Competencies: The building blocks of capacity strenghtening (Webinar 3)

Webinar Transcript

John Nicholson

Good morning, good afternoon, good evening. My name is John Nicholson and I lead the knowledge management team at USAID Advancing Nutrition. We're happy to have you with us for the third webinar in our series, focused on the importance of competencies and how to use them to create tangible, relevant, high quality capacity strengthening interventions. I'd like to get us started today with just a few housekeeping items for today's webinar.

Next slide.

We're pleased to make today's webinar available in both English and French. You can click on the interpretation icon at the bottom of your screen to choose French, if desired

(background speaking in French)

For those that... For those that may be having trouble with hearing me, we have included some troubleshooting tips in the chat. You can please feel free to use that chat to introduce yourself. You can tell us who you are, what you do, and where you're joining from today. We encourage you to use the chat to ask for help. You can use Tech Support 1 or 2, and we'll be happy to assist you with any trouble you might have. We also encourage you to use the chat to share your perspective on what you hear.

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If you have a question for one of the presenters or panelists, please click on the Q&A icon at the bottom of your screen. Panelists will respond to questions in the Q&A box as they're able. We also have allotted some time for discussion at which point the panelists will respond to any questions from the audience. If you have any trouble with Zoom today, we recommend leaving the webinar and returning by clicking on the join link you received via email. If that does not resolve your issue, please rest assured this webinar is being recorded and you will receive an email with a link to the recording, and slides from today's event in a few days. And now onto why we're all here today. I would like to introduce Ann Miceli, director of capacity strengthening with USA advancing nutrition to get us started. Over to you, Ann.

Ann Miceli

Thank you, John. Good morning. good afternoon, good evening, everyone. We're really excited to have you join us today for this webinar on evaluating capacity. We'll be talking about lessons from measuring the performance of the district nutrition coordinating committees in Ghana. We've got a really great panelists of speakers who are coming up today to focus on various aspects of this theme. One of the things that we're really passionate about, that we're excited to present to you in this webinar, is this combination of talking about how we do capacity strengthening and how we use competencies to help build skills in various places together with this example from Ghana about how we do multi-sectoral nutrition coordination and how we help those district nutrition coordinating committees to achieve

their goals and to drive toward really important outcomes for nutrition. So, I'll just mention that this webinar is the third in a series of webinars that are about competencies. We've talked about competencies from different angles in the previous two webinars, and this one really is focused on evaluating capacity.

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So, for the webinar series, we have a series of objectives. This is for the full three webinars. Overall, our goals here were to define competencies. We're also looking at how we can translate those competencies into really practical terms, into tangible activities that really build from this core set of competencies or this core set of skills. And with each webinar, we've really set out to illustrate how these core competencies can be leveraged to assess skills, to develop skills and to really evaluate those skills in different types of programming all over the world. And last, our last goal for this webinar series was really to explore and discuss some of the lessons we've learned, some of the considerations and some of the recommendations for how we use competencies for capacity development and capacity strengthening.

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So, in this webinar specifically, what we're looking at is this example from Ghana, we're looking at... We're looking at an example of how we apply this competency-based approach to the measurement of the performance of the district nutrition coordinating committees in Ghana. During this webinar, we'll explore and discuss some of the lessons around coordination and bring out some of those recommendations for applying competency-based skills and evaluation approaches, ways that we've evaluated those skills, using the project's experience in Ghana as an example, for how to look at some of these questions.

Can I have the next slide please?

So, when we look at how to use competencies effectively, we are looking at competencies really as the building blocks for effective coordinated and consistent skills development. Competencies are really at the root of how we do capacity strengthening and these competencies, when we identify them well and when we identify them correctly, these competencies should align a whole set of things that we're doing to help people perform better in their jobs. In a systematic way, we're using these competencies to really define a set of measurable and observable skills. So, it forces us to kind of step back and look at what skills are actually needed for successful job performance and how we can look at those skills in a more systematic way. This webinar in particular will link specifically to performance evaluation in a specific role. In this case, with the district nutrition coordinating committees.

Next slide please.

When we talk about competencies, go ahead and click... When we talk about competencies, I had mentioned a few minutes ago that competencies are really at the center of what we do. And competencies can be used as the starting point for some specific interventions.

Click.

So, first in our first webinar, we talked about how competencies can be used to assess skills. So as a first step, we might think about what competencies are really needed for a specific role and how that role in that set of responsibilities is centered around specific skills that we want to see laid out really clearly. Those skills are often described in a job description. So, the job description for the role will describe what responsibilities are included, but it starts to get out those skills that are really needed to perform the job well. And often the first place we use competencies for assessment is in making hiring decisions.

So as part of our interview process, we're really looking at, does this candidate have the competencies that we need to perform well in this role?

So that's how we might use competencies for assessment. We cover that in webinar one.

Can I have the next click please?

So, the other way that we commonly use competencies is really to develop skills, to build that same set of skills we used for hiring, but to recognize that now that we have a person in this role, we want to help them succeed as well as we can. And part of helping them succeed is looking at the parts of their job that they're really strong in and the parts of the job where they may need some additional support. So we're looking at things like performance improvement, capacity strengthening programs. And when we design these, we want to look at what competencies we want to focus on and make sure those competencies are aligned with what we set out to do in the original job description and as a reflection of the hiring decisions that we've made.

Next click, please.

And as the third step in this webinar, we're going to be looking at how we use competencies to actually evaluate that performance. And often you see competencies used for evaluation in supervision tools and different kinds of performance measurement. And this is a really interesting place where we look at competencies because it's really where we answer the question, how is this person or this group of people, how are they performing in their role? And what can we understand from how we've hired, recruited, defined this role? What can we understand about the process of our capacity development that really has led to an improvement in performance or not an improvement in performance? And so in today's webinar, we'll be looking at that example of the district nutrition coordinating committees in Ghana.

Next slide please.

