



Strengthening the Capacity of Local Organizations for Nutrition Outcomes: Local Perspectives and Ways Forward

Webinar Transcript

Yaritza Rodriguez

Welcome to our webinar today. We'll get started in about a minute. As you're joining, I ask our audience members to introduce themselves in the chat. Let us know where you're tuning in from, what organization you're with by selecting everyone and sending a message to everyone in the chat as you join. We'll get started in a moment. Thank you.

[pause 00:00:53]

Welcome to everyone. We'll get started in just a moment. Please introduce yourselves in the chat as you're joining. Thank you. [silence] Thank you. Hello, Karen. Hello, Dora. Thank you for joining. Everyone who's joining us please do introduce yourselves in the chat as we get started.

All right. I think we can move forward. Welcome, everyone, to the webinar on Strengthening Capacity of Local Organizations for Nutrition Outcomes. We'll hear local perspectives and ways forward.

My name is Yaritza Rodriguez. I'm a communications officer with USAID Advancing Nutrition, and I'll be providing tech support in today's webinar. I'm joined also by my colleague Lauren Wheeler, who will also be providing tech support. Next slide, please.

If you have any technology issues or questions, please send a message to tech support in the chat box or email info@advancingnutrition.org. If you have any issues today, just insert them in the chat box and we'll do our best to address them. Next slide.

Today we have French interpretation so I'll make and just mention this slide in French so that our French-speaking colleagues, Francophone colleagues can listen in French.

[French language]

Next slide, please. For attendees listening in English, when our French speakers are speaking, click the interpretation icon and select English to have the option to hear the webinar in English. When English speakers are presenting, you may need to click the interpretation icon and select original audio to turn interpretation off to hear the English-speaking presenters. Just a reminder. Thank you. Next slide.

Today we'll be using the Q&A box. To submit your questions for the panelists, go into your Zoom controls, click on the Q&A icon and type in your question and submit it in the Q&A box. Panelists will either reply to you via text in the Q&A box, or we'll answer your question during the live Q&A discussion portion of the webinar. Next slide.

If at any point during today's webinar you drop off and rejoin, for example, and you're unable to hear the speakers, please make sure you've connected your audio by selecting the headphones icon. Please, as I mentioned before, send a message to everyone in the chat box, introduce yourself. Send in your

comments or ask for support during today's webinar. Closed captioning has been enabled for this meeting. To view live subtitles on your screen, click on the CC icon and select show subtitle.

Finally, please note that this webinar is being recorded and will be available both on our LinkedIn website at USAID Advancing Nutrition, and also our LinkedIn profile, and also on our website advancingnutrition.org. Next slide.

It's now my pleasure to introduce our moderator for today, Meg Kinghorn. She's a capacity strengthening consultant with USAID Advancing Nutrition. Over to you, Meg.

Meg Kinghorn

Great. Thank you, Yaritza. Hello to everybody. We are so, so happy to have you here. We're looking at the chat and your introductions, and we have people from all over Africa, Asia, Latin America, which is terrific. We're so happy that you're here because we really want to showcase some of the great work that USAID Advancing Nutrition has been doing in recent years and some of the lessons it's learned in looking at supporting the capacity strengthening of local organizations.

As we know, those organizations are so key. They're the ones that work directly with communities in things like nutrition and improving nutrition outcomes.

With that, we are going to talk a little bit about our webinar today. It is on for strengthening the capacity of local organizations for nutrition outcomes in particular, so that slant. This is harvesting some of the lessons from USAID Advancing Nutrition. This project is USAID's flagship multi-sectoral nutrition project. It builds on past investments in nutrition, but looking at it really through a multi-sectoral lens, so bringing together all the different ways to address the many causes of nutrition and malnutrition.

One of the key strategies has been in working with partners to strengthen their capacity to deliver multi-sectoral nutrition programming. That's what we're here to talk about today, is to showcase this work that they're really proud of. USAID Advancing Nutrition is also very excited that we have local partners here from Kenya and Burkina Faso who will share their experience with you directly.

With that, let's look at the agenda for today. They will be the main featured speakers. First of all, I'll ask USAID Advancing Nutrition to give an overview of the work that they've been doing, both from the Central Washington office and also the Kenya Country program. Then we have our featured speakers, two from Kenya, the OGRA Foundation, and CBCC Africa, Center for Behavior Change and Communication. We also have two organizations from Burkina Faso, SOS Sahel and PanAfricare.

Each one of them will be talking a little bit about their experience, and how they advance their capacity, and how the project support helped them, what was effective and what are our recommendations. Finally, we'll look at some of those lessons and recommendations. Then at the end, we'll have some time for Q&A.

As Yaritza said, we have a Q&A box, so we ask that you please throughout the presentation submit your questions there and we will take them at the end. Excellent. With that, let's go to the next slide.

Since this is a capacity strengthening project that we'll be talking about, we thought it was really useful to base this on reflecting on USAID's recent policy on local capacity strengthening, particularly looking at their seven principles that they've put out. We've asked the partners also each to address one of the principles and how did that principle play out within the project. We just want to highlight that we will be tying to the USAID principles and gaining some lessons there in practice.

Great. With that, I will turn it over to our first speakers for the next slide with USAID Advancing Nutrition. We'll have two presenters, the first is Ann Miceli, she's the technical director for capacity strengthening at USAID Advancing Nutrition based in Washington, and then also Peter Milo. He is the chief of party for the USAID Advancing Nutrition Project in Kenya, which is just wrapping up its work.

