Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture Design Guide

Webinar transcript

Kelly McDonald

Hello everyone. Thank you for joining us today for the webinar to launch the Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture Design Guide. My name is Kelly McDonald and I am a Knowledge Management Office for USAID Advancing Nutrition, the agency’s flagship multi-sectoral nutrition project. Before we begin today’s presentation, I will quickly review the Adobe Connect environment and will set a few norms for the webinar.

All participants will be muted for today’s webinar but please make use of the chat box in the bottom right of your screen to introduce yourself, ask your questions, or ask for help with the sound during the presentation. If you are experiencing any difficulties, our technical support will respond to your questions privately. We will collect and save your question for the discussion period. Your experience today may vary based on your internet connection and computer equipment. I will briefly go over a few troubleshooting steps if you have any technology challenges today. If you lose connectivity or you cannot hear, please close the webinar room. Please reenter the meeting room in a browser other than google chrome by clicking on the webinar link provided via email. Use the chat box to ask tech support for assistance. They will start a private chat with you to work through your issues.

Now I will introduce our speakers for today. I am pleased to introduce Ingrid Weiss. Ms. Weiss is a Senior Nutrition Adviser at USAID’s Bureau for Food Security. Previously a Global Health Fellow in the Bureau, she supports the design, management, monitoring, and evaluation of integrated nutrition programs. With a focus on nutrition-sensitive agriculture linked with nutrition-specific interventions, Ingrid has experience improving nutrition in maternal and child health outcomes in West and East Africa, Asia, and in the U.S. Prior to joining BFS, Ingrid worked as a Senior Nutrition Program Officer for University Research Co., LLC, where she provided technical support for community nutrition and behavior change activities in a portfolio of USAID Feed the Future projects on resilience and food security. She was previously a Senior Policy Analyst for Domestic Pediatric Research and Policy Center, focused on the child health and developmental impact of food and security among children under 5 years of age. Ms. Weiss holds a Master of Science in Applied Nutrition and Policy from the Tuft’s Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy and a multidisciplinary certificate in water systems, science, and society from Tufts.

I would also like to introduce Sarah McClung. Ms. McClung is a Technical Adviser on USAID Advancing Nutrition on the food systems team. Her role centers on supporting the team with the conceptualization and implementation of activities that explore causal relationships, generating evidence and identifying opportunities for action to improve diets through food systems. Ms. McClung’s support to the development of the Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture Design guide began in 2017 and included 2 field tests with the Feed the Future activities. Ms. McClung joined USAID Advancing Nutrition from the Strengthening Partnerships, Results and Innovation in nutrition globally (SPRING) project on the linking agriculture and nutrition team and other projects within JSI’s nutrition portfolio. Sarah holds an M.S. in Food Policy and Applied Nutrition from the Tufts University Friedman School of Science and Policy and a B.S. in International Agriculture and Rural Development from Cornell University.
From the Hinga Weze team, we have Mr. Daniel Gies. Daniel serves as Chief of Party of the USAID Feed the Future Hinga Weze activity in Rwanda – a 5-year initiative covering diverse areas including agricultural production, post-harvest handling, and improved human nutrition. He is an experienced international program manager and former banker with a professional background encompassing over 20 developing countries. Mr. Gies specializes in developing relationships between food processing companies and rural agricultural producers, negotiating forward production contracts for farmers as well as suggesting improvements to agro-processors value chain efforts. Mr. Gies holds an MBA with a focus on international markets from the Thunderbird School of Global Management and a Bachelor’s in European History and Slavic Languages from Regents College of Albany New York.

Next, we have Laurence Mukamana. Ms. Mukamana is Deputy Chief of Party and Senior Agronomist at Hinga Weze. She holds a Bachelor’s in Agriculture and a Master’s degree in Business Administration and Project Management. She has more than 16 years working with government, international non-governmental organizations, and the private sector. She has extensive experience in access to agricultural inputs and integrated soil fertility management technologies, climate-smart agriculture, land husbandry, and irrigation. She has experience in agriculture value chain development entrepreneurship for small and medium enterprises, including farmers’ organizations. She is a trainer in many of these fields, including nutrition-sensitive agriculture.