So we're going to start out this webinar with a quick Menti poll. So if you would grab either your phone or open a new tab on your computer type in www.menti.com, that'll take you to a website where you'll be prompted to put in a code. The code is there in the lower right corner of your screen. It's 7 7 6 1 6 5 5 7. So if you enter that code for the Menti, you'll get a prompt on the Menti screen and the prompt will ask what one word comes to mind when you think of working or coordinating across sectors. And this is a really key issue in multi-sectorial nutrition. And I'm interested to hear from those of you who are on this webinar, what comes to mind when you think of that coordination across sectors. We do it for nutrition, but we do it also in a range of other, in a range of other technical areas.

John Nicholson

Ann, I think we, I think we may have a mistake on the Menti code. I put it in the chat. I don't know how that happened, but...

Ann Miceli

Okay.

John Nicholson

I think the code is actually going to be 6 7 3 9 4 0 7 7.

Ann Miceli

Thank you, John.

John Nicholson

You can try that one.

Ann Miceli

You can take a look at the chat. That code again is 6 7 3 9 4 0 7 7. So please take the code from the chat and not on the slide. So go ahead and pick up your phone or open a new tab and enter that code. As you're, as you're entering those words that come to mind, when you think of working or coordinating across sectors, I also wanted to mention, I've noticed a couple people have started putting questions in the chat. Thank you very much for adding those questions to the chat. We are really excited to see what questions you have coming up and what questions you have throughout the webinar. So just to acknowledge, we'll be paying attention to those questions in the chat, keep those coming. We'll have a Q&A session at the end, and we're really excited to have this opportunity to answer your questions. So it looks like we've worked out some of the bugs with the Menti poll. I think we're ready. We're ready, and moving ahead. Does somebody want to let me know if the answers are coming into the Menti? Whenever you're ready, we can show the word cloud that's forming.

John Nicholson

Yes. I'm sorry for the trouble here. I'm just trying to find the right tab.

Ann Miceli

Certainly.

John Nicholson

There we go. Can you see it?

Ann Miceli

Yes. Perfect. There we go. Okay. So we're getting some words coming in for what comes to mind when you think of coordinating across sectors. And I see that word that's popping up in the middle is challenging. Coordinating certainly is one of the more difficult things about our role. And the more people that we have involved in that coordination, the more challenging it can become. And I might even use the word complex. It's challenging, but it is the kind of thing that is really essential. I see also in this word cloud, information, sharing, communication, collaboration, we've got some really good words coming in here. Oh, I see patience. That's a good one. That's a good one. Those of us who have had coordinating as a really central part of our role, we know that it definitely takes patience. Coordination is without a doubt one of those things that takes more time, but is often worth the investment. And I see the word important popping up in the middle of this word cloud. And I think what we have here is an interesting map of the terms, map of terms that really come to mind when we're thinking about coordination. And I see a range of things here from noting how complex and challenging coordination can be to how valuable coordination can be. And I think that's a pretty accurate representation of the range of things that we see. Wonderful. Thank you all for taking a minute to fill out that Menti. Oh, and

tolerance. Yeah. I see someone has just put tolerance to the list. Yeah, I think that's true. The more people that you have involved in a discussion, the more giving we need to be around what our expectations are and how we go about meeting different goals that come from different stakeholders who are involved in that coordination. Wonderful. Thank you so much for that for taking part in that Menti word cloud. That was really interesting to see. We're following that up with just a quick poll to get us started on this webinar. And the poll will just help us better understand a little bit kind of where you're coming from around the topic of multisectoral nutrition coordination. So for those of you who are English speakers, that poll will pop up in a text box. For those of you who are French speakers, you can look at the French text on the slide and then click the corresponding number in the popup window. So just take just a minute here and tell us how familiar you are with the topic of multisectoral nutrition coordination. Pick any one of the options there. This really will help tell us, as the speakers, better how to tailor our presentations and tailor our thoughts to your understanding as we start this webinar.

Okay. So we've got a few minutes here just to kind of click on that dot. I'll allow just a couple more minutes for people to engage in the poll there. And when we have some poll responses feel free to oh... Excellent. We've reached 75% participation. Wonderful, great. Do we want to share the poll on the screen? Right. So just to see, we've got a nice range of people in this webinar from a good number of people who are very familiar with multisectoral nutrition coordination. It doesn't surprise me that we've attracted a nutrition audience and coordination is certainly a really key theme in nutrition, but I see we've also got a set of people who are not as familiar with some of the things that come up around multisectoral nutrition coordination. And I think this is really excellent. A lot of the lessons that we've learned from specifically multisectoral nutrition coordination are applicable in other sectors. And really one of the things that's at the core of what we're talking about today is how we've used competencies to really assess some of what's happening at the district level with those nutrition coordination committees. So we'll be talking about tools and strategies for measuring competencies as well. Wonderful. Thank you so much for taking a minute to complete that poll. That helps get us started on a really helpful, really helpful note.

Next slide, please.

I wanted to get everyone, just quickly looking ahead, we've got an excellent panel of speakers with us today. We've got speakers from the national development planning division in Ghana. So government representatives who've come to join us for this webinar today. We're really excited about that. We also have a few words that are being shared from our team at USAID Ghana. USAID has a few things to share with us as we get started. We've got some representatives from the Advancing Nutrition team in Ghana, and we also, at the very end of our webinar as part of our Q&A, we've got some representatives from the district nutrition coordinating committees themselves to share some insights and to help answer your questions. So we're really excited about this panel of speakers that we have ahead and without further delay, I'll hand over to our first featured speaker, Mary Mpereh. Mary we're looking forward to having you kick off our webinar with your presentation. Mary is currently serving as the acting director of development policy and planning division with the national development planning division in Ghana. Can we have the next slide, please?

Mary has over 20 years of experience in social policy planning, monitoring, and evaluation, and she comes to us with a real passion for ensuring that Ghana's development agenda is gender sensitive, socially responsive, and really leaves no one behind. Mary has been a really strong advocate. She's the scaling up nutrition technical focal point, and she's coordinated mainstreaming of food and nutrition security issues into Ghana's development and policy frameworks. Mary comes very, very highly recommended and clearly with a great deal of respect from across the country. Mary I'll hand over to you to kick off the next part of the webinar. Thank you for joining us today.