The two of them will walk you through some of the approaches and the work that has been done, some of the results, and with that I will turn it over to Peter or Ann.

Ann Miceli

Thank you, Meg. I'll go ahead and start out the presentation and I'll hand over to Peter after I speak a little bit about our learning agenda. Next slide, please.

I wanted to start out just by sharing with you some background on the way Advancing Nutrition set our goal to really learn about our work with local partners and synthesize that learning very clearly so that we could share it more broadly. We know that working with local partners is not a new strategy.

USAID has been doing this for quite some time, but we wanted to really take this opportunity to focus on how we can help understand how local organizations can really contribute to nutrition specifically and how organizations like USAID and Advancing Nutrition and other implementing partners can support local partners in that goal and as part of USAID's overall movement towards localization.

As part of our learning agenda, we really set out to develop some recommendations for USAID and its implementing partners, specifically for how to better design and implement capacity-strengthening programs and how to support local organizations to reach their organizational goals and to contribute to nutrition priorities overall. We also set out to understand how to develop or adapt capacity-strengthening activities and approaches in order to really be responsive to the needs of those local organizations.

Then lastly, our goal was also to leverage opportunities and to address challenges and constraints that are really unique to capacity strengthening for nutrition. Next slide, please.

As part of this learning agenda, we really looked at two programs that are operating in slightly different ways within Advancing Nutrition. We have some funding through the New Partnerships Initiative program with USAID. We have four grantees under the New Partnerships Initiative that include the OGRA Foundation, the Center for Behavior Change and Communication. Those two are in Kenya, and two partners in Burkina Faso, SOS Sahel and PanAfricare. We have representatives from all four of these partners who will be with us on the webinar today, and we look forward to hearing from them about their experiences with the NPI program.

I wanted to highlight that the NPI program includes two components. It includes a sub-grant for these partners to implement nutrition programming alongside capacity strengthening that is agreed together with the partner in the very beginning and that is built around the partner's priorities. That's the first part of the programming that we've done as part of this learning agenda.

The second part of Advancing Nutrition's programming reflects some work that we've done in Kenya. We have worked with 10 civil society organizations that have been supported through Advancing Nutrition Kenya. Those 10 civil society organizations are listed here on the slide. Because we had a very large program in Kenya, we've asked Peter to speak a little bit about that program in Kenya and some of the experiences that they have had in working with these 10 CSOs. Those 10 CSOs were part of our program. Next slide, please.

I should also mention there were some differences in both the way those programs functioned and the way that we viewed our learning approach as we were learning about our experiences both with NPI partners and with the CSOs. I do want to note that our NPI partners received a sub-grant as part of the NPI programming alongside the technical assistance.

Our CSOs that we worked with through the Kenya Country Program received technical assistance that was really focused on partnering those CSOs with the government and facilitating that relationship with

existing structures, but the CSOs that we worked with in Kenya did not receive a sub-grant as part of that work so that's one slight difference that you'll hear about as we go through the webinar today.

In terms of our learning approach, as you can see on the slide here, with our NPI partners and the CSOs, we conducted a couple of key steps. We did a baseline and endline organizational capacity assessment. We also conducted semi-structured interviews with those capacity-strengthening providers. These were our TA providers. Then we conducted a document review. This is how we learned about partners' experiences and some of their growth throughout the program.

For the NPI program partners only, we also conducted a feedback survey with local organization staff. We wanted multiple levels of staff to really be able to tell us about how the NPI program worked and what they'd like to see done differently with NPI. We also conducted a pause and reflect with our capacity-strengthening partners. Next slide, please.

I'll say a few more words about NPI and then I'll hand over to Peter to describe in more detail the work with our community organizations. Through NPI, capacity strengthening support was all provided by local consultants in collaboration with our US-based team, but by and large, the vast majority of that capacity strengthening was done with local consultants because we wanted to facilitate those linkages to in-country resources. We also felt that our consultants who are working in these countries understood the context better and could be a much stronger support to these local organizations.

Overall, we used five strategies and approaches. We conducted mini trainings in addition to multi-day training, so some of those trainings were an hour, two hours, or an afternoon, and some were multi-day. We conducted both routine and on-demand coaching and mentoring, so we did both coaching and mentoring. We conducted monthly progress reviews and an annual pause and reflect to make sure that we had ample opportunities to really talk about what type of capacity strengthening was needed and what kind of TA providers would be most helpful to our partners.

We also set out to support developing and finalizing tools and documents that would be helpful to the partners. Again, the partners define their priorities through the capacity-strengthening plans that we put together. We were connecting grantees also with other organizations working in nutrition in the same geographic area, so peer learning was a key part of our approach here.

Just to indicate in that blue box on the side, grantees identified specifically the areas they wanted to focus on through the NPI program. These were some of the priorities that the grantees set. Within these areas, grantees really were able to define what priorities were most important to them. Next slide, please.

I'll hand over to Peter for the next part of the presentation to describe the work that was done through our Kenya Country program. Peter, over to you.

Peter Milo

Good morning, good afternoon, colleagues. Happy that you're here. As Ann has said, is that our work in Kenya was building from what we are doing at the global level. One of the motivation of the CSO work in Kenya was to make sure that we're able to contribute to the three outcomes of the project, which was improved planning, improve advocacy for resource allocation, and then improved coordination.

