

Fararano DFAP Final Performance Evaluation

Summary Brief

INTRODUCTION

The Fararano Development Food Assistance Project (DFAP) was launched in Fiscal Year 2014 and aimed to reduce food insecurity in Madagascar through three purposes and one cross-cutting priority:

- Undernutrition is prevented among children under two years of age
- Increased household incomes
- Community capacity to manage shocks is increased
- Cross-cutting priority: Promoting gender-equitable decision-making

This brief summarizes the results of the final evaluation conducted by [TANGO International](#). The evaluation measured Fararano's development outcomes and presents evidence that:

- Child health and nutrition outcomes improved, but critical gaps remain
- It is unlikely that water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) practices contributed significantly to improved child health and nutrition outcomes
- Interventions related to Savings and Internal Lending Communities (SILC) groups and farmer organizations produced meaningful impacts during the life of the project
- Community capacity to manage shocks was improved
- Community engagement was one of the most significant changes resulting from Fararano's gender/youth integration approach



Photo Credit: Catholic Relief Services

ABOUT FARARANO

Primary Focus Areas: 1) Increase consumption of nutritious food; 2) Increase utilization of MCHN services; 3) Promote optimal WASH behaviors; 4) Increase diversified agricultural production; 5) Increase on- and off-farm household incomes; 6) Develop community disaster mitigation, preparedness and response; and 7) Strengthen community social safety nets.

Implementing Organizations: Catholic Relief Services (CRS), NCBA/CLUSA, the Development Board of the Diocese of Toamasina (ODDIT), the Development Office of Ecar Mananjary (BDEM), Caritas Morombe, and the Development Council of the Diocese (CDD).

Funding Source: United States Agency for International Development Office of Food for Peace.

Intervention Period: FY 2014 – FY 2019

Intervention Areas: 44 communes in Andrefana Atsinanana, Vatovavy Fitovinany, and Atsimo Andrefana regions.



KEY FINDINGS

Nutrition and Health in Children under Two (Purpose 1)

Final evaluation results point to improvements in child health and nutrition outcomes, but critical gaps remain. The endline quantitative survey data show significant reductions in rates of underweight, stunting, and wasting in children under five years of age (Figure 1), especially in the East. Consistent with these trends, the final evaluation data suggest children under two years of age—and whole households—are benefiting from greater dietary diversity and quality as a result of improved nutrition behaviors and access to nutritious foods. However, the data also suggest that women may benefit less from increased access to diverse and nutritious foods than their family members, with no significant improvements for direct participant women in rates of underweight or minimum dietary diversity, which underscores the need for greater focus on the gendered dimensions of food security. Focus group discussions (FGDs) with mothers found satisfactory levels of knowledge of critical preventive and curative services available at local health centers and from Community Health Volunteers (CHVs), with direct participant mothers able to cite the timing, frequency, and benefits of antenatal care. This is consistent with the results of the endline survey, which indicated a significant increase in antenatal coverage. However, there are indications that some of the challenges to child health care that existed at baseline persist and that some gains may not be sustainable. First, mothers in the endline qualitative study noted some of the same barriers to maternal and child health and nutrition (MCHN) service utilization as they had at baseline, including distance from their health center and the high cost of medicines for treating sick children. Second, CHV service coverage has shrunk since the close of the USAID/Mikolo health program. In addition, Fararano’s 1,000-day rations distributions were conditional on proof of antenatal care and vaccination.

Results for WASH are similarly mixed, despite intensified WASH efforts after mid-term. Although handwashing was the first WASH key practice cited by mothers, and the percentage of households with soap and water at a handwashing station increased from 4.9 percent to 9.9 percent, prevalence of these practices remains extremely low. Quantitative survey results show