Mary Mpereh

Thank you very much, Ann. I've been introduced already, so shall we next, next slide.

Yes. In this presentation, I'll do a quick outline of our legal and institutional context for multisectoral coordination. What we've been able to accomplish, challenges, opportunities, and then draw some conclusions.

Next.

Yeah, so our multi sectoral coordination is set within our development planning law, it's Act 480 and it has the national development planning commission. It's commission, not division. I'm sure. I made a mistake, national development planning commission at the Apex. And then we have at the very top, yes, we do the coordination, but at the very top, we also engage with the office of the president, with cabinet, with parliament in the process. And then at the horizontal level, we have the sector ministries, departments and agencies with the ministry of finance placed a little bit above the other agencies for obvious reasons, budgeting. And then at the vertical level, from the office of the president to the NDPC, we go to the ministries department and agencies, the regional coordinating councils, and then the district assemblies. We also have subdistrict structures, but within these political administrative arrangements, we have planning units. And so at the level, at the national level, we call it the cross-sectoral planning group. At the regional level it's regional planning coordinating units. At the district's level, we are talking about district planning coordinating units. And so the law actually gives, sets the tone that you can't do anything, whether it's policy formulation, whether it's planning, monitoring, and evaluation, you can't just sit in your corner as a technical person and think for everybody. You need to bring everybody who matters around. So we have these planning platforms embedded in the law, so that all levels take that into consideration in their work. We must say that even, even though we had, we have all these structures, that the SUN movement has really been catalytic in helping us to prioritize food and nutrition, security, coordination, deploying these country structures that we have, meaning that the structures are on paper. They are not deployed everywhere. And so the SUN movement actually was a catalyst. And I need to add upfront that the USAID Advancing Nutrition project also is helping us to deploy these structures.

Next. Next please.

So what have we been able to do with this? As far as multisectoral coordination of NDPs nutrition, security is concerned, we have established the CSPG on food and nutrition security at the national level. And we want to replicate all of these, this particular structure at the regional district levels for now. Subdistricts, structures are themselves not very developed. So we, we will think about that in the future, but for now national, regional and district levels. We also have some stakeholder networks like the academic platform, civil society, and donor networks. We are also working on the establishment of a business network. We have also managed to integrate food and nutrition, security issues, and recently food systems issues into our main development policy frameworks, like the long term/medium term policy frameworks, especially. And then we also track indicators in the annual progress reports. I think a couple of years ago, there was no visibility for nutrition, food and nutrition security issues. So we have come a long way in that regard. We've also integrated FNS into planning guidelines and developed to a toolkit to strengthen sector and district FNS planning, monitoring, and evaluation, which I'm sure our USAID partners are going to discuss even more. So the way now that we are talking about planning guidelines, the way we coordinate this decentralized planning system is to provide guidelines indicating what our expectations are and providing what we call a policy matrix, which is actually from the medium term development policy framework, which will, would then guide sectors or MDAs and districts on how to plan concerning particular issues. These are very, very important. The guidelines are very important.

Next. Next please.

Yes. We are talking about, our accomplishments. So because of this work that has been going on, especially at the national level, some nutrition sensitive sectors that were not paying attention to nutrition are actually doing so, or even if they were paying attention, I think that now they've actually prioritized it more. So we have examples like education, social protection, and WASH. We help them by developing issue papers that help them to see themselves in the picture when it comes to food and nutrition security issues. We've also piloted food and nutrition coordination structures. The USAID Advancing Nutrition one is actually the second of these pilots. We'll talk about that. Let's go on please.

Next.

Yes, we do have a few challenges. When we started, forgive me because I've been on this job for such a long time, sometimes I talk more about the history than the current situation. But when we started at first, there was no buy-in from development partners, you know, because our expectation is that development partners would buy into our national development policy, frameworks and work with country systems so that we can sustain whatever efforts we are putting in place. And unfortunately, some of them were not interested. They thought it was too complex. You know, they wanted the low hanging fruits, a little here, a little there, and, you know, just the ticking of the box. And so that was also problematic for us. And because of that lack of interest, the funding of multisectoral coordination was something that if government didn't give us money for that, then we were stuck. So it's one of the reasons why probably it's, we are not as strong as we're supposed to be. We are trying, but we are not there yet. We are not there a hundred percent. Political coordination of decision making is also very important for accountability, both at the sector and the district level. So why technically we do everything that we ought to do to plan and make sure that food and nutrition security issues are prioritized. If there's no political buy-in at those levels, implementation becomes a problem, resource allocation, and therefore implementation becomes a problem. We are very fortunate to have SUN networks, the networks that we've talked about already, but in terms of the critical mass of their membership, that is able to influence policy making and planning and monitoring and evaluation and especially accountability at all levels, it's a little weak. And we need to strengthen all of that. We also have predominance of the donor funding and insufficient government funding of FNS activities.

Next, please.

And one critical issue has to do with technical competencies and inadequate human resource capacity because of high staff attrition, especially at the district level and the need for continuous capacity building and development of critical tools. So for instance, what we do is that apart from the planning guidelines, we do acknowledge that there are competency gaps, and therefore we resort to what we call tools, development planning tools that will help sectors and districts to plan accordingly in case there is a weakness in capacity at any level. We talked about the fact that there's been an earlier pilot of the district nutrition coordinating committees. There, we all know that their problem with pilots is that once the pilots are completed, it comes to an end. It is not sustained because there isn't sustained financing to make sure that the meetings go on and on and everything that ought to be done to mainstream FNS actually continues. We've talked about the political welfare for implementation, even after mainstreaming FNS. If there isn't sufficient political will, it will just remain on the books, because the money is not coming from the government side. And if donors do not prioritize, then it means that's just, you know, so that's a real issue. We also have moving landscapes. There have been several paradigm shifts. We're talking about initially about public health nutrition. And then we came to food security issues. Now we are talking food systems. So, as and when these shifts come, including emerging issues, we look at the capacity there. We try to also develop toolkits and train where we have the

resources. So that district and sectors are up to speed with what is really happening in the development arena.

Next please.

