



FEED THE FUTURE

The U.S. Government's Global Hunger & Food Security Initiative

This document is part of the

Agriculture and Nutrition Global Learning and Evidence Exchange (AgN-GLEE)

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For additional presentations and related event materials, visit: <http://spring-nutrition.org/agnglee-asia>



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE


Strengthening Partnerships, Results
and Innovations in Nutrition Globally

Closing Remarks from Melissa Ho March 21, 2013

Brief Overview

Participants included representation from all FTF Asia countries – Nepal, Bangladesh, Cambodia¹ and Tajikistan. In addition, other Asia Missions, including India and RDMA, were present. USAID HQ staff from GH and BFS were also present. Presentations from all speakers are available in an AgN-GLEE Bangkok folder saved to the BFS Shared drive.

- **Keynote** – Patrick Webb, Dean for Academic Affairs at the Friedman School of Nutrition Science, Tufts University, and PI for the USAID Nutrition FTF Innovation Lab (formerly CRSP) provided the context and the current evidence-base for why our commonly held assumptions about the linkages between agricultural development/increased productivity and better nutrition outcomes are potentially flawed and need revisiting. For instance, progress against poverty goals do not necessarily translate into proportional reductions in malnutrition. Webb provided evidence that in some countries a doubling of per capita income as a result of agricultural-led growth resulted in only a 15-20% decrease in levels of stunting. He also noted a range of mechanisms for enhanced nutrition through agriculture (Note that his framing is slightly different than that presented in the seminal guidance from FAO on the same topic): Productivity; Consumption; Utilization; Empowerment; Toxins/diseases; and Platforms for delivery. Webb noted especially that in addition to agriculture's links to the Productivity, Consumption and Empowerment pathways, we should also take note of the role that agriculture can play on factors that can have an equal or even greater contribution to nutrition outcomes, including utilization issues and exposure to toxins/disease (eg aflatoxin or contaminated water).
- **Technical discussions of Pathways and Indicators** – IFPRI provided an overview of issues and options related to the current thinking around pathways for achieving nutrition outcomes through agricultural-related activities, and included a short activity to help participants apply the theory into practice and programming. USAID provided an overview of the current FTF M&E framework and set of indicators, and highlighted issues related to measuring progress and impact related to nutrition objectives. Both highlighted the potential need to customize activities and metrics to nutrition-specific objectives, activities, and timeframes.
- **Mission/Country specific case studies of activities and processes:** Case studies were presented by the Bangladesh and Nepal Missions and partners; both teams have achieved innovative approaches to integrate nutrition activities into their FTF programming.

Some examples from the **Bangladesh** team include how they have: 1) used an evidence-approach to determine the factors affecting undernutrition in the regions where they are working in order to better design impactful interventions; 2) proactively designed FTF and GH programming to overlap, target and scale up agriculture and nutrition interventions to a majority of households within the Bangladesh FTF Zone of influence (e.g. 73 sub-districts of 99 in Barisal and Khulna Divisions will have a comprehensive set of nutrition interventions by FY14); 3) encouraged collaboration and coordination among a cross-cutting set of nutrition and

¹Cambodian government officials attended the N-GLEE in place of USAID Cambodia Mission FTF staff as OE funding restrictions prevented most of our Mission teams from attending.

agriculture partners, including external implementers, NGOs the GOB Ministries of Health and Agriculture; 4) streamlined and combined messaging and training between ag and health workers on all FTF-funded projects; and 5) incorporated nutrition indicators into mission-level FTF management system.

Some examples from the **Nepal** team include: 1) Gap analysis that identified lack of overlap between an integrated nutrition program (Suaahara Initiative working in 20 districts – 2011-2016) and the FTF agriculture and nutrition program (also working in 20 districts – 2013-2018) and need to proactively integrate agriculture, nutrition, and WASH activities and objectives; 2) Forcing nutrition and agriculture teams to be “locked up together” for four days to go through joint budget and strategy development process; 3) Leverage GH and FTF funding into one project and integrate workplans; 4) Cross training of agriculture and nutrition change agents and co-location of trainings; 5) Mission specific interagency agreement with Peace Corps to focus volunteer efforts on agriculture /nutrition FTF districts; 6) Utilize FTF N-Innovation Lab (formerly N-CRSP) for evaluation.

- **Themed Breakouts** on day two there were multiple concurrent sessions related to the issues of: Gender, Water, Fortification to address micronutrient deficiencies, 1000 Days, Behavior Communication Change (BCC), and ICT tools for extension and outreach
- **Overview of Partner Resources** – included brief presentations from Technical and Operational Performance Support Project (TOPS), the Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance Project III (FANTA), Global alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), and Strengthening Partnerships, Results and Innovations in Nutrition Globally (SPRING)

Key Takeaways

- 1) **Acknowledgement of a critical need to refocus on nutrition integration in FTF** – Nutrition is one of the two topline goals of FTF from the initiative’s inception. As exemplified by the data and themes presented in Patrick Webb’s presentation, the current assumptions of pathways that link agricultural growth and development are necessary, but not sufficient to getting us to the nutrition outcomes we would like to see in the field. We need to develop a stronger evidence-base and potentially do more to target agriculture -related interventions that will achieve desired nutrition outcomes. While this Key message has clearly been received readily by the Asian FTF Missions, it may be worth sharing some of the Asian experience with USAID FTF teams in other parts of the world. Several individuals who had attended all three AgN-GLEEs noted that Africa and Latin America may benefit from additional encouragement and sharing of experience re: the need and approach of nutrition integration within FTF.
- 2) **Need to develop the right metrics/indicators to measure progress and impact re: nutrition** - especially appropriate targets and indicators that are specific to nutrition objectives measured over the appropriate timeline
- 3) **Contextualization is critical**
 - Background – need to assess the enabling environment factors at the country (eg policy, programs, resources), the community (eg geography, topography, natural resource base), and household level (income, gender dynamics, education and capacity etc).

- Strategy development – Need to assess how to develop evidence base to prioritize, layer, and target nutrition/health interventions with FTF agricultural development programming; how to ensure cost-effectiveness and avoid duplication; how to achieve impact with potentially multiple and/or competing goals.
- Implementation plan - Need to assess how to design and implement cross-cutting programming, including developing common objectives, language/terminology, resources, messaging, tools, outreach, metrics etc.
- Institutionalized processes – Need to consider mechanisms for facilitating cross-cutting collaboration within USAID from HQ to Missions, within Missions, with external partners, including implementers, NGOs, and host country governments; how to institutionalize and streamline the strategy development and implementation of nutrition integration into FTF.

4) *Role of USAID*

- Support the development of the “evidence base” for nutrition interventions – data gathering, evaluations of approaches, projects, outcomes.
- Develop integrated and appropriate metrics, including tracking of resources to nutrition-direct and nutrition-sensitive activities.
- Develop incentive and support mechanisms to facilitate cross-cutting dialogue and collaboration in our Missions and in the field.
- Continue to provide technical assistance and resources to HQ staff, Missions and implementing partners when needed and appropriate.
- Continue to facilitate learning, community of practice, and sharing of best practices within USAID/USG and with outside stakeholders and partners.