

South Kivu Food Security Project (FSP)-Enyanya DFSA Mid-Term Evaluation

Summary Brief

INTRODUCTION

The South Kivu Food Security Project (FSP)-Enyanya Development Food Security Activity (DFSA) was launched in September 2016. FSP-Enyanya aims to “improve food and nutrition security and economic well-being of vulnerable households in South Kivu” through three primary purposes:

- Purpose 1 (P1): Agriculture: Household incomes are increased
- Purpose 2 (P2): Health, Nutrition, and WASH: Improved nutrition status in communities
- Purpose 3 (P3): Governance: Socio-economic status is stable and inclusive

Prepared by Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, this brief summarizes the results of the 2019 mid-term evaluation ([available here](#)).

The evaluation identifies several areas where FSP-Enyanya has had important successes, as well as areas where opportunities to improve and learn can inform FSP-Enyanya and other DFSAs. These areas include:

- Timeliness of activity implementation and M&E
- Transmission of information/technology comprehension to participants
- Initial trends in impact and sustainability
- Lessons learned from the Refine & Implement approach



Photo Credit: Annette Fay

ABOUT FSP-ENYANYA

Primary Focus Areas: Agriculture to increase household incomes. Health, nutrition, and WASH to improve nutrition status in communities. Governance to ensure the socio-economic status is stable and inclusive.

Implementing Organizations: Mercy Corps (Prime), World Vision (main sub-partner and health intervention lead), Harvest Plus (supplier of bio-fortified seeds), Université Evangélique de l'Afrique (soil fertilization, erosion control, hill approach), Action pour la Paix et la Concorde (conflict management interventions).

Intervention Period: Sept. 2016 – Sept. 2021

Funding: United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Office of Food for Peace (FFP), \$38 million.

Intervention Areas: Three health zones in South Kivu: Kalehe (territory of Kalehe), Miti-Murhésa, and Katana (territory of Kabare).

Targeting: 80% of the population living in its zone of influence or 35,000 households, with particular attention on women, youth and children under two.



KEY CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Timeliness of Implementation and M&E

Year one of the FSP-Enyanya was focused on conducting formative research, as part of the Refine and Implement (R&I) approach. Most field staff were hired during year two (October 2017 to September 2018), after which FSP-Enyanya began expanding implementation, including recruiting volunteers across its zone of influence who support the activity's cascade model.

Taking into account the fact that FSP had only begun expanding implementation during the year before the evaluation, some interventions are still behind schedule or in need of improved service delivery quality. For example, the Producers' Organization (PO) interventions (creating/strengthening Producer Organizations, post-harvest handling/storage, linkages to inputs, financial or technical services, and market linkages) are either weak, behind schedule, or non-existent. Additionally, a number of agricultural activities started only at the beginning of season A (which starts in September/October) in the last quarter of fiscal year (FY) 18 and start of FY19. All unimplemented interventions were carried forward and re-planned for FY19.

One of the evaluation team's (ET) overall observations is that FSP-Enyanya is attempting to implement more interventions than is realistic given the time and funding available. **Therefore, as a first step, the ET recommends reviewing the scope of interventions, determining what will have the highest impact and is essential to continue, and scaling down those that are a less efficient or effective use of resources. As a second step, the ET recommends that FSP-Enyanya reduce its targets to have a more robust intervention.**

Finalizing specific M&E plan documents, such as the theory of change, was time demanding and contributed to some delays in setting up the M&E system at the start of the project, as staff were hesitant to move forward with implementation until the foundational documents were complete.