Yes. In spite of these challenges, there are opportunities. For instance, because NDPC is the institution that coordinates both the SDGs, the SUN movement and the food systems transformation agenda. We have opportunity to ensure greater policy coherence, and also crowding funding. You know, for all that we are trying to do. We also have other accountability frameworks, the district performance assessment to districtly table etc., that actually helps some of these districts to take these issues very seriously. We say that we are... we also... I think I've mentioned it already that scaling up the multisectoral and multi stakeholder platforms across the country is very critical for mainstreaming issues into development plans. So we have USAID Advancing Nutrition working with 17 districts, for instance. What happens to the rest of the districts in the country?

Let's go on, please.

So there is room for scaling up all that work. So, in conclusion, I would like to say that, yes, we have the multi stakeholder platform embedded in our decentralized planning law. We've shown some successes in mainstreaming them into our long medium term sector and district plans. But we do have challenges which we have talked about briefly, inadequate competencies, political well, donor dependency, etc. And we do, but in spite of these challenges, there are opportunities, you know, to include prioritization of FNS in key national policy frameworks, budget. We've done budget tracking from 2015 to date, which provides the basis for advocating for more government funding. We do have an accountability framework within the planning system, which is about the M & E system apart from the ones I talked about earlier on. And so we do also have opportunities for scaling up these coordination platforms at all levels, because as the evaluation will prove, once these are set up and there are tools to enhance capacity, you can see it translated, reflected in planning in terms of mainstreaming of FNS. And so, on that note, I'd like to encourage partners to help us to scale up around the whole country. Thank you.

Ann Miceli

Thank you very much, Mary. We really appreciate those words and that context for helping us understand how the steps that have been taken to really integrate this nutrition coordination into government policy, and really your frankness about some of the challenges that come up around that. Ongoing funding, a continual challenge, building of competencies, turnover of staff. These are themes that are really common to both, common to trying to establish strong coordination platforms, both in nutrition and in other technical areas. Thank you again for that context.

So, next we have some words on the next slide.

We have some words that have been sent over from our colleagues at the USAID mission in Ghana. Lutuf Abdul Rahman has sent a recording to share some words with us as we kick off this webinar. We're ready for the recording from Lutuf.

Lutuf Abdul Rahman

Okay. So just to build on the points and the challenges in the system that has been highlighted by Mrs Mpereh, USAID is very committed to working with the government of Ghana to responding to these challenges. And globally our response or interventions in nutrition is guided by the USAID global nutrition strategy, which aims to reduce malnutrition measured by stunting by 20% across the globe. The USAID strategy recognizes the importance of using multisectorial approaches in responding to nutrition. Because it creates an opportunity for you to respond to both nutrition specific and nutrition sensitive issues. And this global strategy is what is guiding, how the USAID mission in Ghana works and

supports the Ghana government. In this regard, the mission through the Advancing Nutrition project have been working in the last two, three years of the national development planning commission, which is Aunty Mary's agency at the national level, and also working in 17 local governments in the Northern part of the country. This local governments are the zone of influence for the futures influence local governments or districts in Ghana. Their overall approach has been supporting their local government to develop medium term development strategies of guidance from the national development planning commission. And the concept is that once we get multisectoral approaches into this development plans, it'll be a way for the local government, USAID resources from USAID through our rank, resiliency, Northern Ghana activity, and then also using the government's own internal resources and that of other donors to better respond to the underlying causes and underlining and immediate causes of malnutrition. This district nutrition coordination committees, which are multisectoral committees at the local government level, have been very central in helping the local governments to be able to come out with this multisectoral nutrition plans, or development plans that uses multisectoral approaches. And USAID is very happy with what we have been able to achieve so far. Yes, there are still some challenges, but we do think that the lessons that have been learned in terms of working with these, this nutrition, coordinating committees is worth sharing with other countries and other practitioners and nutrition so that they can learn from that as we continue to work with these committees to support the local governments in terms of implementing the specific plans, by looking at developing web plan and budgets, and then looking at how do they support their local government to implement these plans to contribute toward achievement of nutritional, getting long term resource from the interventions with USAID and other partners that we are supporting. So we are really happy that we have this opportunity to share this. And at the mission, we are committed and we'll continue to learn how these DNCCs are supporting the process. And as we move forward, the more we learn, we'll be willing to also share with other practitioners and persons of interest and nutrition. So thank you so much. And I'm really looking forward to hearing the lessons from the Advancing Nutrition team, and then hearing your questions. Thank you. And I wish you a great discussion in this webinar.

Ann Miceli

Okay. So following on, from those words from Lutuf, he highlighted a couple of things that were particularly important, including USAID's commitment to the further development and coordination around nutrition, both nutrition specific and nutrition sensitive work, and also the overall USAID commitment to supporting long-term planning and integration of those plans with government, utilizing those local systems and thinking over the years, or thinking in the long term about how we can mobilize resources to keep this work going. We really appreciate having that perspective from the USAID mission in Ghana. So before we get to our featured speaker who's coming up next in the presentation. We do want to take just a moment to put up on the screen. One more poll. We wanted to hear just a little bit from you as participants about your level of experience with evaluating capacity. So taking a look... the English version will be on the popup box that appears on your screen. The French version is on the side. Please do vote in that popup box. And tell us a little bit about your level of experience with tools or approaches specifically to measure capacity and performing a skill. As I mentioned early in this webinar, we're really excited about bringing together some discussion about capacity strengthening and how we measure capacity strengthening together with this work in multisectoral nutrition coordination, and through this example of Ghana and the context of Ghana and all of the really interesting things that are happening through the government in Ghana, some of the policy changes happening there and so forth. So please choose the option that best describes you for your level of experience in evaluating capacity. Take just a minute to complete that poll. And whenever we're ready, feel free to put up those polling results. Okay. We've got about 61% participation. Let's wait just another minute and see if we've

got a couple more people who might answer that poll. I'd like us to get us a little closer to 70%. Okay. So let's go ahead and put up the results of that poll. So we can kind of see where people's level of experience is, is falling out. Oh, interesting. So in terms of evaluating capacity, we've got quite a number of people who are kind of in the middle of the road with some experience evaluating capacity or a moderate level of experience evaluating capacity. And this is an interesting, an interesting insight into some of the work that we do, particularly around capacity strengthening and, and the evaluation component that can come along with measuring capacities. But this is really good to hear, because this is the theme that we'll be talking about in the webinar. We'll be digging a little more deeply into some of those tools that we use to evaluate capacity and looking at some strategies that have been used through the USAID Advancing Nutrition program in Ghana to evaluate capacity. Thank you for your responses to that poll. So from here, I would like to introduce our feature presenters. We have two presenters.

