Assessing Capacity: Lessons from a Social and Behavior Change Competency Assessment in Uganda

Webinar Transcript, 03 February 2022

Kristen Devlin

We're very much looking forward to our presentation from the Nuyok project. We'll also hear from colleagues from the USA bureau for Humanitarian Assistance and the USAID Advancing Nutrition projects, to provide some background on competencies and capacity strengthening. We also have an informational presentation about how USAID Advancing Nutrition is offering to provide technical assistance to interested RFSA and RISA partners in capacity strengthening and other key technical areas in the coming months.

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So, for a little background on this webinar series, capacity strengthening is central to our work. And for those of us in the nutrition space, we use capacity strengthening approaches to help ensure that programs strengthen health and food systems to achieve sustainable nutrition outcomes. At the same time, there has been recent renewed interest in capacity strengthening. Particularly, strengthening local systems in the countries we work in.

In just the last month, USAID released a draft local capacity development policy which lays out a vision, framework and set of principles around investing in the capacity of local actors. So, one of the key ways is that USAID Advancing Nutrition approaches capacity strengthening is through designing and applying competency-based interventions. When we say competencies, we're referring to knowledge, skills and attitudes. And we like to think of them as the building blocks for assessing, developing and evaluating performance. In other words, a clear set of competencies helps us build out effective capacity strengthening activities and tools.

We developed the graphic on the left to illustrate how competencies might be used for capacity strengthening. We thought it would be interesting to explore these purposes through a webinar

series; the first focused on capacity assessment, the second on capacity development and the third on capacity evaluation or measurement.

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During this webinar series we hope to:

- Define competencies

- Translate competencies from a concept to a tangible relevant tool for designing high quality capacity strengthening interventions

- Illustrate how competencies have been leveraged to assess, develop and evaluate skills through case studies and examples

- And explore lessons, considerations and recommendations when applying capacity strengthening interventions.

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And here, we have the objectives for today's webinar where we will:

- Discuss designing and applying competency-based assessments;

- Learn from the Nuyok project in Uganda about their experience assessing staff, social and behavior change skills;

- and use this example as a jumping off point for a broader discussion.

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So, before we begin, I'd like to take a quick poll to learn how you as the webinar participants rate your understanding of competencies and capacities assessment. Apologies we could not fit the French translation of the poll questions into the text for the poll. So please refer to the current slide…for the French version of these questions. So, you'll see a poll pop-up on your screen.

The first question asks you to rate your level of understanding of competencies from 1-3. The second question asks you to rate your level of experience with competency assessments with zero, meaning you do not have any experience. And three meaning you have led capacity assessment activities.

So, we'll take a few seconds to do that.

All right! I think…I can't see the responses… but maybe we can… not sure… if… okay! perfect! Wonderful! Thank you so much to everyone who responded. It's really nice to get a sense of your background on this topic. It's exciting to see that most people have a general understanding of competencies. And yes, I'm experienced in competency assessments and also at the same time there are some people here who are very new to these topics. So yeah let's move on.

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Here we have today's speakers our feature presenter is Miss Lillian Ojanduru, who works for Catholic Relief Services as a technical advisor for gender on the Nuyok project; which is a development and food security activity in Karamoja, Uganda. Miss Ojanduru provides technical oversight on gender integration in this multi-sectoral program. She's also a researcher, who's led several research activities in the fields of health, livelihoods and gender.

 You'll also hear from Mike Manske, a nutrition advisor with the USAID bureau for Humanitarian Assistance or BHA. Mr. Manske has worked in public health nutrition and food security for more than 15 years. And in his current role, he provides technical assistance to global awards and supports country programs with a focus in West and Central Africa. Prior to USAID, he designed and implemented community health nutrition and food security programs with several implementing partners.

We also look forward to hearing from Jennifer Burns who has more than 20 years' experience providing technical support to nutrition and food security programs. Currently, she's a senior nutrition advisor with Helen Keller International on USAID Advancing Nutrition. Jennifer provides technical assistance to BHA's emergency and development portfolios in the areas of breastfeeding and complementary feeding; formative research and theory of change development and acute malnutrition.

And finally. we'll hear from Ann Miceli who has led the capacity strengthening work on USAID Advancing Nutrition since 2019. Working to strengthen approaches to strategic planning; organizational development and training; and mentoring for USAID and other partners. Ann has worked with a range of international and local organizations to design strategic conversations,

organizational development programs and capacity strengthening initiatives in the fields of nutrition, food security and global health, in both humanitarian and development contexts.

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So, without further ado I'd like to first turn it over to Ann who will provide some important context on competencies and competency assessments. Thank you, Ann, for kicking the discussion off today.

Ann Miceli

Good morning! Good morning everyone. Good afternoon everyone. Thank you, Kristen, for that lovely introduction.

We are really pleased to be here to speak about competencies and capacity assessment this morning. Competencies are a really key part of our work in capacity strengthening at USAID Advancing Nutrition. And we've been working with competencies in a number of different ways across the project creating competency lists; creating competency based training programs and looking at different ways to use competencies in the work that we do with USAID. And we know that throughout this process, not only have we integrated and built on the work of others, but we also have looked at different tools that we can add to this global dialogue about capacity strengthening and specifically competencies in the nutrition space. While capacity strengthening is definitely a key strategy to help support local actors in local systems; we recognize that capacity strengthening often requires a significant investment. And because that investment is significant, there is an even greater urge for us to use evidence-based strategies to strengthen capacity. And competencies are a really key part of those strategies. Competencies are really the foundation of good capacity strengthening work.

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The next slide please. Yes. Thank you.

