

DEMAND CREATION AT GAIN



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INTRODUCTION

This document describes the work GAIN has been doing on demand creation, mainly under the Making Markets Work programme. The purpose is to inform interested readers about the approach and progress made in the last three and a half years. There are four sections that describe

- The role of demand creation in GAIN strategy
- The evidence that informs our approach to demand creation
- Our demand creation approach
- Activities undertaken to test and develop our demand creation approach

ROLE OF DEMAND CREATION IN GAIN STRATEGY

Increasing demand for safe nutritious foods (SNF) is one of the three pillars of GAIN's strategy 2017-2022, because there are many SNF that are not perceived to be desirable by those who would benefit from consuming them. Some nutritious foods are already desirable, such as milk in Kenya or India, but are largely unaffordable. In these cases, improving affordability is the main driver for increasing consumption, and fewer intensive efforts are needed to drive desirability. But for many nutritious foods, such as vegetables (1) or pulses (2), desirability remains a key constraint for improving consumption, along with improving affordability and availability.

Therefore, GAIN has defined the role of **demand creation** as *“Create and sustain desire for nutritious diets and foods; and influence consumers’ food choices at points of purchase”*.

This definition stresses the importance of creating desire for nutritious diets¹ as well as creating desire for individual nutritious foods. A nutritious diet involves the consumption of many nutritious foods at different meals. If the consumer cares about achieving a nutritious diet, she will be motivated to also choose foods that are nutritious. This two-tiered structure - diet & food - is also used for other public health goals such as:

- **Physical activity** – Motivate people to want to be physically active, then it becomes easier to promote the different options like sports or walking or yoga etc. This was achieved in the UK via the ‘This Girl Can’ Campaign (4).
- **Family planning** – Motivate couples to want a smaller family, and then choose the methods of contraception that best suit them to fulfil this need (5).

Exploiting the two-tiered structure is more efficient and improves the coherence of messages that consumers receive.

Because nutritious diets are a public health goal and no specific commercial entity will exclusively gain from promoting an ‘idea’ like nutritious diets, the public sector must lead on creating desire for nutritious diets. Public sector lead is also needed for promoting unpackaged, unbranded nutritious foods, such as legumes, eggs, fruits, vegetables; although sometimes in partnership with sector-wide associations (egg producers, or dairy cooperatives). Private sector manufacturers will then continue to promote their own nutritious products but would also benefit when consumers are interested in improving their diets.

EVIDENCE THAT INFORMS OUR APPROACH

In this section, we briefly present key findings from nutrition, social psychology, and marketing literature that has guided the development of our approach over the last three years.

Food systems in the GAIN countries are a combination of subsistence and market-based systems, with subsistence households relying on markets to supply some staple foods, such as oils, sugar, staple grains or legumes, or animal source foods (6). Thus, **consumers are also shoppers** who participate in a (mostly) cash exchange for food stuffs.

¹ Nutritious diets are those characterized by high intakes of fruits, vegetables, legume, nuts and sufficient amount of animal-source foods and oils/fats (3) to meet energy, protein, and macro/micronutrient needs.

The idea of an exchange (7) is fundamental to demand creation approach. It means that we see the consumer as an active agent searching for food stuff that delivers value (or a benefit) in exchange for cash and their time. It also means that consumers have a choice (of product or of seller).

The consumer participation in the market may be deliberate (i.e, selectively searching for a specific product or seller) or it may be quick (i.e, rely on simple cues in the purchasing environment and make a fast choice) (8). Consumers use a combination of these strategies, depending on their level of motivation, time, or cash resources. Thus, we must be ready to influence consumer choices where foods are **purchased and consumed** (e.g, small restaurants, traditional markets, hawkers, kiosks and small stores, workplace canteens) with tactics that accommodate both deliberate and quick shopping strategies.

Biological, social, and economic factors as drivers of choice

Consumers fall short of consuming nutritious diets not necessarily because they lack awareness of nutrition, but because there are more powerful **biological, social, and economic factors that shape our food choices** (9). Our evolutionary preference for salt, sugar, and fat is a fundamental influence on preferences (10), which are further shaped by social forces, such as our upbringing, role-modelling, and early experiences with food/meals in family and school life (11). Our lifestyles, including time needed for shopping, food preparation, and cooking skills, deeply affect what foods we buy and prepare, and how much we enjoy eating them. What we consider desirable and acceptable happens in the backdrop of our sociocultural context (12). Consider vegetable consumption across countries; local food culture largely shapes when and how much vegetables are eaten.

Marketing efforts of food companies also influence our perceptions. And finally, there are the economic factors of food prices, cost of fuel and water, and the cost in time, including the tools and technologies for cooking and food storage (13).

It is no wonder then that choosing to eat nutritiously every day can be a challenge. Overcoming these powerful forces is possible, however.