Can I have the next slide please?

So the two presenters that we have coming up for you next to talk about the work with these district nutrition coordinating committees, are first the USAID advancing nutrition Ghana chief of party Selorme Kofie Azumah. So Selorme will be talking first about some important context about the project's work in district coordination for nutrition. Selorme comes to us as a really strong public health professional with over 20 years of experience in programming, technical leadership and management. He really specializes in managing projects that focus on advocacy, social, and behavior change, sexual and reproductive health for women and girls. And he has a ton of applicable experience in multisectoral nutrition, planning, and coordination. So we're looking forward to hearing from Selorme. After Selorme opens the presentation, we'll also hear from Al-Hassan Issahaku, monitoring and evaluation and learning specialist. Who's had numerous evaluations and assessments for development programs over the past two decades. On the USAID Advancing Nutrition project, he's been involved in designing and applying capacity strengthening and measurement tools with government partners, including these specific efforts to assess and strengthen the district nutrition coordinating committees. You'll hear those referred to as the DNCCs to improve multisectoral nutrition coordination in Ghana. So with that, I'd like to hand over to Selorme and Al-Hassan. Selorme, please feel free to kick off the next part of our webinar.

Selorme Kofie Azumah

Thank you very much, and good afternoon, good morning, good evening to all our participants. I must say that we are really thrilled as a project to have this platform to share some of the learnings that we have gathered from this work that we started barely over two to three years. And, and also to acknowledge the support that we have received from Aunty Mary and the NDPC as a whole. Her guidance has really helped to ensure that we've made this kind of progress as far as the core focus of the project, which is to help trending multisectoral coordination and collaboration, both at national and subnational level is concerned. And so just building on, the context that Aunty Mary and Lutuf provided, USAID Advancing Nutrition Ghana set outs essentially based on those challenges that were highlighted by Aunty Mary to help support the country, to strengthen in multisectoral coordination at national and subnational level. And at national as Aunty Mary said, we work with the CSPG, which is the procedural coordination group. And then the subnational we work with the regional coordinating councils, particularly the planning units. And at the district level is their district's planning committees. And in making sure that the nutrition as, as it has been just focusing on the specific we move from that point of just unique coordination to multi, which is the whole drive to make sure that nutrition is prioritized in the manner that both the sensitive and specific come together to think through the challenges, plan together, work together, and implement together. We focus attention on building the district (inaudible) coordinating committees. And as Aunty Mary mentioned, some projects have piloted this. The experiences have been, once the project folded up, that was the end of the story. And so our

commitment was to help rejuvenate or reconstitute some of these committees within the zone of influence, which is the 17 districts that the project works in. And also make sure that we don't suffer the same faith once we are done and over with the project. And that's where the capacity building comes in, because experiences from the previous analysis showed that there were a lot of capacity gaps as Aunty Mary alluded to. And so even the skills to continue once donor's supports is over, was missing. And so we needed to focus attention on those. And that essentially is what our work has revolved around. The agenda as I mentioned, was to facilitate the multi-sectorial collaboration and the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of nutrition related activities at those... The district level. And these committees were made up of all the various sectors and actors that have a direct role or indirect role in making sure that nutrition is prioritized and implemented in the manner that it delivers the kind of results that we are all aiming for. And so those sectors included health, water, gender and social protection, education as well as environmental health. So it represented both the sensitive and the specific sectors, making sure that they work together as well as the academia and civil society organizations who also work in those areas. At the, at the community level. What were the main functions of these DNCCs? Essentially they were set up, or probably the reconstitution was to provide technical guidance in planning and budgeting for nutrition related activities, ensuring collaboration and coordination and making sure synergies are built around the various activities of the sectors so that at the level of implementation, they can mobilize together and make sure implementation is done together. So we avoid the usual duplication of efforts and resource wastage, as well as promoting joint sector monitoring. So it's not just about the planning or implementing the activities, but it's also about how these committees work together, as a structure and the body to also follow up on some of the things that they're doing across the various sectors, but we support of each other and accounting for some of the resource and learning the lessons that they can use to improve on their implementation. So those were the four core mandates of the (inaudible) nutrition boarding committees.

Next slide. Next.

So for the DNCCs to be able to deliver on the mandates as highlighted in those functions, what were the capacities needed for them to be able to do this? First of all, we look at the planning and the integration bits of the work and how that's, they needed knowledge around multisectoral nutrition planning. Which in itself was a gap because it probably was just in the domain of the nutrition specific sector, which is health. But the other non-nutrition specific actors really needed that knowledge and understanding of multisectoral nutrition planning and coordination and how they can be able to integrate those ideas, activities, actions into the development at the district level. We also realized a gap around advocacy, and so we provided trainings around advocacy, resource mobilization. As Aunty Mary mentioned, nutrition is highly donor... Funding for nutrition is donor driven, and government's contribution has always been a challenge. And so at the local level, how can we empower the local stakeholders and actors to be able to engage the decision-makers at that level to see nutrition and prioritize it a development issue rather than just a social thing. And so, they needed that capacity to be able to do those engagements. And then we provided those trainings at the local level to empower them. Also using the expenditure analysis that we have supported the districts to do the findings of those to be able to engage the decision makers at the local level for increased funding for food and nutrition security. The other bit was the resource mobilization capacity area. How that we, from the stakeholders, it was evident that at their level they would want to come together as sectors and actors put forward ideas that can generate or raise some resources to support some of the work that they're doing at that level, including even monitoring of the activities that they were supposed to be following up on as far the media and development plan was concerned. And then the last bit of the capacity area was the team building, as we saw in the pool, working in a multisectoral space has its own challenges. Everybody has an interest, but how do we work together as a body, some counting the same common