The previous one. Perfect! Thank you very much.

So when we look at ways to strengthen nutrition effectively through competency development, one of the things we really want to think about is how these competencies allow us to align the

way we talk about the skills that we're trying to build; and the skills that we're trying to assess and evaluate among a particular group of people. Competencies really are the building blocks as Kristen had said, for effective, coordinated and consistent skills development. When all of our work in capacity strengthening is centered around a set of competencies, you have the ability to strengthen those competencies in a much deeper way and reinforce the competencies that we're trying to build.

In a systematic way, competencies allow us to define a set of measurable observable skills and allow us to link key things like performance assessment, development and evaluation for a specific role.

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Kristen introduced what defining … when we define a clear set of competencies, we have these competencies really at the center of what we do. And those competencies then allow us to do a couple of key things and Kristen introduced this diagram earlier. But I wanted to share just a little bit more detail. So, in this assessment, this is one of the first ways that we might use competencies to develop a program. We're assessing the competencies of a team that we're working with. So, we might be looking at that team's roles and responsibilities. What skills are a part of their job descriptions? What's required to do the job that we're asking them to do? And then looking at, as well, where the gaps might be in that skills assessment. So, what are the areas we need to look more closely at in the job descriptions and in the types of responsibilities that members of our workforce have?

We also might use competencies to write those job descriptions and to make hiring decisions. So, we can assess competencies for an individual or for a team and they really can help us decide what's needed among these members of a team. So that, we have a team where the skill sets really complement each other and we can build a well-rounded team based on the core skills that we need across an activity or across a project. And just to link up with the rest of the diagram that Kristen presented...

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So, once we assess these competencies, that then, really helps us to look at those competency gaps that might be there and the competency strengths that are there, to see what we might

need to develop further. Other ways, we can take the workforce that we have, develop a set of skills and really improve performance and design capacity strengthening programs; like training or mentoring, to really bring out those capacities in a much stronger way.

And the third click please.

And lastly, is evaluating the competencies. So, once we've assessed those competencies, we've done some work to develop or strengthen capacities, at the end we may want to evaluate how well did our capacity strengthening work. How well do we build skills? An evaluation of competencies often links to supervision tools and performance management. So, supervisors might use a set of competencies with their supervisees in order to guide them in a direction for growth; and to highlight areas where those supervisees can receive some extra mentoring or some extra support.

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So today we will be spending some time talking about a really interesting competency assessment that took place with the USAID Advancing Nutrition project and our partners with RFSA in Nuyok. This social and behavior change competency assessment was particularly interesting because what this tool enabled us to do was really look at a team of people and start to ask the question: What competencies need to be built in SBC (in social behavior change) among this team of people?

So, we've invited partners from our RFSAs, our Resilience and Food Security Activities... to use this tool last year through a facilitated process that allowed them to identify those gaps in SBC skills and those strengths in SBC skills. This tool was piloted with two of our resilient security activities in 2021 and key lessons from the Nuyok experience will be shared today. And our partners at Nuyok had a really interesting way of using this tool and an interesting experience to share with you today. So, with that, I'll hand back to Kristen to introduce the next speaker. Kristen over to you.

Kristen Devlin

Thanks, so much Ann. That was a very helpful overview of competencies and competency assessments. I'd like to now turn it over to Mike Manske, who will say a few words about capacity and sustainability in BHA resilience programming. Thank you, Mike.

Mike Manske

Thank you, Kristen. Yeah, I'll just talk briefly today about a few different points and hopefully it helps give people some additional background why USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance was interested in working with Advancing Nutrition on this activity. As an agency, USAID is committed to creating conditions whereby countries own resource and sustain their own development. USAID invests in developing capacity to contribute to locally owned and locally sustained development results. I'll talk about the intersection of capacity and sustainability and highlight a study that some of you may be aware of.

In our USAID BHA resilience programming, we request partners to address sustainability in both project design and in implementation. I'm sharing with you... as you can see on the slide and I can share also in the chat the link to the documents, a multi-country study that legacy food for peace commissioned under the FANTA project to examine processes that were put in place during the life of four projects in Kenya, India, Honduras and Bolivia. The effects on sustainability and benefits were documented up to three years after the projects ended. This study has been instrumental in that; we now ask partners specifically how they will address these four factors within their own project theory of change. Four main factors emerged from the study and you can see at the right of your screen which include; having sustained a source of resources, a sustained technical and managerial capacity, sustained motivation of participants and service providers and linkages to governmental organizations and or other entities.

So, taking a little bit deeper look at the capacity component of sustainability, technical and program staff, as well as service providers in our resilience or non-emergency programming, the study documented that sustainability was much more likely when projects withdrew gradually, but ensured that community-based organizations or service providers developed the capacity to operate independently. There were instances where sustainability was less successful. For example, where the water management committees were not shown how to do water quality testing, because the project did it for them over the life of the project.

 I think there are other instances that I've personally noticed as well in our programs especially nutrition activities, where there is really just a one-off training of trainers' model that's put in place. And it's pretty well documented in many of our evaluations that projects do not always

provide the adequate support for service providers after this training, including the mentorship or other forms of accompaniment that's needed. We have especially noticed these challenges within our resilience programming SBC activities which led us down this path to working with Advancing Nutrition SBC and capacity strengthening team, then developed this list of competencies. And ideally, we wanted to work and test this work in a country program. And fortunately, we had the chance to have Advancing Nutrition work with the Nuyok project in Uganda. And so now I'll hand it back over to Kristen.