Also from the Hinga Weze team, we are joined by Jeanne D’Arc Nyiragajambere. She is a bilingual senior public health nutritionist. She is leading the integration of the nutrition, gender, and social behavior change agriculture initiative to increase the dietary diversity and improve the nutrition status for women of reproductive age and children. She is currently chairing the chain food and nutrition task force. Jeanne D’Arc has more than 20 years of experience as a nurse, veteran master trainer, nutritionist, and manager and familiarity with USAID projects, including nutrition-sensitive agriculture and more than 7 years as a leader in public health. She also holds a Master of Public Health from Makere University in Kampala, Uganda.

Lastly, we are joined by Heather Danton. Ms. Danton is the Project Director for USAID’s Advancing Nutrition. She has over 20 years of experience in the area of food security and livelihood and is a specialist in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programs that integrate economic and agricultural development with nutrition. Prior to her work with USAID Advancing Nutrition, she was the Director for Food Security and Nutrition on the Strengthening Partnerships, Results and Innovation on nutrition globally (SPRING) project with JSI. Heather holds of a Master of Science degree in Agriculture from Cornell University and has a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology from Stanford.

And with that, I will hand it over to Ingrid. We have lost Ingrid online, so we will just move on to Sarah.

Sarah McClung

Alright, well thank you everyone for joining. Hopefully Ingrid can reconnect with us in just a few moments but I can go ahead and get us started. We are really excited to be getting the Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture guide out to the world. This has been years in the making, including multiple visits to Feed the Future teams like Hinga Weze, who we’ll hear from in a few moments and we’re really excited to have them on the webinar with us today. Before we get into that, I wanted to go through some Frequently Asked Questions about the Design Guide. So let’s start with what exactly we’re referring to when we say “Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture Design Guide.” We’re talking a facilitator’s guide that’s just over 80 pages, 2 PowerPoint slide decks and all of the handouts that you would need to deliver a 3-day workshop. The facilitator’s guide is written in the voice of the facilitator. This means that it’s written as though you’re reading it to workshop participants. So, we certainly wouldn’t recommend just reading directly from the guide, if the facilitator was to get lost or was having a tough time, they could easily find their place. There are facilitators’ notes throughout that provide details on activity instruction and even things like how a room should be set up. The guide also contains two very detailed PowerPoint slide decks. The slide are beautiful and although we encourage adapting to a team’s needs,
they're ready to go and would get you through a 3-day workshop. There are 13 handouts included at the back of the facilitator’s guide and those are ready to go. You can just print those out and we recommend having one for each participant of the workshop.

So who exactly is the Design Guide for? We kept in mind activity teams of agriculture activities charged with some sort of nutrition outcome. We don’t mean to suggest that this is only useful for Feed the Future implementing partners, however this is certainly the model we had in mind as we were developing the guide. I can also speak to who should facilitate the Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture Design Guide workshop. We recommend a minimum of 2 facilitators, ideally from the activity team itself. An external facilitator could absolutely deliver the design guide workshop, of course we’d want them to have adequate orientation to the activity, but we recommend the facilitator come from the activity team so that not only do they have a good understanding of the structure of the activity itself but also the team dynamics, their strengths and information gaps that might exist within the team. In a few moments, we’ll hear from the Hinga Weze team about the composition of their facilitation team.

When should you use the Design Guide? There is definitely a sweet spot for activities just post award and before the Year One workplan is finalized. So in the guide itself we suggest other times it might be useful to go through this exercise and the value of maintaining the output – the activity design matrix – as a living document and referring back to it to check on your assumptions and the impact pathways you thought through as you advance through implementation.

And finally, where can you find the guide? The guide is on the USAID Advancing Nutrition website. You can find a link to it directly on the page that you registered for this webinar on. I believe that it will be on the left side of your screen so if you wanted to open right now and just start flipping through, you could absolutely do that. We hope that people have already downloaded it and are starting to dive in to the content.