In Kenya, a departure from the NPI civil society organization was our role was to provide technical assistance. We went through a process of, first, we began by a co-creation and mapping exercise. In co-creation, here is whereby we had the program at the global level, but we had to sit down and unpack and say, "Fine, who is in the nutrition space normally?"

That required us to do a mapping exercise. This mapping exercise, we were able to conduct across our three program areas which is in western and the Lake region of Kenya and the eastern part of Kenya.

For those who are in Kenya, they will be able to know about Kakamega, Kisumu, and Kitui. For our global audience, just be aware that this was in the highly agricultural potential areas, a lake region, and semi-arid region.

The second step was also a selection of the civil society organization through collaboration and working with multi-sector nutrition technical departments. Under mapping we were asking this question. Who normally do you interact with as you continue to work in nutrition space? Certain names will come, and then as a project, we'll dig that a little bit more so that we are not missing out people who are already active in that space.

Then the second step was a capacity assessment. We all know or if you don't know, is that USAID has a very detailed tool called the Organizational Capacity Assessment. That tool is very comprehensive and thorough and very long, but one of the things was to adapt that to the need of the civil society organization that we were targeting to work with. That means we had to tailor to our need.

Then from that, then we had to do work with the CSOs to develop a capacity-strengthening plan. There were broad, big areas around leadership and governance, resource mobilization issues to do with learning advocacy for nutrition, and many, many other areas. Then from that capacity-strengthening plan, then we are able to agree with the leadership of the civil society organization in Kenya on what they need to do in the short-term, media-term, and long-term. There are things that they will need to do even when the program has closed in Kenya in September 30th.

Then after that, then we now commenced on the technical assistance. The program in Kenya, we had a mix of we had staff within the program who are nutritionist by qualification and we also had consultancies that will also add to that piece of work.

The main approaches were mentorship, training opportunities, and we became very intentional that in any capacity strengthening training or support we are providing to government on planning, on policy, on public participation. We made available slots for these civil society organization that becomes intentional. You cannot support and strengthen government if you don't understand how it works. That was very useful.

Then, the other bit was joint support supervision whereby working with the subnational districts in certain countries, or in Kenya we call them counties, we were able to go out and able to kind of visit the civil society organization and work with them on areas that they were struggling in.

Also, working with the partners here to kind of link them. In one region. In Kakamega, for example, we were able to work with the Nutrition International to support them to start us scaling up Nutrition Civil Society Alliance.

Then the last bit was, monitoring their capacity-strengthening plan, helping them understand nutrition indicators. Then we also supported by convening a learning sessions that whereby they're able to talk among us themselves and able to learn from each other. Then a big part was also issue about documentation and work on their visibility. This was useful and it proves to be very useful. Next slide, please.

Now, our work in Kenya largely was focusing on the first principles starting with the local system. This is one area that we have found to be very useful. As you strengthen civil society organization, it's very important that you stick to the law and stick to the mandate of what everybody's supposed to do. Constitutionally and by law in Kenya, health, agriculture, nutrition, and several other 13 functions have been devolved or taken to the subnational level.

Therefore, then it meant our work needed to align in as far as these civil society organization were doing to support strengthening of decentralization of services so that people can get better services. This is very well aligned in the Kenyan constitution and the 4th Schedule.

Then, the other area that was also very important for us was issues to do at the point of mapping, some of the tools we used was network analysis. What you're seeing on your left, the first question we asked a host of civil society organizations that we asked them when you're looking for nutrition information or when you are collaborating for nutrition, whom do you normally go to?

It was interesting as much as we know that this will always come from the Ministry of Health or agriculture, but there were other players that were also coming up and quite strong. You'll find UNICEF, World Health Organization, and others were going there. Then there was issue about also the cooperation process allowed us for them to own the work and be able to continue to work with that.

Then the other thing that was also very important was to build on the existing leadership. We know sometimes the civil society, grassroots civil society organization leadership can be very nascent, not so strong as with the international organization. It's always good to start from the point where you have something and then you are able to move forward.

We found them most committed.

On the extreme right, that is one civil society organization in Western Kenya that I love because they are quite keen on land access and abilities of women to access land for growing crops and keep livestock for their children. You can see different players play differently, and this was quite useful. At the end of all, we had to all add a shared value of making decentralization work based on people's mandate. I think, that is what I want to share, but I'll come later to share a little bit more slides. Next. Thanks. Over to you.

Ann Miceli

Thank you, Peter.

Meg Kinghorn

Thank you. I think we are running a little bit behind and would you like to maybe just spend 30 seconds on the next two slides?.

Ann Miceli

Certainly. We wanted to compile for you just a little bit of information to kind of illustrate on the left the categories that we used from the Organizational Capacity Assessment tool and some of the changes that we saw in those OCA scores from baseline to endline. We invite you to take a look at these slides when we send around the slide set, but this just illustrates these for the NPI partners. On the next slide for the Kenya CSO partners, the kind of change that happened as a result of these two programs and the different categories that we used with the OCA. Thank you, Meg.

Meg Kinghorn

Great. Thank you. Ann. As you can tell, USAID Advancing Nutrition is so excited about their work and they've done such good things. We are happy to hear from you. However, our featured speakers to go to the next slide are the local partners. I am very happy to introduce the first of our speakers from the OGRA Foundation, Dr. Stephen Okello, and he will be speaking about the experience from the OGRA Foundation.