Kristen Devlin

Great! Thank you, Mike. That was some really helpful context. And thank you for providing some of your reflections. I'd now like to turn it over to our feature presenter Miss Lillian Ojanduru to take us through the Nuyok experience using the Social and Behavior Change competency assessment tool. Thank you, Lillian.

Lillian Ojanduru

Thank you so much. Good morning. Good afternoon everyone. I'm grateful to present Nuyok's experience with testing this Social Behavior Change competence tool.

We can go to the next slide.

I'll briefly give an overview of Nuyok and also outline what exactly we're going to talk about during this time that we're presenting to you the experience Nuyok went through when testing this tool.

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So, we will give you the overview of Nuyok briefly, what it entails and the purpose of this particular exercise and the processes we went through testing this tool. What are some of the results that came out of this exercise? I will also share with you some of the insights and lessons that we learned when we are doing this exercise and the recommendations.

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Nuyok, this is a six-year development food security activity which started way back in 2017 and it will end in 2023. Initially it was a five-year project. It's funded by USAID, particularly the Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance. So, there's one year added to actually implement our exit and sustainability strategy. Nuyok in our local language here means *'ours',* that means ownership of the of the intervention by the community members. The goal of Nuyok is actually to improve and sustain food and nutrition security for the vulnerable population in Karamoja, where the project is being implemented. Currently we've reached about 125 000 participants directly with this intervention and these people come from like 90 000 households. So, in the next slide, we're just going to show for you in Uganda where this activity is taking place exactly.

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So, we're in four districts in north-eastern Uganda, you can see the shaded place on the Ugandan map there and Nuyok areas are the ones in pink. The yellow areas are for our sister projects; they're also implementing this at **Massico.** So in total we are in 524 villages in this area of the country.

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Nuyok focuses on four main thematic areas and we call these *purposes*. We have the foundational purpose. Nuyok basically here focuses on gender and governance, which is more cross-sectional. And the goal of this purpose is to ensure that community and institutional capacity is improved to sustain food and nutrition security. So Nuyok also ventures in resilience activities where Nuyok improves the works with natural resource management committees on natural resource management, but also the disasters production and as well as public works; where there's road rehabilitation, there's pond rehabilitation. All that is done by the community and it's a cache for work activity. Here, we are trying to improve the community resilience to shocks and expressions.

The next purpose Nuyok ventured in is the livelihood. There are key areas in livelihoods that Nuyok promotes. They use skilling but also business supports to youth and women, the livestock production as well as crop production and savings. Commonly we call it SILK, where the women and men come in groups to save their income and the goal particularly is to ensure that the vulnerable households have sustained livelihoods.

Lastly Nuyok has a maternal child health nutrition and WASH component. So here, there are approaches that have been used like; the mother care group, the integrated health outreaches, the home improvement campaign to ensure that there is increased coverage of latrine construction and use, as well as Warhol rehabilitations. And the goal of this purpose is to ensure that there's improved nutrition of pregnant and lactating women, adolescent girls and children under five. That's all about what Nuyok does in Uganda. We are now going to move into the purpose of this exercise.

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So why was this activity conducted and what collaborations did we have with USAID Advancing Nutrition?

When this tool was developed, Nuyok piloted this tool in Uganda and the goal was to ensure that this tool is tested in order to review for example; the overall strength, the gaps in Social Behavior Change competencies across the different teams since Nuyok is a multi-sectoral program. So we did the virtual collaborations with the Advancing Nutrition team. This activity took place in 2021, remember at that time Covid-19 was at the peak, there were restrictions. So most of the collaborations were virtual, we had the preparatory meetings to initiate this activity. We also had a debrief in between when we are already testing the tools, but also a debrief at the end. And we had email exchanges with Advancing Nutrition team throughout when we are contacting this activity.

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So we'll take you through the process that Nuyok underwent to contact this exercise. We created teams, different teams because it's assessing the capacity of teams. So each team contact consisted of 12 to 15 members both CRS but also our partner staff, because Nuyok works through partners especially caritas. So each team had a leader and these leaders are actually our purpose leaders for the different purposes that I presented. We also, in addition to the technical teams we had managers, we had the monitoring and evaluation and learning team, as well as our community supervisors. These are the frontline staff who directly work with the volunteers. And because this is a huge team, we needed to ensure that everybody participates or a large percentage of staff participates, we developed a schedule for testing to ensure that participation

from the different teams is executed. So this schedule was developed to make it easier for people to know when they are needed or when they are supposed to attend this meeting to assess capacities.

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So, after we developed the schedule, we went directly into testing this tool. And in testing these tools with each team, we took about 1-2 hours depending on how big the team was and how easily they came to consensus on what their capacities are for the different items. So within that same meeting, the teams prioritize the competencies whether they were very important for their team; whether they were somehow important or not important. And then went into rating. Only for those competencies that were identified very important for the team or for the project, is what they rated their abilities, or their skills or their capacities against. So, the rating was whether the team is competent enough to apply those skills, they can train other people or they still needed to have more experience, or they never had that experience and so they needed their skills to be strengthened, or if they had moderate skills. So, all that happened within that one meeting. When Nuyok completed the assessments with the six teams, we went into processing the results. And during the prioritization exercise, we had a note-taker who was very dedicated and taking notes. So, in processing these results, we first sent these back to the teams to just confirm that what they rated is actually what has appeared on our assessment tool. After confirmation, we went into ensuring that all those capacities with gaps were pulled out; because we are interested in those with gaps and that can be strengthened, particularly for each team. Then later, with the help of the meal team, we pulled out competencies which were common, or cross-purpose; which came out for every purpose or at least three or four purposes had that gap that was pulled. That was what we used to develop the capacity strengthening plan particularly for Nuyok. Once this plan was out, it was disseminated to the team in a meeting and all staff meetings, but also put strategically online where everybody had access.

