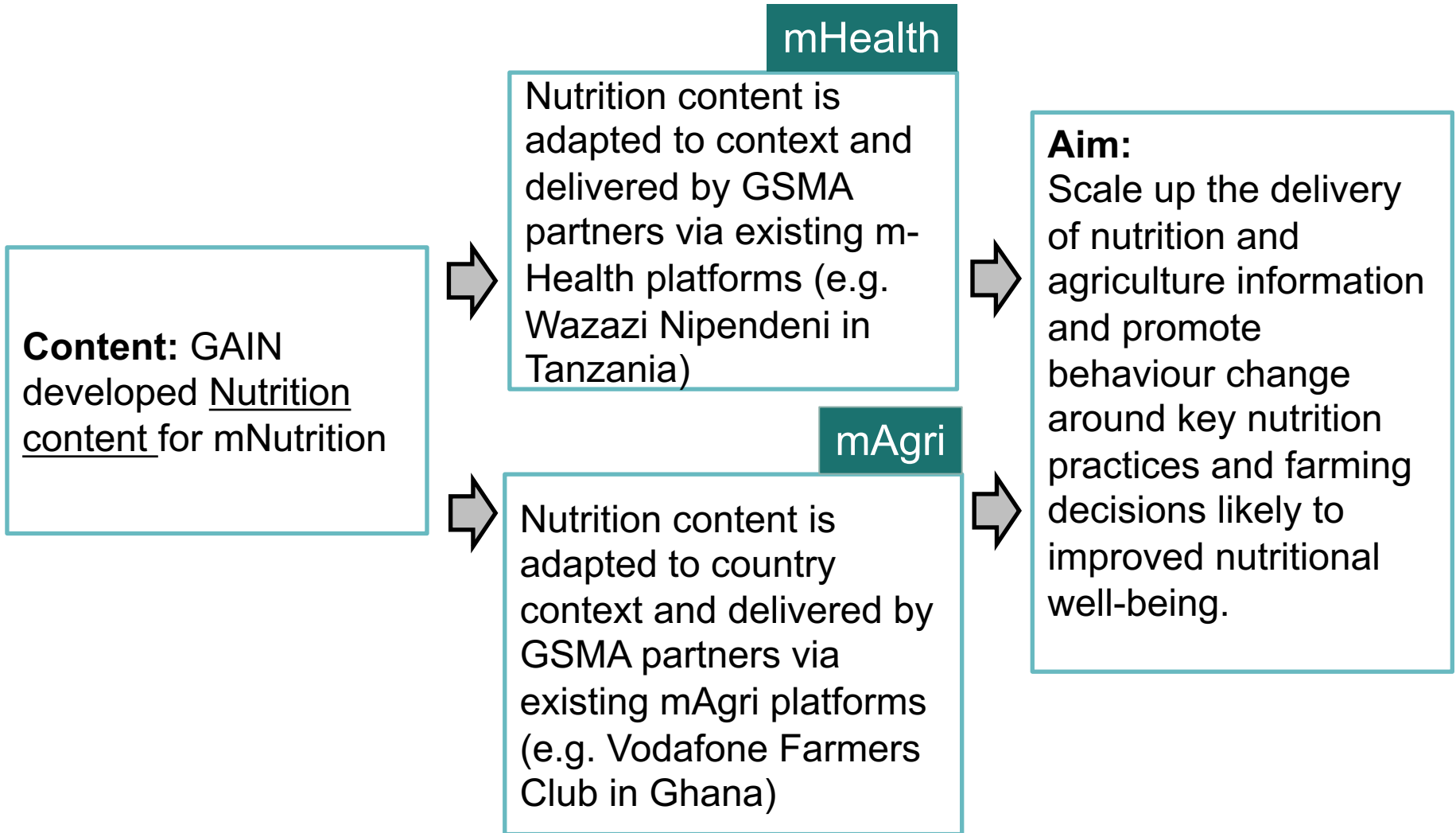




# Using mobile-phone technology to change behaviours: Lessons from mNutrition

Inka Barnett, PhD PHN MSc (IDS)

# mNutrition: How does it work?



# External impact evaluation of mNutrition

**Goal:** Provide independent in-depth insights and a rigorous impact assessment of mNutrition in two countries to inform future programming

- **3 in-depth qualitative studies**

- 100 IDIs, 50 FGDs, 20 KI/country

- Reporting timelines

- Baseline: 2016
- Midline: 2018
- Endline: 2019

Qualitative



- **Experimental designs (RCTs)**

- 2,800-4,000 households/ country

- Reporting timelines

- Baseline: 2017
- Endline: 2019

Quantitative



- **Multiple data collection rounds**

- Stakeholder interviews, user data reviews

- Reporting timelines

- Baseline: 2017
- Endline: 2019

Business model



**Aim:** How effective & commercially viable are mobile phone-based services in reaching poor households and improving their nutrition knowledge and behaviours

# Reach and sustained use of the mNutrition was low

- Reach and up-take low in both countries (only 34% in Ghana; 66% Tanzania)
- Especially poor households and women were often excluded from accessing and using the mobile service.
- **Common barriers to reach and sustained up-take were:**
  - A lack of available supportive infrastructure (e.g. limited network coverage, difficult electricity access, multiple SIM card use)
  - Capacity of users (e.g. illiteracy, limited familiarity with voice messages)
  - Issues in implementation (e.g. fluctuations in service)
  - Issues in service design (e.g. difficult registration process).