Dr. Stephen is project director for the USAID Advancing Nutrition Project within OGRA Foundation. He offers technical and administrative oversight and oversees the project implementation. Dr. Stephen has over 10 years experience in health programs at the management level, both as a medical doctor and a master's of public health. As if the NPI project wasn't keeping him busy already, Dr. Stephen also still does clinical practice on a daily basis, so he keeps his practice sharp. Thank you for joining us, Dr. Stephen, and I invite you to take over. Pass the mic.

Dr. Stephen Okello

Thank you very much, Meg. Good afternoon. Good morning, everyone. Thank you for joining us. I'm Dr. Stephen Okello, as had been mentioned from OGRA Foundation. Can you move on to the next slide?

OGRA Foundation is a nongovernmental organization in Kenya. We are a local organization registered in Kenya since 2004. We are actually one of the beneficiaries of the NPI program and USAID Advancing Nutrition. Our mission is to implement sustainable health and development solutions with communities in sub-Saharan Africa through innovative integrated interventions.

Before we engaged with USAID Advancing Nutrition, we have been implementing projects for now about 20 years. Most of these have been under grants from Global Fund also from PEPFAR, that's President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, and also USAID. All these have been a sub-award or we've been sub-recipients of other organizations. Part of this journey with USAID Advancing Nutrition was to capacity build us to a level where we can also be direct grantees of USAID and other major donors.

Under the NPI project, we have been implementing in Kakamega County, if you refer to the map on your right, the area highlighted in black is Kakamega. It's the western part of Kenya. May look small on the map, but is actually one of the most densely populated areas in Kenya. Our project was focusing on nutrition interventions during the first a thousand days of life that is from conception to the child's second birthday.

Other than the implementation of the grant as had been explained by Antonina earlier, we were also having a capacity-strengthening component, which began by a participatory baseline assessment that was done between us and the USAID Advancing Nutrition, after which we identified key areas where we had the gaps for our organization. We identified finance, we also identified communications, and resource mobilization as our key priorities.

In partnership with USAID Advancing Nutrition where our principal recipient that was JSI, we were able to actually recruit local consultants that then took us through these areas. Through that we were able to achieve a lot, including developing a strategic plan, developing a communication strategy, and a resource mobilization strategy. Eventually, we actually did a final evaluation, which was also participatory in approach. This capacity strengthening was incorporated as part of the project much as we had another grant. Next slide.

What changes did we experience through this support that we got from USAID Advancing Nutrition? One, we had improved awareness of the organization's mission and vision among our staff. Currently, that has been achieved and all our staff are aware of our mission and vision. There's also been an enhanced knowledge and skills on USAID rules and regulations, which are quite applicable in all other grants as well and most of the donor requirements. Now we are both aware.

The beauty of this is that we involve everyone. The finance people are involved in program-related trainings. The program people are also involved in finance-related training. There's general knowledge and skills across the organization. We have seen this also in improvement in the quality of our financial reports and also our technical reports. Hence, we have less back and forth, not only in the NPI project but even other projects that we are running.

Through this support, we've also been able to revise our documents policies, and standard operating procedures both in finance, human resource, and program. Currently, I can say with confidence that our policies and procedures are responsive to the requirements of the US government and also other donors that we may be able to apply for moving forward. Also, the support enabled us to have a better approach to program implementation. Before we would just come up with a work plan on our own and then we go ahead and implement, but now we learned another approach of going through behavior prioritization. Then after the behavior prioritization, we do a formative research through which we

identify together with the community, the areas that really need intervention and the approaches that work.

Through that, then we develop an SBC strategy or social and behavior strategy. The social and behavior strategy then guides our implementation of the project. This approach has been quite participatory, and we are now cascading it through the whole organization so that all programs are now using this approach, which is quite useful. Next slide.

As we have mentioned, the change has been supported by NPI through a participatory approach that involves the OGRA Foundation right from the assessment through the implementation and also through the final assessment. As had been mentioned earlier, this was through the involvement of local consultants. These local consultants were not just sent to us by USAID Advancing Nutrition, but we were actually involved in the recruitment of the local consultants. We actually conducted the interviews together and identified people who could really be responsive to our needs.

Another beautiful thing about this is that capacity strengthening was inbuilt in the project, including creating a staff level of effort so that there was time allocated for capacity-strengthening activities. Staff would not say they were too busy for some of these activities because this was actually part of what they were paid for. This was quite important in terms of incorporating it into the project. Next slide.

We were just taken through the USAID policy on local capacity strengthening. For us, we were focusing on policy number four, which is aligning the interventions with local priorities. How did we achieve this? One is us as OGRA Foundation, we aligned our interventions with the local priorities of the government and the local community because our project was based on the Kenya Nutrition priorities and also the Kakamega County Integrated Development Plan.

[inaudible 00:33:52] a close partnership with the government and local communities. Every month we had multi-sectoral forums, which involved everyone from agriculture, from health, from all the departments, and the representatives from local communities who are able to then identify the priorities for the project moving forward.

We also got input from the community through the behavior prioritization process and baseline formative assessment. All these were based on priorities that were identified from the communities.