These are some of the gaps identified particularly for Nuyok and cutting across many purposes.

➤ There were knowledge gaps that emerged especially on nutrition sensitive behaviors and factors that influence nutrition behaviors.

➢ Also, there were gaps around application of adult learning principles as well as gaps in measurements, monitoring and tracking of some of the SBC activities, which came from many of those teams in Nuyok.

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When we were conducting this exercise, there were also immediate results which we called the process results and gaps were identified for each team immediately for us. That was the result of the process. As well as there was an understanding that knowledge on nutrition is key for everybody, not only for those who are doing nutrition-specific activities or those who are in health, but everybody needed to have the knowledge on nutrition for the project to be successful. There was also increased knowledge when we're doing this with the staff, especially for the staff who were very unfamiliar with some terms and concepts which are related to SBC as well as nutrition. So, there was increased knowledge at that level. Immediately the teams owned these, they owned the competency gaps and realized that they needed to have this, and it was like a check for them. So, there were these gaps that emerged from the process which were common for all the purposes.

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In the next slide we'll just show you how the capacity strengthening plan looks like;

➢ It gives you the capacity gap;

➢ where the gap is;

➢ what should be done;

➢ what activities should be done to ensure that these gaps are reduced or filled up.

➢ what resources or persistence is needed;

➢ who should be responsible for that.

For Nuyok's case, we looked internally if we had one or two people who had the ability to increase the capacity for others within the project. That is, can that person take that up?

I will take you through the first capacity gap of knowledge. For example, here we identified that the nutrition team had to arrange the other people in other sectors, either through taking co-working group meetings or through all-staff meetings. For them to do this, they needed to have the nutrition sensitive behaviors and causes of malnutrition. So, the nutrition team was responsible for doing this and managing the timeline attached to this. This is just an example of part of the plan.

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How did we apply these assessment results?

The teams were responsible for implementing the capacity strengthening plan, especially the leaders that came from each thematic area. They were responsible for implementing this and there were gaps that could be addressed easily through peer-to-peer learnings, sector working group meetings, but also quarterly reflection meetings, thus it was easy to incorporate some of those into the existing activities and those were easily addressed.

However, there were gaps that needed more of trainings and so they became a little bit difficult to address, given that we did this exercise in the fourth (4) year of the life of the project.

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In a nutshell, when we are conducting this exercise, there were some challenges or feedback that we had to give. Issues around scheduling, especially when they're competing priorities. Also, in our teams of different sizes, everyone wanted to participate but we had to trim, or we trimmed these participants to be between 12 to 15 so that it could easily be managed. The presence of supervisors in the same group as direct reports kind of limited the contribution from some of the direct reports. Prioritizing these competencies somehow became a little bit difficult for some of the competencies, where a section of the team will say we have the competence and then the majority will say no we need more skills to apply that competence. This made it difficult for them to reach that consensus and it took a bit of time. And then for the non-technical teams, especially where our management team consisted more broadly not only the technical team but also some people from our partner's side who were coordinators and part of the management so the ranking definitions were a little bit hard for them and it took a lot of efforts to explain to them what this was.

This was a very good exercise and we felt that where the program was, we would have integrated this into our work plans, but we are already in the fourth year by the time we did it. We pulled out competencies that are key for Nuyok for the project time left, and that is what we addressed.

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What did we learn from this project?

We learned that for this project to be successful, leadership support is key. For Nuyok's case, we had support from the chief of party right from when we initiated to when we completed the activity, but also to the implementation of some of these action plans.

We learned that having team leads for each team is key for the success of completing this process. Having a dedicated note taker keeps things in track. Also, we learned that adjusting these matrices especially the development plan to fit the program is key. Leave alone the facilitation skills, especially from the person who is leading this process.

We also learned that as teams, it was quicker for the teams to move. When they identify the gap, they rated it immediately. But previously, we first identified all those competencies with gaps and then we started ranking it later and moving vertically, but along the way we learned that it was easier to identify and then you rank immediately. That is moving horizontally.

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What are some of our recommendations?

➢ For those who would want to apply this approach or who want to take it up, it's a very good exercise and it makes teams to realize their capacities and check themselves against what they need to have to deliver their activities well.

➢ We recommend that when forming your teams, it's good to separate the supervisors from your direct reports. But also, there must be someone who can oversee the implementation of the plan and do the follow-ups. You need to have that dedicated champion for this assessment. And we recommend that more than one assessment can be done. You can first do one at the start of the project as well as you can do it mid-way. That way the project will benefit a lot.

➢ Leadership support is very key, but also intentional resources need to be allocated to implement the capacity strengthening plan and we recommend flexibility where you need to add it just to

fit your project needs, but also encourage the staff to come for this activity especially with open minds. This is because capacity assessment is the quickest thing in our context that comes to people's mind, and the question is what if we don't have the capacity are they going to lay us out? Nobody was laid out, so there's need to prepare the team for this beforehand.

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I think that's where we can end with our experience. Thanks for listening to us and I will hand you back to Kristen.

Kristen Devlin

Thank you, Lillian, for that very clear and thoughtful presentation about Nuyok's experience with this tool. I am sure there are many questions about your engaging presentation which we look forward to discussing in just a few minutes. But first I'd like to hand over to Jen Burns to talk a little bit about the technical assistance that the USAID Advancing Nutrition project is offering to RFSAs and RISAs. As you'll hear from Jen, the support can encompass a range of different activities including capacity strengthening. Thank you, Jen.