Motivate, build capacity, and create opportunities

The Motivation - Capacity-Opportunity (MCO) is a well-established model in social psychology and serves as the scientific basis for our demand creation work (14,15), and it offers a comprehensive framework for designing a coherent and effective demand strategy.

- **Motivation** – our emotional, habitual, analytical processes drive our intentions (i.e., goals we set)
- **Capacity** – our knowledge, skills, and agency (belief in myself) influence our capacity to act
- **Opportunity** – our intentions to act are influenced by external factors, such as social (norms) and physical settings where the action take place

Today, consumers are bombarded with multiple, and at times contradictory, messages about food from various sources. This creates a cacophonous food messaging environment, and consumers cope by 'tuning out'. Coherent strategies that leverage powerful human universals, such as emotions and values, reduce consumer confusion and are financially more efficient through fewer, mutually reinforcing messages and tactics.

Emotions drive our intentions and can signal the (un)pleasantness of our experiences. The stronger the emotion, the more we want to do something (16,17). Values, evaluations of our mode of conduct (18) or beliefs about an end-state of existence (19) are also powerful, and sometimes, tacit forces that drive us towards what ought to be. Food elicits emotional responses (20) and are a way to express our values(21). Our demand creation approach seeks to draw from a wide range of emotions (love, joy, happiness, curiosity, confidence) and values (benevolence, self-direction, respect for traditions) to activate desirability for nutritious diets and food at scale.

Until now, most efforts to improve diets have emerged from the health sector via a 'social and behaviour change communication (SBCC)'. This approach is deployed in the health and community settings by a health provider (paid staff or trained community volunteers) to change behaviour among target audience. We echo Andreasen (7) and consider that market-based behaviours (such as purchasing) are best addressed through market-based strategies. SBCC in health-settings can contribute to improving awareness for nutritious diets.

OUR DEMAND CREATION APPROACH

Over the last three years, GAIN has built a distinctive Demand Creation approach that incorporates insights from the multi-disciplinary literature described above and from a set of thought partners. We have convened these partners through events, such as N.O.W Amsterdam (22), and workshops in UK and Dubai (23).

Promote the good, curtail the bad, in a coordinated way

To create and sustain desire for nutritious diets and foods among shoppers and consumers, we have developed a **coherent multi-layered communication strategy** (see appendix Figure 1) that serves multiple purposes: to motivate the consumer, strengthen their agency, promote specific foods, and to influence shoppers to buy nutritious foods at points of purchase.

To motivate the consumer, our approach involves developing emotionally compelling campaigns on the benefits of good diets and then connect specific foods (vegetables, legumes, etc) to the benefits of good diets. To strengthen consumer agency, we seek to connect with local NGOs active in food-initiatives and where appropriate, leverage social media for sourcing of 'tips and tricks' to improve diets. The aim is for the consumer to find support within the existing community structures and services.

To create opportunities and influence shopper choices at point-of-purchase, we have started working on **visual cues** and **product/service design**. Visual cues build on the evidence of 'signalling' and information cues in the purchase environment. Product and service design addresses the settings in which foods are bought, including the setting's visual appeal at retail (e.g. for vegetables), convenience (pre-cut veg or pre-cooked pulses/beans), and engaging the retailers to deliver a 'sales pitch' to encourage shoppers towards the more nutritious options. Product and service design is an essential feature of social marketing (24).

The **right policies** are also needed to curtail the powerful evolutionary forces that drive our preferences for foods high in sugar, salt, and fats. For example, marketing restrictions (25,26) can curtail the marketing power of unhealthy foods and create a level playing field for promotion of nutritious diets & foods. Taxes are another policy instrument that can serve multiple purposes, such as send price signals to consumers, accelerate financial pressures to change industry behaviour, and generate revenue to fund promotion efforts.

In summary, we seek to promote the good and curtail the bad choices. The demand creation approach includes a communication strategy coupled with efforts in retail settings and policy interventions, and organized so they are mutually reinforcing and supportive of the consumers efforts and desire to eat better. The approach also includes influencing and coordinating actions among public and private sectors actors.

TEST AND DEVELOP APPROACH

With funding from our Making Markets Work award, a set of projects and workshops in Bangladesh, Nigeria, Pakistan and Kenya have been used to develop and demonstrate different elements of our demand creation approach. We are now designing future projects to deploy the full, more integrated approach (see Kenya under this section).

Bangladesh – Nourishing Dreams

The aim of this project is to activate adolescent agency and motivate them to want better diets so they can fulfil their dreams. Designed in collaboration with adolescents, the program is testing a social movement-based approach with our partner, the Shornokishoree Network Foundation (SKNF), the largest adolescent network in Bangladesh operating through 2000 clubs in secondary schools. This is a good example of creating desire for better diets.

The project activated adolescent's agency and responsibility through three stages: 1. Express your dream; 2. Feel validated, and 3. Feel challenged. The culmination of the programme was a 'pocket money pledge (I will use my pocket money to buy nutritious snacks)'. The channels used to deploy the programme were social media and school-based events (before COVID).