So, let’s talk a little bit more about what you’ll find inside the guide and I’ll give you a bit of a feel for what the 3-day workshop is life. The first day of the workshops provides a lot background information we feel sets teams up for success for in-depth conversation about nutrition in their activity context. This begins with a session on essential nutrition concepts that can be tailored to the needs of an activity team. Say for example, you have lots of nutrition expertise on your team. You might opt to shorten this session, however, and we find that this is quite a common situation, perhaps your team is a bunch of hardcore aggies and there is one nutrition adviser who is supposed to infuse nutrition across a large project. In that kind of context, you might opt to expand the session on nutrition fundamentals. The first day also includes an overview of the agriculture to nutrition pathways to set up for the presentation of six nutrition-sensitive outcomes we recommend for this course. These outcomes were identified through years of support to Feed the Future activities provided by the SPRING project. They are not intended to be prescriptive but rather to start the conversation about what is realistic for a 5-year agriculture activity where reductions in stunting may be a bit of a reach as far as an outcome, but increased availability in safe, nutritious foods year-round is an outcome the activity could work towards and successfully deliver on. Participants then think through the nutrition-sensitive agriculture outcomes that might be possible for their activities and over the next two days, and a series of four steps, they identify strategies, practices, interventions, and indicators.

This slide lists the six nutrition-sensitive agriculture outcomes. We’ve got availability, affordability, desirability, environmental and food safety, income control by women, and increased time and energy savings for women. There is a useful handout included in the facilitator’s guide that goes into detail about each of these six outcomes. Finally, I wanted to provide an idea of the output of this workshop. This is the activity design matrix that grows over the course of the 3-day workshop. It is developed through guided, small group work with planned pauses for presentations to the broader team and many opportunities for discussion and adjustment along the way. Looking across the columns, you will get a sense of the stuff in the workshop. It starts with prioritizing the Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture
Outcome, the column on the far left, then you move to brainstorming strategies, practices and interventions are discussed together in Step 3, and step 4 provides guidance on identifying appropriate indicators for differentiating between output and outcome indicators.

I mentioned earlier that we recently had the opportunity to conduct the design guide workshop with the Hinga Weze team in Rwanda and I’m going to hand it over to that team to share more about their activity, their experience using the design guide and their advice that they might have for other activity teams considering the design guide workshop. Over to you, Dan.

Daniel Gies

Thank you very much and I want to thank the Advancing Nutrition team for putting this together and for field-testing it here in Rwanda. It has been a really great experience and it’s helped us a lot in our implementation, as you’ll hear a little bit later. First, let me just introduce the USAID Feed the Future Hinga Weze activity. It is a 5-year, 33 million dollar combination of, I would say, agricultural productivity, market access, and nutrition interventions under an overall theme of increasing farmer income and improving nutritional status while also addressing the changing climate of Rwanda, which is happening every day. So, we focus our efforts on behavior change and household and community levels and as one of the larger if not largest implementing partner on the USAID Economic Growth and Nutrition portfolio in Rwanda We interact quite a lot with the government of Rwanda, we have a number of various strong partnerships with the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture, so it’s a very, I would say, complex program – a lot of moving parts, a lot of different aspects, 8 contract targets, 23 nell indicator targets. In that context, having the guide has been great for us, because it’s provided for us a kind of analytical framework and a way to formulate our thoughts as we engage in our workplanning process. We came in about the end of our Year Two so for our Year Three workplanning, we relied on the guide quite a lot. Right now, we are about at our halfway point. In the context of the description of Hinga Weze, we have been focusing gradually on transferring our interventions to Rwandan partners who will continue in our absence. We wrap up in 2022. The guide has also been a useful framework for thinking about how we can do that and which partners will be important as we start to phase out our Year Four which starts next fiscal year. We are actually only operating in 10 districts of the 30 that are in Rwanda. For us, that means we are not a national-level program and that is actually great for us as it allows us to focus at a very community-driven level within each district, sector, cell – basically at the village level.

Before I turn it over to the Director of the Nutrition program Jeanne D’Arc, who will speak on our implementation of the guide itself, a quick reminder, I have said it before, we have a number of components. It is a fairly complex program but across the three main components, we have agricultural productivity (component 1), farmer’s market access (component 2), and nutrition outcomes improved under component 3. So for us, integration of all these activities, is one of our most important functions as managers of this activity which covers these 10 districts and about 140 employees working with a few thousand agricultural extension agents and community health workers. So once again, the framework of having the guide has been a very important tool for us to make sure we’re delivering the right interventions to the right partners at the right time. The Director of Nutrition Programs for Hinga Weze, Jeanne D’Arc will speak more to that.