Jen Burns

Thanks, Kristen.

So, some of you on this webinar may be already familiar with this activity. We have this activity on the Advancing Nutrition project that is solely devoted to providing technical assistance to the USAID bureau for humanitarian assistance staff, both at the global and country level. It is really looking at supporting them and improving strategy design implementation and learning for emergency and non-emergency nutrition activities, as well as to the implemented partners of the RFSAs. So, with a very appropriate group on this call today, we really want to inform you of this opportunity.

A large part of this work is on capacity strengthening, to improve the quality of nutrition programming funded by BHA. Assessing the capacity of RFSA implementing partners in building skills where needed is really at the center of our work.

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The nutrition focused technical assistance that we offer to both BHA and to the implementing partners covers a range of areas, many of which are cornerstones of RFSA programming. The following list highlights some of those areas.

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To benefit from this type of technical assistance, we have two channels that have been established. One is for the BHA Washington DC and field staff involved in the managing and supporting of the nutrition programming, then another set up for implementing partners of the DFSA/RFSP IPs.

Requests from BHA can be submitted through the nutrition team while RFSA implementing partners submit requests through the Advancing Nutrition website which I'll show you in just a moment.

Under this activity, we provide emergency programming support but that's solely for requests through BHA colleagues. For implementing partners, all technical assistance is development focused, and this is for a good reason, as there are several other technical assistance mechanisms funded by BHA. All technical assistance is demand driven and so should you feel there's an area you could benefit from with additional nutrition technical support, such as in building the capacity of technical and program staff, as previously mentioned by Mike, we'd be happy to further talk with you. This work is carried out by technical specialists across our teams on the project and consultants where needed. The system for technical assistance has been in operation for just over a year.

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So, this is just to show you that on the USAID Advancing Nutrition website, there is a link where implementing partners can request support and I will go ahead and put this in the chat box.

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I would like to conclude by giving you some ideas around the general types of support that could be requested. This slide outlines what shorter- and longer-term requests could look like. Keep in mind this is not an exhaustive list and we emphasize that all requests are demand driven and the support could fall under any number of technical assistance areas previously shared. Short-term support might include.

➢ helping RFSA implementing partners to design their research to address key areas of their theory of change during the refinement phase.

➢ it could also involve looking across learning from the studies conducted during the refinement phase and helping to adapt original program approaches such as the integration of nutrition into agriculture or youth activities.

➢ assessing capacity of risks of staff on SBC competencies and creating a plan for improving skill sets is another example. Or implementing partners might find it helpful to convene other partners working in the same nutrition related area to harmonize approaches such as in addressing moderate and acute malnutrition.

For long-term tasks.

➢ facilitating regional or in-country trainings on formative research methodologies to identify the drivers of malnutrition and food insecurity or in skill building sessions on recipe development using locally available foods, breastfeeding or complementary counseling skills or a few areas.

➢ We can also assist with designing research to assess the switch midway through a program from food assistance to locally enriched flowers through development to enhance program implementation. So as an example, supportive supervision approaches as mentioned earlier by Anne is also an area where we could advise.

➢ Lastly, it should be noted that USAID Advancing Nutrition can only offer post-award technical assistance. So, if you would like to talk further about possible areas for technical support, please contact us at the link that I put in the chat box or feel free to contact me at the email listed on the slide.

Thank you I will hand it back to Kristen.

Kristen Devlin

Thank you for that overview, Jen. We would like to move to the question-and-answer part of the webinar.

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So please kindly use the Q and A function to type your responses to type your questions for the panelists. Please indicate if your questions should be directed to a specific panel member. We also ask that you please type using the Q and A function rather than the chat box, so you can see that at the bottom of your screen. Before we begin, I'd like to introduce two of Lillian's colleagues from the Nuyok project who worked very closely on this activity that she described today.

So, today, we have Agnes Achilla, who was our project manager for gender and Rodwell Sebanda, who is our monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning advisor. We are thankful to have them on the Q and A panel and to add their perspectives to the conversation. So, to kick off the discussion as questions come in, we have a set of questions for the Nuyok panelists. So, first, when this activity to pilot the competency assessment tool was introduced, how did the different teams across Nuyok feel about it?

Rodwell Sebanda

All right. Thank you very much Kristen for that question. As already introduced, my name is Rodwell Sebanda, a male advisor for the project. I think we could… I would say we had about three levels of our staff that took part in this assessment and with different levels of acceptance or welcoming of the tool. So, first, I'll talk about the male team and the unit which I head.

So, we were excited to use the tool. It was a new tool for us, and we had not used such a tool before. So, as you know, we M&E people are always excited to get new tools, to see how we can use them in the future and just to have that different kind of a tool that you have not used before. So, we were very excited about that. We were also excited in that we were assessing our team's capacity in terms of our contribution to the nutrition component. So, it was a time to self-introspect, looking at our capacities and our competencies as the new team, and see where we can do better in the future. So, we actually welcomed it.

And the last part, not from our team, was that it was also an opportunity, since this was a pilot, it was also an opportunity for the organization as well as for the project. It was an opportunity for CRS to contribute to the US AID Advancing Nutrition teams' tool that they were piloting in the country. So, we're quite excited to be part of the team that was contributing to how this tool can be improved for future use by other projects as well. We also had other teams that went through the same process. For example, as Lillian mentioned the other purposes where the disaster/risk reduction team being assessed, the nutrition team being assessed, we also had our

livelihoods team being assessed. So, initially they thought, *well, this is a nutrition exercise so what does it have to do with us*? But as a result of Lillian's leadership and going through the tool and explaining the reason why we're doing this, the teams also found that it was important for them to be assessed, so that they could also identify any gaps, as well as strengths, that they had in terms of their contribution to the nutrition component.

