two to three day workshops on the project and specialized staff (e.g., district communication officers and statistical inspectors) all received specialized orientation training.

Supervision is most productive when it is treated as technical assistance to the field staff of the project. A low supervisor/worker ratio is key to effective supervision. In Tamil Nadu, each supervisor worked with 10 field workers allowing a full day with the worker in the field each fortnight. Experience with extension workers from the agriculture sector suggests an optimal ratio of 1:6–8. Such ratios are important for quality as well as quantity of supervisory contacts. On-the-job observation allows for reinforcement of positive worker skills and teaching by example for problematic tasks. Downward accountability is increased because of the direct interaction of the project managers with beneficiaries. It may be necessary to include training for managers/supervisors in how to supervise in a positive, constructive way—one African field worker once described supervision as being like an ambush, and many task managers will have seen authoritarian, negative, fault-finding behavior from supervisors.

**Task 5. Assess institutional capacity**

Much of the relevant information for appraising institutional capacity has already been collected and analyzed during project identification. Decisions about the types of interventions and best methods for delivery of services have been (optimally) based on candid assessments of implementation and contractual capacity, management, and budget/accounting skills at every level from the concerned central government agency on down. It is probably most important for a task manager to be realistic about the constraints (staff, time, and financial resources) on implementation of the component or project and work within those boundaries with an eye toward beginning the longer process of institutional change and development.
In many countries, increased awareness of the negative impact of malnutrition on human resources and aid and technical assistance over the past two decades have greatly improved the institutional base for nutrition programming. However, in many others capacity remains negligible. In these situations, institution and capacity building remains “…perhaps the most important purpose of Bank lending (Baum, 1982).” Experience and advice on exactly how to strengthen institutions varies among projects and continents. The *Nutrition Strategy for the Sahel* (Marek and Heyward, 1994) recommends that most program planning and implementation responsibilities be moved from the center to the province and district levels. Efforts to strengthen institutions would focus on the periphery.

In Madagascar, a long history of bureaucratic delays and procurement problems because of weak managerial capacity in the public sector plagued project execution. To address these problems, the Food Security and Nutrition project focused on building private sector and NGO capacity to deliver project services. A project management structure outside the central administration is staffed by personnel recruited on a contractual basis from the private sector. NGOs, local communities, and private entities are involved in project execution and the project’s social fund is set up as a private non-profit association operating under private sector rules.

**Task 6. Finalize economic analysis of the project**

The economic analysis of the project, initiated during project preparation, will be completed at appraisal. Review the methodology used for economic analysis. Look closely at costing techniques (underestimation of costs is not uncommon in nutrition projects) for inclusion of opportunity costs, comprehensive inputs costs, and activity costs. Was the full range of alternative approaches to the problem examined? Have varying scale, targeting criteria, delivery systems, input packages, timing, etc. been fully explored? Were the multiple dimensions of nutrition benefits clearly compared (Phillips and Sanghvi, 1996)?
Using the results of cost-effectiveness or cost-benefit analysis, determine which nutrition interventions are optimal for achieving the greatest impact on malnutrition for the lowest cost in the context of the project.

**Task 7. Assess financial viability**

Financial appraisal provides the basis for assessing the likelihood of project sustainability. What is the projected fiscal impact of the project? What are the possibilities for repayment over the life of the project and beyond? What is the realistic likelihood of obtaining recurrent funding? This last question depends a great deal on the involvement of the community from the beginning of the project, but there are multiple opportunities in the context of community nutrition programs for savings. Among them are the community production and preparation of food supplements, and use of community nutrition volunteers for child weighing and counseling, and delivery of micronutrient and food supplements.

For purposes of project implementation and operation, the details of the financial reporting and audit system must be appraised for all entities (private or public sector) involved in delivering services under/to the project.

Carry out risk analysis to identify economic, financial and political risks to the project; insure that the project has sufficient funds to meet capital outlays and recurrent costs of the project. The Madagascar Food Security and Nutrition project provides an excellent example of a joint risk analysis with the borrower. Bank staff and borrower counterparts gave high priority to the exercise. Numerous risks were identified and joint agreement was reached on steps to reduce these risks. Implementation, operation, and long-term sustainability of the project benefit substantially from a serious, participatory approach to risk analysis and financial appraisal.
Task 8. Procure inputs

Detailed guidance on procurement in human resource projects is available in Sigurdsson and Villatoro’s Implementing Projects at an Arm’s Length (draft version, 12/95) and the revised version of Operations Directive 11.00, Procurement (revision underway). In the fifth edition of the Bank’s Procurement Guidelines (January 1995), the explicit recognition that centralized procurement may not be efficient for projects with significant community participation is an important departure from tradition. Task managers must weigh the benefits of local control over decisionmaking and procurement against the costs to the borrower of not obtaining the most competitive price or economies of scale for bulk purchases (HDD, 1996).

Details of procurement specific to nutrition projects/components include the acquisition of micronutrient supplements, fortificants and industrial equipment for fortification of food with micronutrients, laboratory equipment for biochemical analysis of micronutrient deficiencies and for use in regulation of industry compliance with fortification specifications, deworming medication, and growth monitoring equipment (e.g., scales and height measurement boards) among others. See Appendix 5 for procurement contact information through the UNICEF Supply Division (formerly UNIPAC).

Status check: The appraisal stage is possibly the most critical time for “getting things right”. The project’s impact on nutrition status may be determined by the care and attention given to the appraisal process. Realistic assessment of institutional capacity, close examination of the technical basis for the project or component and good economic analysis should position the project to succeed, first at implementation and then throughout the project duration.