# Recommendations I : Optimise reach and up-take

- **Make sure there is supportive infrastructure in place**
- **Consider potential gender-based exclusions in the design phase**
- **Design your service to match the capacity of the target group**
- **Design features to help increase reach and uptake**

# Impacts of mNutrition on knowledge and behaviours varied, but were generally small

- **Ghana:** No impact on dietary diversity, agriculture production, or income, or on nutrition or farming knowledge.
- **Tanzania:** Modest positive impacts on knowledge of IYCF practices and on dietary diversity for both women and children; but no effect on nutritional status
- **Active mNutrition** users report variety of individual changes in behaviours and practices
- **Reasons:**
  - Poor reach and very limited sustained engagement!
  - Lack of information is not the key barrier to better practices
  - Barriers to acting on advice (poverty)

## Recommendations II: Increase effectiveness in changing behaviours

- **Introduce interactive components** (Do not rely on just pushing out information to passive audiences)
- **Offer human support to complement mobile phone-based services** (e.g. breastfeeding, high-risk agricultural practices)
- **Combine mobile phone-based services with financial services** or ongoing interventions (e.g. livelihood improvement programmes or social protection programmes).

# Tailored content to ensure continued engagement

- High levels of acceptance of the service among active users:
  - Perceived usefulness
  - Perceived ease of use
  - Trust
  - Social influences on use.



# Recommendations III: Developing engaging content

- **Provide practical, low-cost advice that is actionable and achievable.**
- **Ensure that content is carefully tailored to individual characteristics and information needs, as poor targeting can quickly result in disengagement.**
- **Introducing and/or strengthening existing two-way communication channels and search functions.**

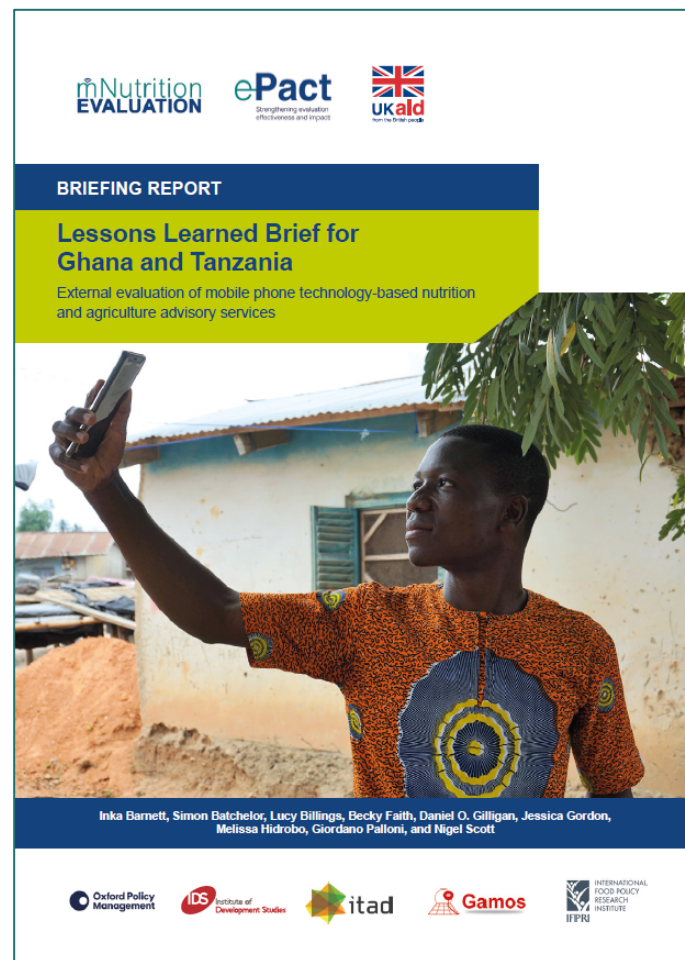
# Leveraging the power of mobile phones: future vision

- **Mobile phone-based advisory services** alone tend not to be enough to affect nutrition outcomes, which generally have complex determinants. Human support are vital to support.
- **Several outstanding implementation and programmatic issues still hamper reach, up-take and sustained engagement.** Risk that the poorest are left behind.
- **Mobile phone-based services to change behaviours are likely to be most effective if embedded in existing structures** (e.g. agriculture extension services), are linked up with other programmes (e.g. social protection programmes) and also include established low-tech approaches (e.g. radio).



Find out more: <http://bit.ly/mNutritionEv>

- Some scientific reports
- Methodology briefs from each team
- Mixed methods papers and summaries
- Blogs and commentary pieces
- Email: [i.barnett@ids.ac.uk](mailto:i.barnett@ids.ac.uk)





Strengthening evaluation  
effectiveness and impact

# Thank you

This material has been funded by UK aid from the UK government;  
however, the views expressed do not necessarily reflect the UK government's official policies.