However, despite the initial challenges in setting up the M&E processes, Mercy Corps has successfully built internal staff capacity (both on the M&E team and on technical teams) to carry out most key M&E functions. Importantly, there appears to be a strong culture of learning at FSP-Enyanya among activity staff (which even extended to learning about better ways to document and use learning). **There is a need, however, for a systematic method or practice for feeding these lessons learned from the field into the Detailed Implementation Plan (DIP) (annual work-planning) process.**

Finally, implementing partners (IPs) are incentivized to focus most of their attention, budgets, and staff training on quantitative methods, not qualitative. However qualitative methods often present staff with different types of findings and a deeper understanding of activity implementation issues. **Staff will benefit from increased training on qualitative methods.**



Main road from Beni, North Kivu, to Mandima, Ituri.

Photo Credit: Hugh Kinsella Cunningham/Save the Children

Transmission of Information to Participants

One of the cross-purpose challenges of FSP-Enyanya is quality and completeness of the transmission of information (knowledge, technology, practice, etc.) to the participants. The general impression given by FSP-Enyanya participants was that the overarching activity design focused on too many initiatives (especially trainings), whereby activity implementation seemed to be best represented by a long list of trainings without adequate in-depth follow-up to ensure the achievement of longer-term outcomes. **The ET recommends that FSP-Enyanya think critically about the most important interventions to scale and those that should be cut back or eliminated in order to have an impact on food security in these three health zones.**

One key finding is that farmers are very enthusiastic to learn about and adopt new practices. **This enthusiasm should continue to be encouraged.** However, it has resulted in some challenges in information transmission. For example, the transmission of knowledge from Agriculture Extension Agents (AEA) and Farmer Field School (FFS) committee members to farmers is uneven, and the technologies are not being applied accurately or consistently. Participants often gain only introductory information about an agricultural technique and attempt to perform it immediately, before they have a full understanding. Similar enthusiasm in adoption of the hill approach, to reduce soil erosion and improve soil quality, risks failure related to quality assurance, as it requires a consistent and complete combination of practice, making it vulnerable to even small deficiencies. Comprehension by rabbit recipients of how to raise, manage, and breed the animals is also limited and varied. **Increased education prior to receiving animals (rabbits), as well as frequent monitoring visits by FSP-Enyanya staff and Village Livestock Agents during the first few months after reception should improve the livestock intervention.**



Photo Credit: Eva Christensen

Small livestock (rabbits) intervention example.

To improve transmission of information and knowledge to participants without sacrificing enthusiasm, FFS may benefit from focusing on the "experiential learning" methodology commonly applied in FFS. Using this methodology, the FFS would try all new crops, inputs, or techniques in the designated learning plot and on a small scale in participants' plots to test before making a decision about adoption and scale-up. This may result in an initial increase in farmers' workload, as was found by the evaluation for women who became involved in the permagarden intervention while also being involved in numerous other FSP-Enyanya interventions. It is to be expected that participants are eager to become involved in the opportunities presented by FSP-Enyanya and that their workload will increase, at times significantly, due to this enthusiasm. **FSP-Enyanya should continue mitigating this by conducting analyses of participant workload and having field staff check in with participants on how the increased labor is being distributed amongst their households.**

Most of the community-based health and nutrition interventions under P2 are considered best practices by FFP, and the ET observed FSP-Enyanya's strong commitment to addressing key underlying determinants of malnutrition and food security, making the connection between the conceptual and the practical. Two examples of this were 1) FSP-Enyanya's focus on adolescent nutrition and food security via the Safe Spaces approach and 2) the attention given to family planning through multiple approaches: Safe Spaces, Positive

Peer Couple, Channels of Hope, and Care Groups. The main design problem noted with the Safe Spaces approach is that its coverage targets of the adolescent population are not ambitious enough. Currently, FSP-Enyanya reaches about 3,500 adolescents via Safe Spaces (with plans to target more than double this amount by the end of the activity), which is a small percentage of the adolescents in the target health areas. **Expanded coverage of the adolescent population may be more likely to lead to population-based impact in nutrition and knowledge, attitude, and practice of sexual health behaviors.**

Initial Signs of Activity Impact and Sustainability

Although the short period of implementation to date for FSP-Enyanya makes it challenging to identify which interventions are most likely to have a sustainable, long-term impact, the ET was able to identify several