interest, which is addressing more nutrition at the community level and how do we work together. So team building was part of the capacity and competency areas that came up, which we focus attention on and be able to help and support the teams to be able to do that. And in addition, we also develop drawing lessons from Uganda, the monitoring checklist, which we supported at the regional level to be able to use, to follow up on the DNCCs on a quarterly basis to evaluate how well they're doing, their levels of engagement, which was critical because this was also happening at the same time when Ghana was developing its media and development plan. And the whole agenda at that point was how do we support the DNCC to influence the development of the mediated development plan in the manner that food and nutrition security issues are considered and integrated and budgeted form in those plans. And so, this continuous follow up was also to track how well they're doing. And I think when Mr. Issahaku is done with his presentation, we can talk more on some of these resources that's based on the capacity and the support that the DNCCs received, what resource they were able to achieve with those skills and competencies. And so, I think by a way of context and background, this was what informed our supports for the multisectoral and teaching coordination in Ghana, making sure we work with the government agencies to strengthen coordination and also drive the nutrition prioritizing agenda, which also included making sure nutrition is adequately budgeted for and funded by government. Thank you. And I think I can hand over to Mr. Issahaku who will now take us to the evaluation process, what we look out for and some of the things that we have found. Thank you. And over.

Al-Hassan Issahaku

Yeah. Thank you Selorme. So yeah, as Selorme mentioned, we in USAID Advancing Nutrition, haven't had those nutrition coordinating communities put in place. We, after building the capacity, we also thought that there was a need to do some supportive supervision, which the regional level provides for the district nutrition community committees, but we also assessed their capacity using a tool that was you know, learned from Uganda. Working with our local government officials, we developed an assessment checklist to evaluate their performance on quarterly basis. That particular tool was further revised, looking at literature available about capacity strengthening measurements and evaluating capacities. And also drawing from management science for health, tool for capacity assessment. We were able to revise the tool, which had likely binary responses to now response options that had a scale of one to five. And, and so, that is what we are using, currently and what we're going to focus on. So, the team administered the checklist. We administered the checklist to the 17 districts nutrition for meeting committees and these district nutrition for meeting committees...

Ann Miceli

It sounds like we may have lost Al-Hassan. Just to confirm, can others hear Al-Hassan?

John Nicholson

Yes Ann, it looks like we may have lost him for just a second. Let's give him a second to see if he comes back.

Ann Miceli

Perhaps while we're waiting for Al-Hassan, Selorme, I just wanted to check, if Al-Hassan is not able to continue, could you pick up the presentation from here? Wait it looks like... I see a message that he's reconnecting. Selorme?

Selorme Kofie Azumah

Okay.

Ann Miceli

I think you can...

Selorme Kofie Azumah

Yeah. So do, do you want me to just...

Ann Miceli

Yes, please go ahead. And once he jumps back on, then we'll allow him to step back in.

Selorme Kofie Azumah

Okay. So yeah, so can we move to the, I think he's done with, with this slide. Yeah. So essentially the checklist assessed this capacity areas, technical, leadership and governance

Al-Hassan Issahaku

Yeah. Selorme I'm back.

Selorme Kofie Azumah

Great. Please.

Al-Hassan Issahaku

All right, thank you. So sorry about that. So, well I'm just continuing from where Selorme left off.

So the checklist actually has six main components, and the six main components are the leadership and governance, technical guidance, coordination and partnership planning and budgeting, monitoring and reporting and advocacy. And each of these components have sub components that drilled down into the respective areas of these components in order for us to cover a broader, the broader components in its right aspect and getting the views of the respective participants. So, the tool is an Excel, it's built in an Excel workbook in several Excel worksheets. And the respective components have its own dedicated worksheets where the sub components are defined and the rating from one to five also defined respectively and this guides the participants to do this for it. So, in using this tool, we make sure that there is, participatory enough, and so we will invite the district nutrition coordinator committees to come together as one group, and we will take each of the components and any sub-components in tense to make sure that everybody understands what the descriptions are and what they are expected to do. And so looking at the descriptions, each of the nutrition coordinating committees would reflect and assign a score that they think reflects the stage in which they are in respect of the components or the sub component that we are dealing with at any point in time. So as the nutrition coordinating

committees rates the same way the evaluators or assessors also rates independently. And so, because of the nature of the workbook, and given that we all don't have the same level of Excel navigation expertise or the usage of the Excel, we have hard copies of the checklist so that if we go, we ask every district nutrition coordinated committee participants to score using that, if you are not comfortable with the Excel sheets. At the end of the day, it's entered, input into the Excel sheet, which has some sections that does the aggregation. And these sections are automated. Once you put in this score, it does the aggregation. And what we see on our screen right now is the, is part of the tool which summarizes each of the figures of the sub components that we have and try to work out the percentage scores at every stage. And based on that, we are able to put everything together on a summary sheet, which we use to do our analysis and report it. And so the categorizations are such that when we do the percentage computation and a score is below 21, we take it that it's still at stage one. If it is between 21 and 40, we take it it's at stage 4. 41 to 60, we take it it's at stage 3, 41 to 80, sorry, 61 to 80, we consider it is at stage 4. And if it is greater than 80, we will consider it as stage 5, and that's the maximum for each participants can give to a sub components. And each of these stages are such that it reflects what the individual participants think given the description for the sub component, the DNCC performance falls within.

Next.

Yeah, so we did analyze this data and we have some resource and some lessons we have learned from the assessment to that we are using. So given the categorization overall, at the end of the day, we realize that when it comes to leadership and governance, the green is what's percentage of this score, the DNCC participants reflects for the leadership and governance...

Ann Miceli

It sounds like we may have lost Al-Hassan again, despite our best efforts, internet connections sometimes have other ideas! Al-Hassan, are you back? Yeah. Selorme, please.

Selorme Kofie Azumah

Welcome back. Yes, I think I'm back. Yeah..

Ann Miceli

Please go ahead.