Figure 1: Children’s health and nutrition indicators

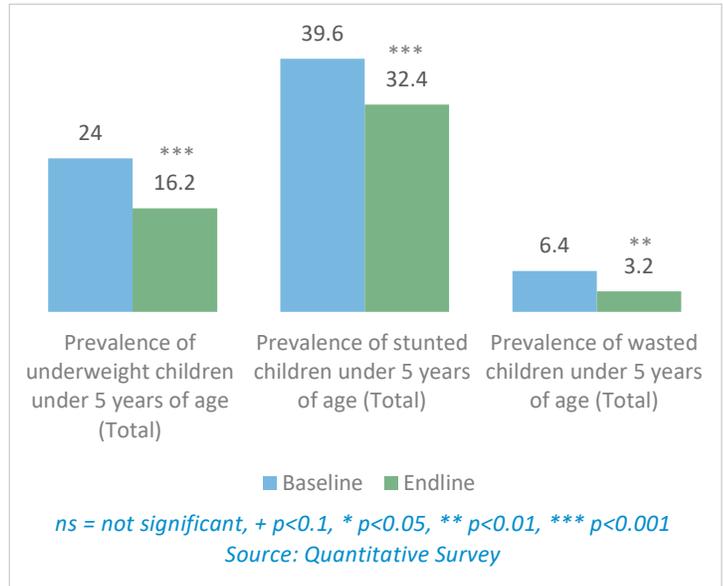
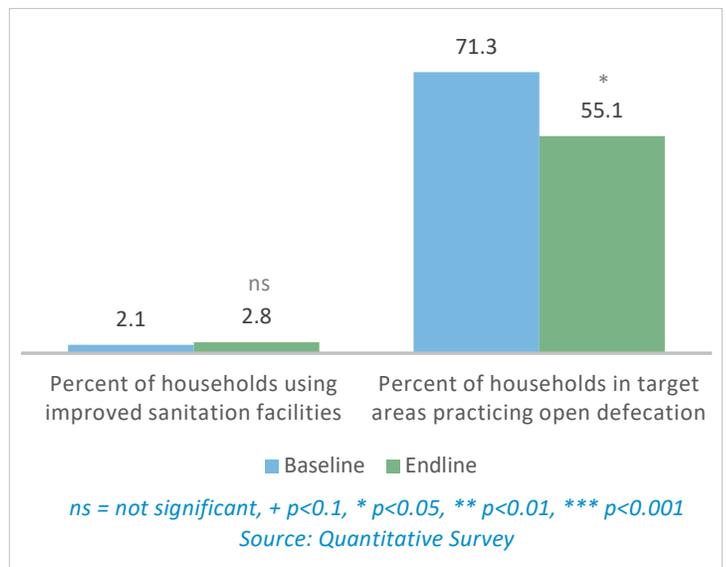


Figure 2: Use of improved sanitation behaviors



significant but small improvements in handwashing, well under the program target of 30 percent, and qualitative evaluators rarely observed handwashing facilities at study sites. Access to water is a major constraint, especially in the Southwest, and there was no significant change over the baseline in the percentage of households with access to drinking water or practicing correct water treatment. Although endline survey data show a shift away from open defecation (Figure 2), the qualitative data revealed multiple barriers that prevent households from using improved latrines. Barriers to improved latrine construction cited in FGDs included low prioritization of latrines versus other household infrastructure needs, low participation of men due to perceived stigmatization, and dense settlements/small plot size.

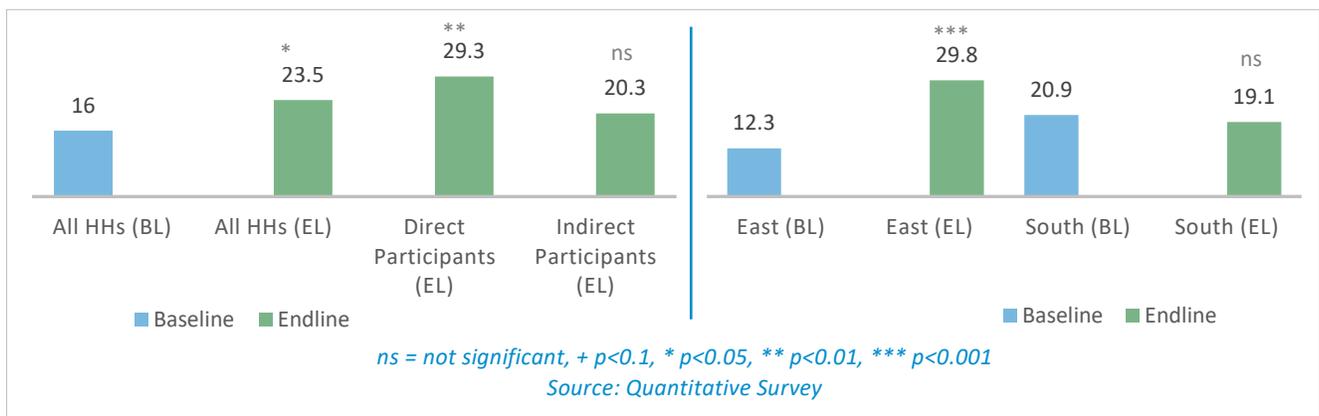
It is unlikely that WASH practices contributed significantly to improved child health and nutrition outcomes. While beneficiaries and stakeholders valued Fararano’s integrated package of nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive activities, the qualitative data suggest that the effectiveness of Purpose 1 interventions was reduced by weak compliance with Care Group approach implementation standards at some sites, infrequent supervision and support to Lead Mothers, and inadequate adaptation of activities to the local context across diverse zones. Another determinant of effectiveness fell outside the control of the project, when Fararano was unable to match the demand it created for MCHN health services with the supply of quality services from CHVs and local health centers, especially after USAID/Mikolo closed.