In terms of how USAID aims Advancing Nutrition demonstrated this approach of aligning with local priorities, as I had mentioned, the whole thing was participatory and involved us in terms of identifying the priorities and developing the work plans, and also the hiring of local consultants, which has been mentioned before. I can again attest to the relevance of this that we are currently even as the project is coming to an end, we still have contact with the locals consultants. We can always reach out to them for any questions, any support, even as we implement the documents.

Overall, I can say this has been a very useful project, and also the approach in overall has been quite aligned with our local priorities. Thank you. Maybe we'll meet again in the Q&A session. Thank you. Over to you, Meg [crosstalk].

Meg Kinghorn

Thank you very much, Dr. Stephen. That was a really wonderful presentation. I'm really struck how you based the local priorities on the local community, integrating with the government, and also USAID Advancing Nutrition followed that to really strengthen the system, and so how the two principles of aligning with local priorities and strengthen the system really do reinforce one another, which is great.

I was also really impressed that you did the cross-training of your staff finance and program so that everybody knew the rules and regs. I think it was really a wonderful innovation. Thank you very much for that presentation.

With that, we will move to the second partner in Kenya. Next slide. Which is CBCC, or the Center for Behavior Change Communication Africa. The speaker today is Catherine Lengewa. She's the technical and strategy partnerships director for CBCC Africa. She is a specialist in SBCC and brings over 24 years experience working in social impact programs across the different sectors. She specializes in comprehensive, locally driven social behavior change programming, which I think as CBCC Africa really specializes in. With that, I am happy to turn over to Catherine for her presentation.

Catherine Lengewa

Thank you very much, Meg, for that introduction. I appreciate, and good morning, good afternoon. I'd like to talk about the Center for Behavior Change and Communications. CBCC is a Kenyan organization established in 2011 and has experienced working across Kenya at six African countries. CBCC provides locally driven social and behavior change solutions using evidence-based programming and also innovative approaches and strong partnerships.

We do quite a bit of SBC work. However, the focus of the USAID Advancing Nutrition NPI CBCC grant was to implement a nutrition-focused social and behavior change interventions aimed at improving the health and nutrition of women and children with a focus of a first 1,000 days. This was done in Kakamega, the same location where OGRA Foundation is found. We were implementing, we're using a very innovative approach. You can see a grandmother there on the photo. It was a grandmother-led initiative because of the insights that was generated during the formative assessment. Next.

I'm going to focus on addressing some few comments, some key questions that would help us through this conversation. Indeed, USAID Advancing Nutrition has been very instrumental in building our capacity in different ways. We have a lot that has changed, a lot that we have learned, but we are going to just discuss a few significant changes that we've experienced. One is we actually received capacity-strengthening support in organizational management, SPC technical programming, monitoring and evaluation, accountability and learning, and finance and administration. What this says, it's actually all round in all those areas, which was extremely instrumental in just strengthening our capacity.

A few that I will highlight. One is we actually currently have a strategic plan developed, and it has been approved, it's being implemented, and actually, we are already up ahead in looking at different critical success factors, which was very good. This is not something we've had as a document, and it had been on for the last 11 years.

Looking at the second most significant impact is we now have a resource mobilization strategy. This was developed with a consultant support. We got support through the consultants that we jointly recruited. We now have this strategy that we are actually implementing and it's really guiding us in mobilizing resources. That's really good. Yes, we've been talking about nutrition, NPI's about nutrition, but just looking at overall performance of the organization has been good.

The third one is SBC tools. We are an SBC organization, and through our many years of implementation, we realized we have a few gaps here and there. This support gave us comprehensive tools that now we can use within the nutrition programs, but also other programs like agriculture seed systems, as well as education. Next.

The other thing is we also have a MEAL, monitoring evaluation and learning improved quality programming around this, because just being given comprehensive tools that speak to the different components of MEAL really goes a long way in empowering and enabling us to be able to have quality programming and be able to implement this across different programs. This is quite appreciated.

The other thing is that was a challenge and a big gap that we had was having a learning agenda. We have commenced institutionalization of a learning agenda at the organizational and programmatic level. That

means we are able to pause and reflect and think through the different programs, what is working, what is not working, what are we learning from this. That's also something excellent that we found came in handy.

The other thing is financial management systems and control to minimize risk. Indeed, when you look at the various audits that you've gone through, we have actually been able to pass. There was a very comprehensive tool that NPI used that helped us to build capacity in very different areas. Now we are strengthened in terms of policies, guidelines, and ready to receive direct USAID funding because our risk has seriously been minimized.

Then we have intentional development of a pool of restricted funding and re-engineering. We are engineering our business model for financial sustainability. We receive funding from different programs. We receive funding from different donors, but most of this we are thinking that we really need from this training some level of a restricted funding that helps us to be able to build our capacity for sustainability, which is something we are working on. That's a good capacity that we have actually received. Next.

The other thing is the support was very unique. We have received capacity strengthening from various organizations, but this was quite unique in a very special sense. It was unique because of the overall performance improvement and overall support, the finance department, the HR, administrative, MEAL department, SPC technical team. That was good. I don't think we've experienced any other like that. This has stood out.

Then the second one, the support was very targeted and aligned to the needs. We have been implementing SPC for a long time, and so it's easy to say we actually are quite well-versed in this. The team helped us to see we have a gap here and here using the very comprehensive tools that were used. That helped us to be able to prioritize areas that we needed support.