Selorme Kofie Azumah

So, in respect of the leadership and governance from the categorization, you would notice that the DNCC reflects 83% and (inaudible) 77. So what that means is that the DNCC think the leadership and governance, they are at the stage five, they have stage five whilst the evaluators thinks that the leadership and governance, they are still at age state four. And in technical guidance, I think there was a consensus. And so, the two set of evaluators that is the DNCC participants and the evaluators thought that they were at stage 5 and the rest were on stage 4 except for advocacy, which was at stage 3. Next. So overall, the 17 DNCCs are well developed, but they have not reached the mature stage yet. And so it means that there are still some capacity gaps that need to be filled, and we're going to be working at that as a project. The DNCCs are also well constituted and have regular meetings. The DNCC have annual strategic plan, which guides their operations and activities. And the DNCC demonstrates high capacity and performance and FNS planning and integration and districts medium term development

plans. DNCC the higher under performed in resource mobilization, monitor and reporting advocacy and switch and behavior change communication. Hence, the need for us to support the DNCC to improve in these areas. Yes, there has been some lessons learned, and some of the lessons includes the fact that the training one needs to have some detailed training with the evaluators to come to grasp with the full distractions of the components and the sub components and the definitions of the various stages for them to ensure an internal reliability and for that matter, reduce some individual biases and errors that may occur. The tool does not make adequate provision for anecdotal evidence. And so, documented evidence is required to show proof of performance. We use it a participatory approach and that promotes ownership and also ensures that capacity strengthening is their priorities, and the evaluation tool needs to be reviewed periodically to remain relevant. You realize that we said as we adopted, we adopted it from Uganda. It was largely a binary kind of response. As we used it, we realized that there was a need to revise it to in order to make it relevant, and therefore we now change their skills to the region of one to five, which I think, it helped a lot and we will still continue to revise and review. Thank you.

Ann Miceli

Wonderful. Thank you. Thank you, Al-Hassan for walking us through that tool. This tool is a really interesting piece of work, and the way that it was used in Ghana is particularly interesting. Those of you who are familiar with network strengthening or organizational capacity strengthening might recognize some of the fields in that tool as being fairly standard. Things like leadership and guidance, coordination and partnership, planning. These are some capacity strengthening principles that are used in a number of different disciplines. And to see them applied here in the Ghana context where you have the strong policy support for nutrition coordination with the support of the USAID admission and USAID advancing nutrition. It's just a really interesting example of how we can help these coordinating committees to really get their footing, become established and grow in a way that they can fulfill the vision for those committees that the government has set forward. So, thank you Al-Hassan for sharing this really interesting tool. I wanted to move us into the Q&A section. This is the last portion of our webinar. We've got about 15 minutes to take a couple of questions and have a little bit of discussions. I'd like to introduce two additional panelists who will join us for the Q&A. We have two panelists who are members of the DNCC. We have, we have first Mohamed Salahudeen. Mohamed is the local economic development practitioner who works at the Gushegu Municipal Assembly in Ghana as a development planner and member of the DNCC. And alongside Mohamed, we have Toyibu Abdul Hamid, and he is the development policy and planning specialist working at the Sagnarigu Municipal Assembly as the Principal Development Planning Officer. He's also a member of the DNCC. So please keep your questions coming in in the chat. You can use the Q&A box or the chat to share your questions with us. Our team will keep an eye on those, box, those boxes to really answer the questions that come in. I'd like to start out with a question for the members of the DNCC, and I'd like to hear just a little bit more about your experience as this tool was being used, as these network assessment tools were being used. How did the coordinating committee view participation in this evaluation and receiving the feedback that you received? So from the perspective of the DNCC, what was this experience like for you? Mohamed or Toyibu, feel free to jump in and share with us how this looked from your perspective to start. Please go ahead.

Toyibu Abdul Hamid

Okay, thank you. I'm Toyibu Abdul Hamid from Sagnarigu Municipal Assembly. I think the supportive supervision and monitoring checklist has helped the DNCCS in its functionality. We hold quarterly meetings and at every quarter we go through the checklist and at the end of the checklist, it shows you where you are doing well and where you are not doing well, so then you discuss how possibly you can improve on the areas that you are not doing well and enhance your good performance. So it has been a very good tool for us, and even at Sagnarigu, at the DPCU, we have incorporated into a DPCU to enhance other areas, even aside nutrition, implementation in the municipality. Thank you.

Ann Miceli

Thank you. Thank you. Toyibu. Feel free... Mohamed, if you'd like to jump in, feel free to add some additional comments. We're happy to hear from you as well. Some of the things you highlighted just there, Toyibu were... the ability for an assessment like this or a tool like this to help the DNCCs reflect on their overall performance and really think about what they want to achieve at the next stage of development. One of the things I particularly noted about this tool was that there's that section where the DNCCs receive a kind of rating or an assessment of the stages of development so that they understand kind of where in the spectrum of development they are and what kind of things they might set their mind to doing next in order to move to the next stage. And it can be really helpful for helping networks and organizations get stronger to create that perspective about what the next step is without focusing too far ahead and creating these unrealistic goals that can't be advanced as quickly as people might want them to be. So it's kind of the one step at a time approach. Toyibu, did you have something additional to add?

Mohamed Salahudeen

Yeah, this is Mohamed Salahudeen. Yes, I have a little challenge with my connection, on the audio, but team here. Yeah, I think I just want to add to the DNCC the capacities of the assessments or the monitoring essentially helped a lot because there are a lot of things that we are doing at (inaudible) level that even sometimes we don't take notes of what the monitoring and supportive provision have actually revealed a lot. And we are actually, it has actually contributed in, you know, this multi-sectoral aspect of implementing our programs, especially at the community level. Looking at the composition of the DNCC, you know, the, it comprises a lot of departments and other partners, so you realize that people who, those who are included are not felt left out and, and therefore they're able to contribute so much in the nutrition planning and implementation in the digital level. Talking about their contribution. I must also say that when it comes to the planning process, especially the (inaudible), they contributed a lot starting from the prioritization level through the mainstreaming of the nutrition activities into the medium term plan, and also a lot of (inaudible) were given, were given to this committee through the support of advancing nutrition plan and the rcc who actually helped, or given the (inaudible) to actually boost the understanding of the committee to perform their role. But I must admit that when it comes to the resource mobilization, that is where we are performing very low, because if you look at the capacity of the committee has not yet fully been enhanced to be able to embark on vigorous resource mobilization to support the activity. Nonetheless, we're able to make it part and past our annual action plans, I'm talking about activities of nutrition, we are able to make it part of our action plans and then the annual composite budget. Thank you very much.