Photo Credit: Annette Fay

Water point constructed by FSP-Enyanya.

early positive signs of impact and sustainability. Farmer Field Schools, Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs), Safe Spaces, Natural Leaders, Citizen Voice in Action (CVA), and tax trainings are all well-received and clearly benefiting participants. However, variation in quality of service delivery and delays in timing threaten the sustainability of the activity effects. In particular, interventions such as FFS and VSLA do not have a clear transition plan. Water Management Committees require additional training in order to effectively ensure the long-term functioning of the water points being constructed and rehabilitated by FSP-Enyanya, as they are unlikely to receive necessary financial support from local government in the case of a breakdown.

Other important issues threaten the longer-term view of sustainability. Because of the weak and delayed activities related to POs, the ET found it unlikely that the POs will survive after activity close. To remedy this, **FSP-Enyanya may consider loosening restrictions on memberships to POs to allow for more members to join, consolidating the existing POs into fewer, stronger groups, and better clarifying the role of the Feed the Future's Strengthening Value Chains (SVC) activity to better support the most vulnerable and empower small-holders (rather than seeking higher-level market participants), or eliminate the SVC activity.**

Layering of other USAID activities needs to be clarified and finalized. The role of Integrated Health Project (IHP) will require definition regarding health system strengthening. The coordination of the SVC activity and FSP-Enyanya must be strengthened in order for the project to best target interventions. FSP-Enyanya also needs to collaborate with government and other partners for legitimacy of interventions and to invest in sustainability after activity closure. Good progress has been made with local governments and informal leaders to date. Despite the difficult and evolving context in South Kivu, continued efforts in collaboration will be an important factor in short and long-term sustainability.

FSP-Enyanya would benefit from a more developed, and unified sustainability strategy planned across the different purposes at the intervention level. The ET observed that there have been good linkages of activities across purposes, and that using this model will help inform an improved sustainability strategy.

Lessons Learned from the R&I Approach

The ET found that application of R&I had mixed effects on the implementation of FSP-Enyanya, while benefiting design. As one of the pilot countries for R&I, the activity suffered from confusion, both on the part of FFP and activity staff, as to how exactly R&I should work. One key point of confusion was how much research versus implementation should be happening during the first year. The IP understood that implementation should only begin in year 2. Because of this delay in project activities, FSP-Enyanya is still viewed by some community members as an extractive program that collects information rather than helps local populations.

In addition, the process of approvals for R&I research and results was very slow. This was primarily due to the large number of studies that required review and approval in a short period of time. As an example, the Health, Nutrition and WASH Services Assessment Report collected data in September of 2017, but the report was finalized in March 2019, well after WASH activities began. On the other hand, the formative research conducted on FSP-Enyanya interventions allowed for several important pivots in programming. For example, the inclusion of the hill approach came out of the R&I formative research, as did interventions focusing on land access, localized conflict, and tax laws.

The ET recommends that FFP continues to clarify with IPs how R&I should be implemented and allow for some interventions to begin during the first year. Initial program design can include a set of core elements from which formative research can build out program intervention strategies and components.

QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY

- Desk review of documents and data relevant to the project.
- Qualitative study in eight villages across six health zones, as well as the province capital and the national capital (August/September 2019), collecting data from a total of 550 respondents (281 women, 269 men).
 - 38 key informant interviews with technical experts with a role in FFP activities.
 - 64 in-depth interviews with participants, local leaders and health center personnel.
 - 45 focus groups, including groups of child caretakers, farmers, members of listening clubs, and water management committees.
 - 38 direct observations assessing road rehabilitation, demonstration plots, water infrastructure, markets, permagardens, household latrines, and the hill approach or observing a gender training.
 - Five water samples from FSP-Enyanya improved sources and household storage containers, tested using the Aquagenx Compartment Bag Test in order to determine most probable number of fecal contamination present in the sample.