To conclude just my section, I mentioned that this guide came to us, we went through the workshop just as we were doing our Year Three planning. We chose the focus among the six nutrition-sensitive agriculture outcomes; we chose to focus on the three that are most important to us in the context of our USAID contract, which is improved availability of diverse, nutrient-rich foods, as well as affordability and also increased income control by women and equitable opportunities. So, the guide was a great tool, a great asset for us. We are going to continue using the guide for the rest of Hinga Weze and I am happy to, offline or by email to share more about our experience on that. Jeanne-D’Arc, Nutrition
Director of Hinga Weze will talk now about the specifics of how we used this guide in implementation of Hinga Weze in Rwanda. Thank you.

Jeanne D’Arc

Thank you. We designed the program following three nutrition-sensitive agriculture outcomes. The first one is to improve the availability on food with a focus on nutritious foods in local markets. Highlight on beans, orange fleshed sweet potatoes (OFSPs), horticulture vegetables and fruits, and animal subsisted food with focus on chicken. The strategy was on the availability of nutrition-rich seeds and also animal subsisted food in the 10 districts. The practice was to increase the number of seed multipliers producing seeds at community level and build the capacity of those multipliers and also incentives through grants and work with the RAB/MINAGRI on extension programs and also work with the private sector to engage them with working with Uzima chicken and other chicken and work with those multipliers to offer high iron beans and OFSP.

For intervention, we did a training for the new and existing seed multipliers on multiplication and storage. We are working on grants for the provision of seeds in those areas. We also started the integration of a poultry program in those 10 districts. We facilitated the program in all 10 districts with around 112,600 chickens at the household and care group level. For the indicators, we used the indicators provided by USAID for our project. We used the value of annual sales, number of individuals participating in food security programs, and yield of targeted agricultural commodities among participants and the percentage of women and percentage of children who consume diversified diets.

Regarding affordability, the first strategy was improved packaging system for nutritious food in small packaging, working with agrodealers so that the packaging are available at all levels—the grass roots level. As a practice, we worked with processors to produce the smaller packaging. As an intervention, through the grant mechanism, we built capacity building for those agrodealers to pack nutritious foods in small package so that they are accessible for the whole community. We also worked on distribution network using youth in those areas. For indicators, we used the number of individuals in the agriculture system who have applied improved management practices and the value of annual sales.

Another strategy for affordability was to use a product-swap arrangement between the buyers and sellers and farmers for foods and services. In practice, we had farmers exchange products and the overall consumption of diverse nutritious foods. For interventions, we established and promoted the value of products, information dissemination among our beneficiaries, organize farmers in groups like care groups, youth groups and collaboration of local leaders, and increased nutritious food available. As indicators, we have the number of individuals in the agriculture system who have applied improved management technologies with USG assistance, the number of farmers reached by new information systems, and the prevalence of women and children who increased the consumption of nutritious foods.

Control of income and equitable opportunities for women is a strategy that supports couples to improve decision making on use of assets through the GALS methodology. Now we are planning to reach 180,000 households so that in all 10 districts, around 1,800 in each district will apply those GALS methodology. The practice is to build capacity of those couples in household planning, budgeting and expenditure, so that they allocate money for nutritious food. We gave them nutritious foods that we promoted in each district. Both male and females were equally involved in this work – the nutrition and childcare area. We trained the couples as intervention and promoted behavior change through campaigns like International Women’s Day and Maternal and Child Health Day so that they are aware of those practices. The indicators were using the number of improved supported food safety programs, and the number of females who participated in USG-assisted programs who increased access to productive economic resources.