Ann Miceli

Wonderful. Thank you. Thank you very much Mohamed for those additional words. One of the things that I really liked that you underscored with the importance of how you've taken this experience and

how the tool has allowed you to reflect on those stages, and then you've integrated some of those changes into the routine planning and the routine things that the DNCC is doing. And one of the kind of bigger picture, one of the bigger picture advantages of a tool like this is when you start using it with multiple DNCCs, it also helps program planners to understand where to put resources, where to put time and where you can group learners together in focusing on a similar thing. So these kinds of assessments really can lead to much more efficient use of resources. We had a question come in that was focused on leadership styles among the DNCCs, and I believe this question is probably for either Selorme or Al-Hassan. It's about the results of these assessments. So Dr. Qadir was asking what leadership styles are most effective to promote cluster coordination as well as managing teams in a humanitarian setting. So in the settings where you've administered these assessments, what have you learned about leadership styles? And this may even connect to leadership and governance, that category in the assessments. What leadership styles have come out as being more effective with the DNCCs? What have you seen in some of the early results from this assessment? Selorme or Al-Hassan, you're welcome to jump in on this or anybody who would like to respond from the panel.

Selorme Kofie Azumah

Okay. So, uh, yeah, so thank you very much and, in terms of, so as, sorry, I think my line went of on and off a little. I saw Dr. Qadir's question about the competencies required for multisectoral coordination. Is that the one that you are referring to?

Ann Miceli

There were two questions. One was about the competencies for multisectoral coordination and the other one was about what leadership styles seemed to be most effective for this coordination, for the coordination of these committees.

Selorme Kofie Azumah

Okay, good. So yeah, so thank you. Yeah, so essentially from, what we've gathered before the DNCC takeoff and over the time, the trainings that we have provided, we realize that to be able to coordinate multisectorally and effectively, the, the first thing is the understanding, at the knowledge level, the understanding of what multisectoral coordination in itself is all about. What's, how does that play into addressing the issues of malnutrition? Because you realize that often the real sectors are working in silence even though there is a common enemy that we want to, we want to deal with, which is malnutrition. Everybody is fighting for his own directly to base on course. That understanding multisectoral and what you can achieve together was sort of missing. Number two, what we also gathered was the issue around understanding of malnutrition and nutrition as a whole, the non nutrition specific actor community. And so the knowledge of malnutrition and nutrition in itself is kinda well understood within the nutrition specific community. So those two areas in terms of knowledge gap was critical and, and, and in our estimation, that played a, those two areas played a critical role in bringing all the actors to the same level for them to have a full appreciation of the issue we are dealing with and how they can work together to do that. In terms of skills planning was a key area. The skills to plan which would start first of all from understanding what we are planning for. That's more like the situation analysis, being able to conduct the situation analysis around nutrition, generating the evidence and how to use that information to plan for the kind of interventions that are required to be able to achieve the

desired results was a critical skill area. Then the issue around communication, how to communicate some of this knowledge and understanding as well as negotiating for space skills, negotiation skills. Remember we are bringing different actors together. Everybody wants his agenda to be, to be perceived and achieved. And so how do you negotiate for that space, but at the same time making sure you create the opportunity for others to also come in. So, skills around negotiation, communication, planning, and being able to integrate. Those where some areas that we think really helped to come to this point as far as the DNCC are concerned. In terms of leadership, I think what we saw happen essentially was, was an inclusiveness. So, it is not an entirely, not an authoritarian approach. This is what the district want and this is what we're going to do, but getting everybody involved and carrying everybody along in thinking through the issues and identifying the areas that needs attention. And I would just use that one word, inclusive leadership, bringing everybody and carrying everybody around I think was, was a critical area that we identify as far as the leadership was concerned. I'm sure maybe (inaudible) or even the DNCC members who are on the call. Yeah, thank you.

Ann Miceli

Thank you Selorme. That was a nice way to encapsulate some of those really key leadership qualities that matter, that inclusive leadership and that ability to help the different parties who are coming to the table to understand each other. We're very near the ending time for our webinar. We actually have just about two minutes left. I would invite all of you attending the webinar to feel free to reach out to our panelists. Feel free to reach out to us. We can put you in touch to continue these conversations beyond the webinar. No matter how long we make these webinars, often it feels like we reach the Q&A and we're just getting started to really reach a level of depth of understanding about these topics and these issues. So I thank you all for your participation and for your patience in this webinar. I'd like to thank the presenters and our respondents for sharing your work and your perspective with us today. And I'd like to thank all of the participants for your interested engagement and these really good questions that brought us to the end of this webinar. We are going to be sending around a survey and we would very, very much appreciate any feedback that you have on today's webinar. The link that was just posted in the chat is the link to the survey. Please take a minute and give us a little bit of feedback just to help us understand how we can structure these webinars to really highlight the things you most want to hear and to best suit your needs. So please do take a minute just to click on that link. As a reminder, this webinar is the third one in our capacity strengthening series around building competencies. You'll also receive an email with a link to the recording for this webinar within a few days. So feel free to take a few minutes and review that recording again. Check out some of the speaker's points that you might have missed the first time through. So you'll be hearing us very soon. Please also feel free to share these resources with your colleagues and we do hope you'll join us for a future event. As we go into the next project year for USAID advancing nutrition. We'll be delivering a number of additional webinars and talking about different aspects of multi-sectoral nutrition throughout the next year. So thank you very much everyone, we appreciate your participation. And with that, I will go ahead and bring this webinar to a close. Enjoy the rest of your day and thank you for joining us.