The other thing is the consultants were local at whom we also actually jointly recruited, which was quite good. The other thing is, the grant was provided, there was a grant, there was technical assistance. A number of capacity strengthening initiatives provide just TA, but this one, you get a grant and a TA which is really, really enabling in helping us be able to optimize and to optimally show that and demonstrate what we can do given the technical assistance that is provided.

The photo you see there is the senior management team together with two consultants who have joined us in just one of those initiatives of capacity strengthening, and we really appreciated the support because of that sort of support. Next.

The other thing, one of the principles that was key is looking at the mutuality with the local principle number seven of the practicing of mutuality with local partners. I would like to say that NPI came out very strongly in a collaboration. NPI is very collaborative in nature, very respectful, and the support that provided to us enabled us to build an environment of trust.

It was quite easy to work with the team. It was quite easy because of just, it's not easy to, I just had to pull through this work, respectful, supportive, and trust, very critical. That helped us be able to perform well and be able to really have very excellent results in the program that we were implementing.

We had various meetings. One of them was just these monthly meetings that always we were consistent with that and we found that very enabling and really good. NPI also appreciated and build our own existing SBC and organizational development knowledge. Give meaning that really they didn't want to think that there's a vacuum but to know that yes, something exists and how can we build on that?

The photo that you see there is one of the field programs with one of the members of the USAID team, NPI team that came to the ground. The local capacity strengthening that was provided to CBCC was really instrumental and good. The results that we got from the program was excellent, and we are quite

happy about that and it went a long way in improving performance at the county and the project site as well as the organization. Thank you very much.

Meg Kinghorn

Thank you, Catherine, for an excellent presentation. It really comes through how CBCC really took advantage and was the leader in strengthening their own capacity, took advantage of the support that was given, the technical operational, and just also the pause and reflects that you did with the local consultants, the project staff, and also internally, and what a difference that made to really set your own priorities and strengthen your systems, so really a wonderful presentation. Thank you so much for sharing your experience.

Now, we turn to Burkina Faso. We have our two partners from SOS Sahel and PanAfricare. Due to the language interpretation, I'm going to introduce both of our presenters now, and then we will switch one to the other so we don't all have to be going back and forth.

Our first presenter is from SOS Sahel Ouedraogo Harouna. He is currently the manager of SOS Sahel. He is a specialist in health and nutrition with a master's degree in public health. He has been working in this field since 2002, and has been with SOS Sahel since 2014, starting as a nutrition officer and currently working his way up to the project coordinator. He will be presenting for SOS Sahel.

Then secondly, we have from PanAfricare, Hubert Badiel. He is an agricultural engineer and food security and nutrition expert, so we have a different multi-sectoral expertise to hear from, which would be fantastic. He brings over 22 years of experience. He worked first with Africare as a program manager and now the PanAfricare office as country director where he's been country director since 2020.

He is a nutrition food security expert, and not only is he country director, technical director, but he also works with other country offices lending his expertise. So very busy people here. We welcome Harouna and Hubert. We're going to have just a reminder on language interpretation and then we'll turn it over to our presenters.

Yaritza Rodriguez

Thank you. [French language]

Next slide. Next slide. For attorneys listening in English, the next two speakers will be presenting in French. You will need to click the interpretation icon and select English to English to have the option to hear the webinar interpreted into English. I'll also make a note that our captions will now be switching into French if you have close captions enabled. Next. [silence] Over to you Harouna.

Harouna Ouedraogo

[French language]

Meg Kinghorn

Merci beaucoup, Harouna. [French language]

Hubert Badiel

[French language]

[Hubert's presentation in French language] [Hubert's presentation in French language]

[silence]

Meg Kinghorn

Merci beaucoup. Thank you so much, Haroun and Hubert for your great presentations. I think all these presentations are really highlighting for me how centering on local ownership and the organizations' and the communities' priorities, and building that system outward really makes a difference that the organizations can really take the lead in strengthening their own capacity and what a difference that makes. Thank you very much for those great presentations, I think we can see how all these principles really reinforce one another.

We're just going to take a few minutes to hear from USAID advancing nutrition staff to think about of all the recommendations and lessons learned that they've heard from the partners, from the national consultants, and also from the staff themselves, what were the lessons and what are the recommendations that come out of that? I will turn it over to Peter and Ann again to just walk us through some of those recommendations and then we'll be taking some questions. Peter?

Peter Milo

Yes, next slide. Thank you colleagues from those experiences from Kenya and Burkina Faso. We will take you through some recommendations. Next slide, please.

Some of the things that we've seen with our work in the last two years with the civil society in Kenya with the work that we are doing, and you remember we said in the work we were doing with the Kenya mission-funded activity, we did not have grants. We reflect through that experience.

The number one thing that we are saying is that local civil society organizations are better suited and closer to the communities, so there's need to invest more in service delivery. We've had a lot of this from them.

As we were listening to the four civil society organization, you could see that the fact that they had some small grants, that enabled them to do some of the important nutritional work that they were doing. We are also recommending that we consider having small grants that allow them to reach more community members and also test new approaches. Within even multi-sector nutrition, there are issues you can test around leadership behavior to supporting nutrition work because those are areas.

Also, there are certain works that will require civil society organization to mobilize around public participation for prioritization of nutrition at the community level. Those will require some funding resources because there will always be a small organization that will not have a lot of resources to commit to all that.