As for the challenges and strategies we faced in integrating nutrition. In Rwanda, in the areas and districts we are working in, they are really with very high stunting rates, which affects the lack of animal
protein in farmers’ diets. The strategy was for Hinga Weze to invest over $1 million to increase access to animal-source food for up to 36,000 families and we also built the capacity of youth around 180,000 so that they work together to increase the animal-source food at the community level. Another challenge is the insufficient diversity in vegetables and fruits in home gardens, which are only available during the rainy season but are also needed during the dry season. We improved the home garden guide in collaboration with local authorities so that they can incorporate iron-rich vegetables and fruit and then can access it throughout the year. We initiated water camps in those districts so that they can water their vegetables throughout the year. The guide is now finalized and available for the audience. For those who would like it, we can share. The other challenge is that nutritious foods are not available or are too expensive in rural markets, mainly high-iron beans and OFSP. We worked with agrodealers, aggregators and youth groups on the supplier side so that nutritious foods are affordable. We also worked on the demand side with beneficiaries, local authorities, community health workers so that there is awareness among our beneficiaries the benefit of consuming high-iron beans and OFSP. We worked on both the supply and demand side to increase the consumption of nutritious foods. We partnered with the Government of Rwanda and other CSOs in the private sector to create synergies around nutrition outcomes.

Because of the Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture Design Guide, we were able to design how the guide really impacted our program and we came up with the Hinga Weze Diagram of Integration Framework with all three components. We have the nutrition outcomes for women and children. We show how many beneficiaries we reached with our education and how many beneficiaries will apply these agriculture practices, how many beneficiaries will receive nutrition practices or messages, how many beneficiaries will increase sales or increase agricultural yield by the end of the year and how will that impact women and children.

In summary, this is how Hinga Weze experienced the integration of nutrition in agriculture. Now we are using five ways to improve nutrition through agriculture: 1) Increase availability of and access/affordability; 2) Encourage use of better diets, health and hygiene; 3) Recognize the central role of women in agriculture and nutrition; 4) Generate demand for diverse nutritious foods using our SBCC strategy; and 5) Establish policy through working groups and collaboration with the Government of Rwanda.

In summary, using the guide was not easy. This is an ongoing program, but it came up at the right time when we were discussing working on the Year 3 workplan, which helped to review and improve strategies, practices, interventions, and align with indicators. It was really a good time to come together as Hinga Weze staff and have a common understanding on nutrition, how agriculture programs will impact nutrition, and which indicators will improve our implementation strategy. And now, I will say that Hinga Weze is the premier on nutrition-sensitive agriculture in Rwanda, which is a good thing. For the future users, I will advise to use the guide from the design of the project or program, because when you start by outcomes then it guides the strategy and interventions so you can see how the outcomes in 5 years will look like. Also, use the project staff.

Ingrid Weiss

Hi everyone. My name is Ingrid Weiss and I am a Senior Nutrition Adviser in the Bureau for Food Security. Apologies that I was not able to join at the beginning of the webinar. We are thrilled that the Nutrition-Sensitive Design Guide is ready to be set free in the wider world. It was critical work that we moved forward with the SPRING project and has finished with USAID Advancing Nutrition. We know that agriculture activities are not inherently nutrition-sensitive and require explicit thought during design and implementation to ensure position nutrition impact. And we learned from our Feed the Future global performance evaluation that the integration of nutrition and value chain activities in Feed the Future is complicated by the global understanding of what this means at an operational level.
The design guide tool is meant to provide this operational guidance. Our vision for this tool is that it helps activity designers and implementers to develop appropriate nutrition-sensitive agriculture outcomes, interventions and indicators that will truly help them integrate nutrition-sensitive approaches into their main agriculture income-focused interventions, as opposed to separately programming nutrition interventions alongside their main agriculture interventions. We hope that it will help implementers track their planned interventions and results and that by doing so, practitioners will have more and better information to contribute to the evidence base and advocate more strongly for policies and reverses that support nutrition-sensitive agriculture programming. And with that, I’ll turn it back to Heather. Thanks everyone.