Lastly, we also had community teams, as Lily mentioned again. We also had community teams that are responsible for implementing nutrition activities in the field with the community members who are participants out there. So, at first, they were also skeptical because as mentioned once your capacity is being assessed or your competence is being assessed, you are not sure what is going to be the end result of these. The questions that they had were: Are they going to be fired? Ae they going to be demoted? What was going to happen? Were they going to be trained to cover the gaps that have been identified? So, it was mixed feelings, skepticism at first, but again, with explanations on why this is important, as well as the next aspect of the talk which included working on a web plan, they realized that we were not on a witch hunt, the exercise was not a witch hunt, but it gave them an opportunity to self-introspect and see what competencies they had as well as the gaps that they had, and come up with that work plan to see how to address the gaps that have been identified. So, it was quite good at the end. At the end of it all, I'll say it seems really appreciated and we're happy that we did this exercise. Thank you and back to Kristen.

Kristen Devlin

Thank you so much Rodwell for that question, oh sorry, for that response. Alright, so we have another question for Nuyok. Meredith has asked: 'How did the perceived competencies differ by group?'

Lillian Ojanduru

Thank you so much. As I said earlier, we had the technical groups, but we also had the management group. The competencies did not differ so much for each of the teams, but there were those competencies specifically for the technical teams and such competencies were not included in the management competencies checklist. So yeah, that's how the differences came in but how the competencies were stated, and the intentions were all the same; only that some teams, for example, the community supervisors who are our frontline staff. Also, there are some

competencies we could not assess for them, so their tool is much shorter. But what is within their competency tool is what other teams had. So, there was not much difference, only that they were other competencies other teams never had in their in their tool. Over

Kristen Devlin

Great, thank you, Lillian. And then, 'What was your experience aligning this tool with existing government capacity development efforts if that happened, specifically through local government structures?' And this question comes from Gerald.

Agnes Achilla

Okay, thank you very much. Initially, as we were chosen to test the tool, our focus was much on first the staff and the partners that we're working with. But along the way, as we design settings on how best we can relay this information or integrate into our programming. Then we realized that it would bring the local government staff in terms of like… there were some competencies that were talking about the national policies governing nutrition in our country. So, we kind of reached out to some of them to provide us that information so that we can be able to integrate into our programming. That's the level that we brought them in. Over to you.

Kristen Devlin

Great, thank you. So, there's another question from Susan: 'Did you evaluate capacity pre and post of this process, and the capacity increase in any of the prioritized competencies?'

Lillian Ojanduru

Rodwell, will you want to respond to that?

Rodwell Sebanda

Alright, I'll respond to that. So, we only did the competency assessment once. So, we have not yet had an opportunity to say that this is where our competencies are or were during the initial assessment and then after a certain period of implementation and trying to work on the work plan and accessing those, and then do another assessment to check if we have any improvements or if things have gone well. So, I hope that our team will get that opportunity before the project ends to do yet another assessment internally and just to find out how far we went in terms of addressing the gaps. The challenge that Lillian mentioned is that we are going towards the end of our project, so we did not get that much time. But if this tool had been introduced at the

beginning, I'm sure we could have done it even on an annual basis just to check where we are and how things are going, and if there are any improvements or any new developing gaps that need to be resolved. So, I hope that the team does the assessment one last time before we close. Thank you.

Kristen Devlin

Okay, thank you Rodwell. Alright, this question might be answered by Anne, a little bit about the tool, how it was designed. So, Emily Bach has asked: 'Did the assessment have a verification component and how were the scores given justified?'

Ann Miceli

Thank you, Kristen. I can give the first level answer to that question and then if Lillian or Rodwell would like to jump in with your experience, you're welcome. This tool was not designed with a verification component. The tool was really designed to be a self-assessment and the teams that were assembled to discuss these competencies were intended to discuss the competency and agree on the ratings that they put together. So, the value is really in that discussion among members of the team and the members of the team would come to an agreement about how they would rate themselves. As Rodwell had mentioned earlier, there are often worries that team members have about what will be the consequences of a low rating, and so it's also the responsibility of the facilitator to really set up the right environment so that when teams are doing their self-ratings they understand the purpose of this is really to design a capacity strengthening intervention that follows and so there's a benefit to teams to being really reflective about their own strengths and their weaknesses because there's that capacity strengthening component that follows. And I would expect that when those capacity strengthening interventions are put into place, that's where your measurement to your verification comes into play so as part of those capacity strengthening interventions, you do a sort of baseline assessment, and then, build from there to then evaluate the results of that capacity strengthening intervention. In the last piece of that, I would add as Rodwell pointed out just a few minutes ago, that if the team has the opportunity to do the self-assessment again, that's where you really start to see the change in those self-assessed ratings and kind of what comes out of it at the end. And especially the justification that teams give for those ratings. That's where you can really start to understand

what changes have taken place. Lillian or Rodwell is there anything you'd like to add about the experience you had in this respect, about verifying competencies?

Rodwell Sebanda

Yeah I would say that, maybe just before Lillian, I'll quickly say that it was also good that this was an internal assessment led by a Nuyok member of staff, so it was going to be difficult for the teams to say that they've gotten a capacity or competence that we know is not there. So, it was also good for us to internally recruit them. You could ask fair and say by the way we have not seen this; this has not happened before. So just to crash out the competencies with the teams because it was more helpful. Unlike if with the situation where maybe Ann would have come and it could have been easy to just say well we have this and since Ann is not here and she doesn't know how we're doing things, it would be difficult for her to know whether we're telling the truth or not. So, it was helpful that Lillian knows the project. She's been with the project since it started and so it was good that she could trash out the topics. Thank you. Over to Lillian.