Then the other one, and I think I answered a question towards that, is that local civil society organization, you find they are very committed and they do very well, but their systems are nascent. That explains too, sometimes they have very high staff turnover, they have weak policies, they have structures that require strengthening. Therefore, we also make a case that there is need to support their operational support towards having a system that is robust, that can handle the requirements of funding nutrition work and supporting that kind of work.

Then the other lesson that we've learned is that localizations needs a lot of time. We believe had we had more time, then we'll a big impact than what we are seeing. Therefore, largely, these are the key recommendations that we are seeing that will be very useful as we continue to work with the local civil society organization. I think the next slide is for Ann. Next slide.

No, yes, this is mine. Sorry. This, again, is now looking outward to other partners who support civil society organization and anybody who works with local civil society organization. We recommend that you see your role as facilitators of local organization to where they need that support and working with government.

Sometimes based on your own organization, you may not do each and everything that the civil society organization requires. Sometimes they just need referrals and linkages with other partners who are doing that work. Sometimes there's also connection with government for them to be heard and do what they're supposed to do.

Another area is, we've seen a lot that civil society organization struggle sometimes so much to find a front seat on the table to articulate community issues. We require that we work around creating space for them to be able to enable them to communicate and give feedback, because quite often they are better placed in the community and hear more than sometimes what the government will hear. We say a seat on the table, but we mean a front seat that allows them to be able to communicate, and engage and advocate for those issues that are very important.

Another area that we have found that is very important and a recommendation is that the nutrition work can be very involving, but also opportunities for the local organization also to have opportunities to pause and reflect, to reflect on how things are going, what are the areas of improvement, how is the changing landscapes, what are they hearing from communities, and how do they better engage. That is quite useful.

Issues around connections, issues about space for contribution, and areas of reflection to be better in their work. Those will be key recommendations in how partners can support local civil society organization. Next. Thank you.

[silence]

Antonina

Thank you. Thank you, Peter. To follow on from the recommendations that Peter is sharing, as part of this learning agenda and the synthesis of all this information we've gathered from our 14 partners overall, and from experience of TA providers and our providers as Advancing Nutrition in Washington and Kenya, we had a couple of really interesting recommendations that came out of this learning agenda work.

In terms of some of the lessons learned, there are a couple of things I wanted to highlight here on this slide.

Two of the big lessons were around the ways in which NPI can be challenging for small organizations with limited staff and often multiple donors. Compliance for these smaller organizations with different donors can just be quite complex.

In addition, the fairly short duration of our MPI program, which was about two years, programs that are two years or less place partners under really significant pressure by often forcing too much change at once. This can create a situation that's really, really challenging for our partners.

In terms of ways that recommendations that we have about how to manage these two challenges, we noted that our partners are really proud of the policies and system changes that they could make from the TA that we provided. You can see in these presentations our partners made really good progress, but they often commented that they didn't have enough time to really establish those changes and do the environmental change within the organization that's necessary to make these changes last.

Part of that has to do with the time pressure that often happens when too much change is happening at once. Partners did report that time was really the most significant challenge to learning. All of these partners have other donors, which makes the implementation of both technical activities and conducting capacity strengthening at the same time, it can be a really heavy lift.

In terms of how staff time was funded, some of our partners, as you can hear in this presentation, mentioned that they were able to carve out and earmark staff time for capacity strengthening. In addition to the time spent conducting activities, this really needs to become a regular practice so that the people who are receiving capacity strengthening really have the time to dedicate to it and integrate those learning into the way these organizations work.

Just to note that US compliance regulations are often a challenge and those things are often front-loaded into NPI projects, which can create, again, a tremendous amount of pressure right at the beginning during the startup of a program. Really what we would recommend is a more flexible model that built compliance systems more gradually, making compliance an overall output rather than a very early expectation of the program.

In addition, our partners really came up with some interesting ideas that allows them to more fully assume direct funding over time. In this model, we had the NPI program and our support to capacity-strengthening organizations and we found that many of our partners were really happy with the project support they received but ultimately their goal is to receive direct funding from USAID over time. Our partners are really eager to show how they can handle direct USAID funding and expand their funding base like all organizations.

Our partners proposed a graduated model that would prepare them to fully assume direct funding over time. This would really recognize the range of skills that are needed to receive direct funding beyond just compliance systems. Including things like leadership development, HR management, that full range of organizational skills that's needed to properly manage a full USAID grant.

Phase one of a graduated approach could really focus on organizational- and technical-focused support. Then phase two could focus on technical implementation with support and oversight from the TA provider so here the local partner really leads the technical implementation and the TA provider steps back. Then in phase three, the local partner fully implements the program and reports with light oversight from the support organization.

You start out with strong TA support and that TA starts to back off over time, but providing a safety net for the local organization as they begin to take the helm, just offering some guidance and support over time. One of the things that I also wanted to mention as part of these overall recommendations is bringing partners into meetings with USAID and with government from the very beginning really helps our local partners build those essential relationships with the funder and with their local governments in order to help them really create that sustainability over time. Really maintain that sustainability over time and help them learn how to write a win-winning

proposal for USAID. Can I have the next slide please?

Just a couple of additional points. We wanted to note that the OCA process was really valuable, but time-consuming. This was something that came up again and again for our partners. An intense workshop, often a three-day OCA process really does take a tremendous amount of time, and it can be too much for smaller organizations who are managing multiple donors and implementation and trying to do capacity strengthening all at the same time.