Heather Danton

Thanks Ingrid. Thanks for all the great presentations. Jeanne D’Arc, I want to hear more. I wish we had more time. But I just wanted to move on since I had the pleasure of being involved with the development of this from the very beginning, which then Sarah picked up very ably, once the nutrition-sensitive design guide landed on the lap of USAID Advancing Nutrition. We really wanted to kind of reach back into the history books just a little bit to share a few of the key lessons that we’ve learned in designing both the guide, in order what it took to develop the curriculum that then could be used and adapted in the field by implementing partners. But also to talk a little bit about some of the key lessons that we’ve learned in trying to design a multi-sectoral nutrition activity. And to that end, I wanted to just share a few of those key lessons and start with that fact that, we all know that good design has to be the basis for the context in which we are working. In order to do that, what we really found as we were developing this guide was that a really important first step for any design that is multi-sectoral with an aim to improve nutrition, we need to have an assessment of nutrition constraints and opportunities in that targeted context so that we can then follow up through the development of explicit and more importantly, realistic nutrition strategies and interventions that agricultural activities can support and measure. The slide depicted here is included in the design guide. I think it might be the only slide that is not filled in but we added that in so that we could remind an implementing partner or whomever is using this guidance to make sure that they are including the nutrition system in their particular context or their implementation area. We can build on that beginning assessment to then build on their nutrition-sensitive agricultural strategy. So that’s the first point, is to make sure that we have that assessment.

I think the second point really is that good measurement is based on good design. So good designs are pre-requisites of being able to monitor and define and establish relevant outcome indicator. Although we provided the six outcome indicators or high level outcome indicators, we also encourage the user of this guidance to understand from their initial assessment what they can actually achieve, what outcome is appropriate to their context. And note that at the activity level, the nutrition-sensitive outcomes are likely to fall short of sort of high level nutrition status indicators. Sarah I think brought that out really clearly in her presentation. We can go a long way towards improving diets, saving time and labor expenditure of women so that they can have more time for themselves and their children and also affect the use of income to support better diets and access to healthcare and WASH services and supplies. Whether or not we can really hold ourselves accountable to reducing stunting, I think we probably want to be really careful about that and that was one of the key findings from this effort. And finally, given our field tests and the fact that the guidance is built on the components of results-based design that includes all components of the project cycle, we’re really confident that the design methodology that we’ve laid out in this guidance is solid and adaptable to all contexts. As long as you use the guidance and build on the contextual specificity of your area, we really think that the components are quite valid. Overall, we’re really looking forward to learning from different people’s experiences in using the guidance. Moving on to the next slide, we really wanted to remind everybody that the pathways between agriculture and nutrition, which were the underpinning of this guidance, are part of, of course, a much larger set of components in a complex food system. I think these days we are talking about linking
agriculture and nutrition within the context of a larger food system and using a food systems based approach to link agriculture and nutrition provides that opportunity we think to engage the full range of stakeholders and strengthen all components of the enabling environment or the food environment that is required to sustain the kinds of outcomes that we’ve promoted under this guidance. And finally there is even more of a need for ongoing guidance for implementing partners and those of us working in the field to put food systems conceptual thinking into practice. So this guidance, even though it took us a couple of years to complete, we see it as really foundational to a larger effort that we’re planning to continue to work with USAID on under Advancing Nutrition to provide greater design guidance using a food systems approach.

Finally, going onto - I believe it’s our last slide actually - I wanted to let everybody know that we are planning a Training of Trainers to be trained to facilitate using the design guide. That is scheduled for April 21st to 23rd. For those of you who would like to apply for the Training of Trainers, please do get in touch with us using this link and we’ll be right back in touch with you. I believe that might be our final slide.

I think we’re heading on into the Question and Answer section. I hope my key presenters are ready to be challenged here. I see we have a number of great questions. I’m going to start at the very top. I believe this question is for Sarah and several people asked this, actually.

Is there any accredited certificate for this training or are there ways to get points or credit points for participating?

Sarah

Thank you, Heather. The question about a certificate has come up in some of the field tests that we have conducted and although I cannot say that it’s accredited by a specific institution or anything like that, we do provide a template and we encourage activity teams to designate the right person to sign off on that. Perhaps that’s the Chief of Party or perhaps there’s a conversation you have with your COR or AOR at the USAID mission who might sign off on that instead. But we definitely appreciate the importance of acknowledging the participation in the design guide workshop in some sort of formal way and if that changes or does become a more formal certification, then we would make that update in the guide itself. So, for now, there is a template for a certificate that we encourage activity teams to make critiques of.