Lillian Ojanduru

Thank you so much. There was no verification component but our experience as I stated earlier there was a dedicated note taker. So, when we were doing this exercise the note taker was noting. This was like scripting what people were saying and why they rated themselves that way. So, when we completed the exercise, we actually sent back this to them to confirm that this is the rating that they gave for their particular competencies. So that's where we are and we've put certain things in place to address key competencies that Nuyok felt they still need within the remaining life of the project. And those are very few and so I think it should be nice but maybe if you will have that opportunity one time to see how far we've gone with those that we selected to be very appropriate for us in the remaining time of the project. Thank you.

Agnes Achilla

Yeah! Maybe I cannot see what Lilian has just talked about, maybe there was no verification code per say, but there was in-depth discussion of if you were to rate maybe equal type of ranking, if you said A and what you'd have to justify why you thought maybe that competency was to be ranked A, and then the team had to discuss, give reasons, related examples and then the team would agree that okay let's maybe put it at B or at C, because of maybe the various reasons that

the team gives. So that could also be verifying the knowledge levels of the team in regards to that competence. Over to you Kristen.

Kristen Devlin

Great, thank you for that discussion. So, there's a somewhat related question and a few questions that arose in the QA box and I think there's some good conversation happening so maybe I'll kind of raise them for some of the panelists to discuss. So, the first is "Why were group interviews preferred to individual interviews?" So there are several folks who had asked that in that context considering that we've got different disparities, then another person had asked if this was because of the resources available and I think maybe in that response the Nuyok team might talk a little bit about the different dynamics that they noticed among different team members in that group.

Ann Miceli

Maybe I can start just with the rational formal design perspective and then the newer team can speak a little bit about their specific experiences. From a design perspective, we really designed this tool to be a tool that facilitated a group discussion about specific things. The reason we focused on a team discussion or a group discussion is because we wanted that team to have the opportunity to discuss not only their scores but to use each other's perspective to settle on a final score. It was that discussion of where the team rates themselves in the competencies that really is one of the most valuable parts of this tool. And that was really why we focused on the team. The related reason on the team rather than the individual, the related reason is also about time, because for each individual member to take this assessment one by one, would result in quite a lot of data that would then need to be analyzed and compiled. And we felt like having the group discussion from the beginning helps accelerate that process a little bit. Individuals in many cases will look at the tool ahead of time and think about their own rating as they go into a discussion with the team, but they aren't asked to use the tool to self-assess individually before they meet as a group. So that's a little bit about the design, but I'd be interested also to hear about the Nuyok experience specifically.

Lillian Ojanduru

Yeah! Thank you so much. By design, it's supposed to be a group but we also found the group approach very interesting and will continue to recommend the group approach. We realized that when we are doing this exercise within the group, you can be able to realize who has the potential

to even train or head the rest of the team to increase their capacity. So, as you're doing this exercise you keep pulling out, these things keep coming up; who has the capacity, who needs it actually most and what avenues are there to improve those capacity gaps, not necessarily pulling in more resources but also looking internally within the projects. And what opportunities are there to integrate some of these activities to address those gaps. So, that can only come in through our group discussions but if it's individually it might be a little bit hectic, it might create more anxiety especially to people who feel their capacities are very low. Thank you.

Agnes Achilla

Yeah, in addition to what Lillian has just said, we also work through partners that she wrote in our presentation and then it would have been difficult for us to get into partner by partner. And yet we have to appreciate that different partners have different levels of this knowledge of competencies and then we had to bring them together so we could be able to interact and freely share the knowledge levels of different partners that Nuyok works with. Over.

Kristen Devlin

Great, great, thank you everyone. So, we have another question. Someone is asking if Nuyok could please elaborate more on how the staff competency assessment results impacted program implementation. And maybe this is a nice opportunity for Lillian and her colleagues to talk a little bit about how the assessment findings were integrated into certain actions for its programming.

Agnes Achilla

Yes, thank you very much. As Rodwell earlier on responded about how the team felt about the whole exercise. First of all, it was a self-check, a self-reflective exercise. When we went through the testing tool, people were checking their level, on how far or what level are they in. So after we shared the findings and the notes that we took from the different groups, the different teams through our partners went back and they sat together and said how best can they actually make this happen by integrating into our day-to-day work, bearing in mind that there are no specific resources that would maybe be set aside to start implementing the strategies we developed during the tool testing. For example, we have our partners, when we are rating, some of them realized that some staff had the knowledge, specifically on the nutrition sensitive behaviors, and then some didn't have the knowledge completely in another experience. So, these teams had to match together, the managers had to take advantage of the monthly meetings that are usually

conducted and they were able to take staff through some of their nutritional sensitive behaviors, that would enable them to confidently roll out this knowledge in the field. So that was the way we saw it being integrated.

And then also, since we have gotten different team leaders for different groups, this was another avenue for our team leaders, through their technical working groups, to disseminate their findings and their topics that were developed for the teams to get a wider coverage of the competencies. So, it was really something that we saw working and the team was applying what they learned from other staff. Over to my colleagues.