That OCA process is really valuable, but we recommend more of a streamlined OCA, something that really focuses specifically on the areas that are most essential and that OCA can get repeated later on, including different areas or different categories.

To the second point on the slide here, we also wanted to know that learning is really accelerated when we use a combination of capacity strengthening strategies, not just training alone, and the use of local capacity strengthening providers was really successful.

Training is familiar to all of us and it really is the easiest to organize, but it often is the least effective strategy for strengthening individuals' capacity. Training has a place, but when it's combined with mentoring or other longer term interventions that helps the learner understand the context, your results increase dramatically and that's a really critical point to make.

Where we worked with local consultants, this is what helped enable those mentoring approaches and it helped enable that follow-up support that allows for application of learning. This is what really leads to sustainability and long-term change, which is what we're really all after. This just helps us multiply the results of these interventions in order to make sure they are as effective as they can be.

One last thing to note on this slide, our partners really asked for more flexibility to pursue their own self-directed learning as they see opportunities and change emerge. It's also important to recognize that part of our role as TA providers is not only to deliver things like training and mentoring, but also to cultivate systems for learning over the long term. That includes self-directed learning opportunities that can be funded by a TA provider in the beginning, but helps establish this pattern of self-directed learning so organizations can continue it over time.

With those notes, I wanted to hand back to Meg to begin a very short question and answer period here at the end of the webinar.

Meg Kinghorn

Great. Thank you Ann. Wonderful summary. We do have just a few minutes for Q and A and we've gotten some fantastic questions, so unfortunately we will not do them justice. However, I would like to flag a few, I'm going to put three together and then ask our panelists from Kenya and then Burkina Faso to respond.

One question we have is, was there any resistance to capacity strengthening efforts and how did you overcome that challenge? What about resistance?

The second is how do you sustain operational capacities in light of a high staff turnover? As we know often there are staff turnover and you have to start from the beginning. How did you overcome that challenge?

The third one I'll just throw out for this first round is USAID advancing nutrition used national consultants and did the partners find that there are adequate number of organizational capacity strengthening consultants in-country? Do you have the resources you need?

I would like to first invite the Kenyan speakers and then we'll switch to Burkina Faso. Perhaps Dr. Steven, would you like to respond first?

Dr. Stephen Okello

Alright. Thank you for the questions. Maybe I'll take a few. In terms of staff turnover, for us part of the training and there was not just training, there was training, there was mentorship and coaching, but we also developed a manual that was then used that we have now put for new staff. So anyone who will be coming on board then will receive orientation package that includes some of the basic material that was used during this training. We hope this can help in terms of onboarding new staff.

Maybe the other one I could respond to is about the national consultants. I think in Kenya, we got quite a pool of consultants. We had a bit of a challenge with the resource mobilization, where we did not get

so many people who could do that, but for communications, we got quite a number of applicants, and also for the finance.

I can say that the people who I eventually recruited, including the one for resource mobilization were quite good and they delivered on the job. I can say in Kenya at least we had quite a good resource of consultants. Maybe I can let my colleagues also answer the rest. Thank you.

Meg Kinghorn

Great. Catherine. Yes.

Catherine Lengewa

Yes, thank you. I'll take up two questions. Thanks for for that. I'll talk about the question on staff turnover. During this period of capacity assessment, we actually did not experience a staff turnover, until of course, the end of the project when the project officers had to leave.

However, we've put together mitigation measures for this. One is we have developed standard operating procedures for the various components and aspects of programming so that it becomes easy to transition in case there's staff turnover. There we have regular rotation, and also onboarding processes that help different staff to manage and we extend the learnings to the other teams.

The second question that I will answer is on resistance, the issue of resistance to capacity strengthening. Indeed, I don't think this was an issue, because of the approach that was taken in initiating the capacity-strengthening initiative. Just getting to learn why we need to do this, going through a capacity assessment, getting to identify the various gaps, and jointly doing and co-creating and co-learning.

Just implementing together goes a long way in having different teams embrace the program, address and look at the challenges together and see the gaps that need to be filled and really minimizes resistance, because we see there's a gap, and there's need to fill these gaps and the support that is provided by the teams. Thank you.

Meg Kinghorn

Thank you so much, Catherine. We are coming up to our time, however, I do want to also offer some time to the panelists from Burkina Faso. Particularly, there was a question during Hubert's presentation. Did you experience any resistance to capacity strengthening efforts and how did you overcome this? For this, we'll have to switch back to French translation for those of you listening in English and we would just love to briefly hear from our panelists from Burkina Faso. Thank you.

Harouna Ouedraogo

[French language]

Hubert Badiel

[French language]

Meg Kinghorn

Merci. Harouna? [French language]

Harouna Ouedraogo

Okay. Merci [French language]

Meg Kinghorn

Thank you very much, panelists. We are sadly just over our time so we're going to have to wrap this up. We hope you've enjoyed this webinar, thinking about the lessons, the recommendations, the ways forward as we all look to how to strengthen, how to better do a good job at really making effective local capacity-strengthening support particularly in the area of nutrition. We hope you've enjoyed this. We will send a follow-up email that includes the presentations and also the questions that will come in and we will answer those via email. We really appreciate your great questions, your great participation and particularly thank you to our panelists, who have done such a great job. Thank you all very much. Have a good day and may the conversation continue.



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