Heather

Thanks Sarah. I believe the next question from Sue Ellen Johnson, who posted this, Sarah, while you were speaking and she was wondering about production as a component when we talk about availability of nutrient-rich foods and we’re looking at a full range of components to availability, could you speak a little bit to the way we thought about production as a component to availability?

Sarah

Sure - I saw that question come in and I do think it was when we were talking about nutrition-sensitive agriculture outcomes. We certainly would include production as a component under the availability one. I think, generally, a traditional agriculture development program has increasing production as one main objective and then increasing agricultural production as another. So, there’s this underlying assumption that there is some sort of production outcome already built in to the activity that it’s just inherent in the design that it exists there anyway. As far as the availability outcome, I think it would be sort of taking a step back, particularly if your activity was focused on a short list of specific value chains and looking at the overall diet and perhaps poor production practices that might be happening in the implementation area affecting availability of a diverse diet year-round. So that might mean taking a step back and looking at value chains that perhaps are not the focus of the activity but considering key components that might be missing from the diet.
Heather

Thanks Sarah. Sue Ellen, I hope that addressed your question. Going onto the next. So, Florence Egal has a question. Jeanne D’arc, I think this might be for you.

Does Hinga Weze take local biodiversity and indigenous practices into account as you were considering the use of the guidance?

Laurence

I’m going to respond. This is Laurence. Hinga Weze is considering different crops and taking into account the agro-ecological diversity of Rwanda so we are promoting growing different crops, including nutritious ones. That is our focus as Hinga Weze and we do also promote indigenous crops like traditional vegetables. We do promote both biodiversity and traditional crops including vegetables, which are nutritious food, and including green leafy vegetables. Thank you.

Heather

I am not sure that we were able to hear that answer very clearly. Florence, we will try to draft something and get that answer back to you. I think we are having some connectivity problems in Rwanda. Just a reminder to my colleagues out there to please get very close to your microphones because you have another question next. This is from Carl Wahl.

On Strategy 2 and 3, how did you guys handle issues around watering and labor requirements, especially for women and the dry season, recognizing that watering takes more labor and labor is a contributor to nutritional status, as we know. I don’t know who on the Hinga Weze team wants to take that question.

Laurence

In terms of watering, we have watering equipment. We have access to that equipment. We do also have irrigation program in our intervention. Regarding the labor requirement in dry season, they do enquire about it. There is not much work during dry season and there is collaboration between family members.

Heather

Okay, great. Carl, again, if you have additional questions, please let us know and we will get back to you in writing. Next question, again for the Hinga Weze team.

Are you expecting people to work harder to improve nutritional outcomes and if so, do they have the dietary energy to do so? I think this question is very much linked to the vulnerability of the target group and overall status in terms of being able to take on the extra work that maybe is engaged in being able to produce nutrient-rich foods and being able to take on the opportunities that your project is offering. So again, I’d like to encourage the Hinga Weze team to get very close to the mic. We are having trouble hearing you.

Jeanne D’Arc

Yes. One day they do the plan, then they have the division of labor among household members so that they work all day. Then, they save so that they have money to purchase food they don’t produce so it is equally divided among partners.

Heather

Thank you. That was much clearer, thanks so much. Next question. This is a question actually for Sarah from Hannah.

Is there guidance in the design guide on how to pull together a situation assessment for nutrition, what information should be included, and where can we get that? So Sarah, I don’t know if you want to take that one.
Sarah

Yeah, and I can pass it back to you if you have anything to add. This came up internally on our team when we were making the last updates to the guide if we should include some sort of template or even something as straightforward as a workshop that would have the facilitation teams break down the specific details that they should include in their nutrition assessment. Then we opted not to give that kind of guidance and to leave it open to really encourage teams to think through what makes the most sense for them, what the nutrition problems are in their area. We find that sometimes in activities you see interventions for specific micronutrient deficiencies that actually are not a major issue in the implementation area so we intentionally left it open and really wanted to empower facilitation teams to think through where they could actually make an impact and think through what the real challenges and needs are in their implementation area. So we intentionally did not provide that type of break down or template to fill out. I'll pass it back to you Heather, if you wanted to add anything.