Lillian Ojanduru

Yeah thank you so much Agnes. Different teams different capacities. I'll particularly give an example on Nuyok, maybe Rodwell will elaborate more. There were gaps where some people did not know how to measure some of those coverages. How to measure the SBC interventions. Here they have the tools and that's pointing this gap out during this assessment, they were able to go back and the tool helped with retraining and ensuring that people use these tools well. And when tools are used well you get exactly what is happening in the field, you're able to measure somehow what you're looking for. It has helped. You know where you are, what you're doing, so it has helped the Nuyok program. I can give this over to Rodwell to elaborate on that and other things that we may not have covered. Thank you.

Rodwell Sebanda

All right thank you very much. I think the most important part for this assessment was coming up with that work plan that we came up with at the end, because that's how staff were then settled to know that this tool or this capacity assessment is not about whether Nuyok is being successful or Nuyok is failing, but it's about how do we move forward to address any competency gaps, as well as how do we reinforce any strengths that we have. So, we also took the opportunity during our quarterly reflection and planning meetings, ways where our implementing partners come and we reflect on the past quarter and then plan for the next quarter. So we took that opportunity to say that we need to incorporate some of the actions that came from that work plan and say going forward this is what we need to do; we need to reinforce the utilization of some tools that we have, as Lillian mentioned, of some tools that we have but we have not been

using. So, we need to reinforce the utilization of those tools. And then we also need to go back and start doing some of the actions that we're supposed to do and we're not doing. I would also point out that there were some actions, as we mentioned previously, that we are not in a position to implement all the action points because we are going towards the end of the project.

So, if we were to try and implement everything, it's going to be a problem. We also had to prioritize and say these are the actions which we think are very important and within our short period of time that is remaining, this is what we can practically do. Otherwise trying to implement the whole action plan was definitely not going to work. So, it was a learning curve as well as saying what do we do go forward? Thank you.

Kristen Devlin

Wonderful! Thank you for that response Rodwell and everyone. There's a related question actually about time and Harry has asked how long was the duration to implement the competency tool, including observations, interviews, verification of reports. Maybe the process could be clarified a little bit in that response, and then how different might the competency assessment be if it were individual?

Lillian Ojanduru

The timing up there seems to be a little bit weird. I'll start with this exercise: how much time does it take? it takes about one hour to two hours per exercise depending on how big or how small your team composition is. We had six teams for Nuyok's case and we had to schedule. By the time we were scheduling this it was around competing priorities. So, it took us about one and a half months, partly March and then April. We developed our development plan in May and by June we had disseminated our development plan back to the teams. So, if it were to be done by individuals for a large program like Nuyok which is a multi-sector program, I think it can be very tedious. It can take you the whole year when you're just interviewing individuals for their competencies. I really do think so because the process you go with one person and to be through with that it will also take you almost close to an hour or two if it were one person. So, it will take a lot of time. Someone can add over.

Agnes Achilla

I think it's really clear what Lillian has put through but then the timing is also relative on the plans that we developed. Because I remember after disseminating our findings in May, we also have to set timelines on when should we achieve the set targets or the set plans, and we remember having some of our plans run through up to September - October 2021. So if you put all that time together that means it was like four to five months to achieve or to ensure that the competence were widely disseminated, and while still running the process we are still disseminating using the available platforms to make sure that these competencies are widely disseminated to other teams. Over.

Rodwell Sebanda

So, I'll just quickly say that one strategy that I found very useful was sharing the tool prior to the assessment. So, it gave the teams time to go through the different competencies that were on the tool. This is just to try and internalize the two major stages before you go for that assessment. So, it definitely shortened that time frame. I didn't do the interviews myself but I'm also sure that different teams would also have different understanding of the technical terms that were on the tool. So I'm sure those teams especially that are focused on nutrition would have moved much faster as they have prior knowledge of some the terminologies that are on the tools, unlike maybe when you now take it to teams working on disaster/risk reduction or maybe teams working on governance and especially when it comes to those specific nutrition terminologies. So, there were different or varying timelines. But it is indeed a long tool and as Lillian said it would have taken long to do individual interviews. Thank you and back to Kristen.

Agnes Achilla

Maybe before Kristen comes in, I remember I was privileged to be one of the notetakers and getting group responses was easier because you could probe instantly what maybe they meant when you were taking notes compared to if it were individual it would take a lot of time actually to start probing what an individual meant, regarding to every competency. So, I would still believe that the group method was better than going individual. Over.

Kristen Devlin

Great! Thank you, thanks so much Agnes for that edition, Rodwell and Lilian for your really comprehensive responses to these questions. I think we got to most of them. There are several that the panels may also be able to briefly respond to in writing if there is a little bit of time, but

we did want to take the last few minutes to wrap up the webinar and really thank all of the presenters for today's very rich discussion. So before we end, we have a final poll question asking you to indicate what tools or activities that you think would be useful to your work related to competency based approaches to capacity strengthening, and again you will see that we have the French translation on the slide and the English version should have popped-up for you. So, I will give you just a few minutes to respond. We're very grateful for your input here because we want to continue this dialogue in addition to the other webinars that we are planning.

All right, Yaritza I think we can tie up the poll. Thank you so much for responding to that. It looks like we have some good feedback to go on moving forward and I'm thinking about these topics around competencies and capacity assessment and capacity strengthening more broadly.

Next slide please

So finally, for those of you who are interested, we have posted this competency assessment tool that our new colleagues presented and discussed today on the landing page for this webinar series. So, we'll send this link to this landing page to all the webinar registrants along with this recording in both English and French within the next few days. On this page we also have a list of other key resources related to competencies that we'll continue to add to as we proceed with this series. So please stay tuned for further emails in the next few months about the other webinars. The next one is focused on capacity development and the following on capacity evaluation or measurement. So, once again thanks to all and I hope you have a great rest of your day.