Stage 1 “Express Your Dream” (mid-July to early Sep 2019). Adolescents expressed their dreams and aspirations for their future (mainly via Facebook) by sharing short entertaining videos of themselves in which they reflect on their future dreams and potential discrepancies between their aspirations and their parents’ expectations. In all, 470 videos were posted by the adolescents by mid-September. One video achieved 8 million likes, and 5 others exceeded 100,000 likes.

Stage 2 “Feel Validated” (September 2019). SKNF alumni, social media influencers, parents and key personalities from SKNF actively engaged with adolescents’ videos, praising the young people for having the courage to articulate their dreams for their future. A few celebrities, Anisul Huq (a respected author, 1.4 million FB followers), Ayman Sadiq (an online educator, 944K FB followers) and Wasfia Nazneen (a known female mountaineer, 327K FB followers), engaged with the campaign by telling their “success stories” to emphasize that fulfilling dreams takes commitment and responsibility but it is possible, and they are proof of such an approach.

Stage 3: “Feel Challenged” (October 2019), these social media influencers posted on Facebook praising the adolescents for raising their voices and challenging them to recognize that fulfilling one’s dreams means constant commitment and taking care of themselves, both physically and mentally, every day. This included the adolescents’ need to improve their diets and register the existing, poor options (i.e., lack of opportunity) on which they currently spend their pocket money.

The call to pledge was launched in October 2019 through school-based pledging events. In Feb 2020 we launched a promotional video to mobilise online pledges (see video on [YouTube](#)), followed by an online



Bangladesh school-based pledge events

campaign in May featuring the captain of the Bangladesh cricket team, Mashrafe Mortaza, who is now a member of parliament. Over 800,000 pledges were achieved by June 2020 and the target of 1 million was reached at the beginning of November. These pledges demonstrate unmet demand for nutritious foods. They provide a basis for engaging the government and food industry to respond. This work is now getting underway.

Nigeria – Eggs Make Kids

The aim of this project is to create demand for eggs amongst parents of under-5 children in Kaduna state. This state has adequate production and retail level availability of eggs, so we used a product marketing approach, deploying emotionally compelling radio & TV advertising with the slogan of “Eggs make kids smart & bright and strong & active”. This campaign was launched in Oct 2019 and will end soon. The campaign monitoring in May 2019 showed a reach of 60% amongst target parents, while 88% of parents agreed with benefits of ‘strong and active’, and 77% with ‘smart & bright’. State government and the Poultry Association have been very positive about GAIN’s work. An evaluation is now underway. To learn more about this project read our [Working Paper](#) (27).



Egg Seller in Kaduna State, Nigeria, featuring the retail branding materials (banners, posters, apron)

Kenya – Integration and Coherence

In Kenya, we have been working with our research and creative agency partners to integrate supply and demand. The work has progressed in three stages.

1. Develop multi-layer communication approach, demonstrating how one might promote benefits of nutritious diets and specific nutritious foods. We have drawn on the learnings from the This Girl Can campaign.
2. Use Systems Dynamics Modelling to identify coordinated supply and demand actions required to increase consumption of vegetables.
3. Conduct consumer research and generate insights on the role of food in parenting. We have collected emotional and value-based ideas, which are being used to develop a nutritious diet brand to motivate Kenyan parents.

Influencing choices at point-of-purchase

'Visual cues' is a term that covers a range of pictorial and (short) written labels that appear on or near packaged and unpackaged food products and are relevant stimuli that might influence decision-making. The term 'visual cues' aligns with the Codex definition of labelling. Our work builds on the literature and research on front-of-package labels, implemented in modern supermarket settings, and is informed by consumer decision-theory. For a summary of this research see the [GAIN Discussion Paper Series](#) on this topic (28). We have used Pakistan as the context to develop our thinking because the food authorities in the largest province of Punjab were interested and supportive. Results of these workshops can be seen in [GAIN Convening Paper Series n6](#) on "Front-of-pack labelling and visual cues as tools to influence consumer food choices in low- and middle-income countries" (23).

Because undernutrition is still a significant issue in most GAIN countries, our visual cue system seeks to signal both good and bad choices (whereas warning symbols aim to only highlight bad choices). Our programmatic work is in the early stages of development to ascertain how these might be deployed in traditional retail environments where many foods are also sold loose (vegetables, grains, pulses). We have developed illustrative designs for these symbols, but these need further research and development.

A visual cue is underpinned by a food profiling system. We have been exploring various profiling systems to understand what criteria might help evaluate foods on problem nutrients (salt, sugar, fat) and presence of key nutrients (vitamin A, iron, zinc, etc). The rating of the foods could also be linked to marketing controls, as has been done in Chile and now Mexico, and to taxes, to create more powerful and mutually reinforcing ways of changing consumer and industry behaviours.

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APPENDIX

Appendix Figure 1. Multi-level communication strategy

Translating the connection into better diets