Heather

Yeah, so this is actually something we worked on a little bit under SPRING, as Sarah noted and we’re hoping to do more of under the context of food systems. Under SPRING, we did, maybe some of you remember. And by the way, there are maybe too many resources for doing multi-sectoral assessments. Maybe they are not always around nutrition. We actually had an online tool on SPRING that basically consolidated or gave you a one-stop shop to be able to find a lot of those resources. I believe I think John might still be online, that this is still available on the website. We are planning, we hope, under Advancing Nutrition, to probably start thinking about providing better guidance using the food environment as a starting point understanding the food environment for drawing key points for these assessments. I think it’s going to be something useful at a number of levels. Right now a lot of the work that’s being done is being done at the national level but for activity-level efforts, that’s an area that we are very much focused on at BFS at the moment so do stay tuned for that.

Going on to the next question. Oh my goodness, they are piling up. Claudia, I think maybe we addressed your question. So from, Mauro:

Perhaps from this experience we could have a one or two page summary of key issues that need urgent intervention in this topic of nutrition-sensitive approaches.

Great idea. Let’s see if we can work on that and maybe we’ll have another webinar or at least get this out to you on our website over the next several months with our current efforts under Advancing Nutrition. Thanks for that great idea.

Here is a question for Laurence: Did you have nutrition education training across all the components across your project?

Laurence

Yes. We had, first of all, a training of trainers then we have conducted training for all our staff for all components.

Heather

By the way, Hinga Weze is a really amazing project. They have really been very thoughtful about this multi-sectoral approach. There is another question for Hinga Weze.

How are you dealing with water provision in terms of both quality and quantity? Understanding that water of course is a main issue for supporting nutritional outcomes for the countries in which we are working, specifically in Rwanda?
Daniel

Thanks for that question. Actually, that allows me to remind the participants that Hinga Weze is addressing these three components of productivity, market access, and nutrition but also has a pretty wide mandate for addressing climate change. One of the big problems in Rwanda, as pointed out in some of the questions, is access to water. The DCOP pointed out earlier that we have different initiatives around irrigation, around household water tanks for rainwater collection, training many thousands of households on how to use their water better, how to collect water, how to properly water home gardens or kitchen gardens used for nutrition. So, in the context of climate change, it’s really the absence water in Rwanda that is the issue that needs to be addressed. We’ve spent many millions of dollars on terracing activities so that water is channeled more appropriately so that soil erosion becomes less of a problem. We don’t talk about it much because the focus of this discussion is the guide, then we should see more questions about the guide rather than Hinga Weze but for water management, certainly Hinga Weze has to focus on this area as a result of its contract with USAID and the focus on climate resilience and mitigating climate change. Thank you for that question.

Heather

Thanks Daniel. I am afraid we are out of time and we have so many great questions still to answer. We will do our best to get back to you with written responses on the questions. I am particularly really excited to see the ones about gender. There is just not enough time here. Please do check the design guide on our website. I think we have provided links here in the chat box for everybody to use and we are really looking forward to hearing more from you. Please stay in touch with us, especially if you decide to use the design guide. We are hoping to maybe share out experiences in your efforts to adapt it to your particular situation. So thank you so much for joining us today.

Daniel

Thanks everyone.

Kelly

Hi everyone. Thank you. I wanted to thank our presenters once more – Ingrid, Heather, Sarah and the Hinga Weze team. USAID Advancing Nutrition is committed to providing opportunities to learn and share important multi-sectoral nutrition. One way we do this is through webinars like this. To help us improve and suggest ideas for future webinar topics of interest, please take a moment to take a short survey on today’s webinar. In a few days, you will be receiving an email with a link to today’s webinar recording, which will also be posted on the USAID Advancing Nutrition website. Thank you all once again and I hope you have a great day.

[End of Audio]

Duration: 62 minutes 17 seconds
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This document was produced for the U.S. Agency for International Development. It was prepared under the terms of contract 7200AA18C00070 awarded to JSI Research & Training Institute, Inc. The contents are the responsibility of JSI and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the U.S. Government.