Household Income (Purpose 2)

Fararano’s interventions, in particular those related to Savings and Internal Lending Communities (SILC) groups and farmer organizations (i.e., producer organizations, collection point organizations, and cooperatives), produced meaningful impacts during the life of the project. This finding is consistent with the endline survey results, which found a statistically significant 61 percent increase in per capita expenditures (as a proxy for income). Lead Farmers benefited from increased knowledge of improved practices, along with some seeds and tools, and they shared their knowledge with small groups of other farmers. Endline results showed a modest increase in the adoption of improved practices in the surveyed population overall, with the percentage of farmers adopting three sustainable crop, livestock, or Natural Resource Management (NRM) practices rising from 37.2 percent to 45.3 percent; it increased to 53.6 percent for direct project participants. While farmers trained on improved practices may well continue to apply those practices post-project, the overall sustainability potential of the Lead Farmer model is low, as it is almost entirely dependent on unpaid volunteers and operates in a context where there is no local government extension service.

Use of financial services by farmers in the past 12 months increased from baseline to endline, particularly for direct project participants and in the East zone:

Figure 3: Percentage of farmers who used financial services in the past 12 months



The SILC/Private Service Provider (PSP) model was implemented with great success and at scale, and the endline results confirm that SILCs led to a statistically significant increase in the percentage of farmers using financial services (**Figure 3**). In the East, use of financial services increased dramatically, from 12.3 percent to 29.8 percent, while remaining largely unchanged in the South. Nonetheless, future initiatives should consider adjusting the SILC/PSP model to enable it to be scaled more quickly and widely. Producer Organizations, collecting point organizations, and cooperatives also have great potential to enhance income gains for farmers. Such approaches, however, were rolled out slowly and reached less than 5,000 producers, or roughly 20 percent of participants in Purpose 2 activities. While some of the groups established already have strong market linkages and can function without project support, that may not be the case for many of the 360 Producer Organizations, particularly those formed late in the project cycle. Infrastructure investments, consisting of rehabilitating irrigation systems and feeder roads, were successful in injecting food resources into target communities during the lean season, but the extent to which they provide significant lasting benefits to communities remains to be seen.

Community Capacity to Manage Shocks (Purpose 3)

Community capacity to manage shocks was improved primarily through disaster risk management activities focused on cyclones and on strengthening social safety nets for the most vulnerable households. In close cooperation with the line ministry, the project created and worked with fokontany Disaster Risk Management committees to address cyclone risks through appropriate preparedness and response activities. However, it failed to adequately address risks associated with recurrent drought in the South. NRM activities centered on Food for Assets (FFA) and reforestation through newly created, but not well supported, NRM committees. Reforestation in the East was partially successful and failed in the South. Many NRM committees are no longer operating or are demotivated by the lack of results, and their understanding of NRM was limited to planting trees and reducing tree cutting and bush fires. NRM committees reported a decrease in bush fires and tree cutting due to the continuous sensitization and protection efforts, though visible abuses continue.

“
When we were building the road, I was still receiving food rations and did not worry about what we would eat. I prepared the rations distributed by the project, because they were nutritionally balanced foods.
”

Village Development Committees (VDCs) implemented social protection activities in close cooperation with the Ministry of Population, Social Protection and Promotion of Women. Most Vulnerable Households (MVHs) were identified, and more than half of VDCs undertook social protection activities. Other than participation in FFA, the most cited mechanism to assist MVHs was to include them in SILC groups, and a few VDCs have made land available to MVH for vegetable gardening. Unlike Purpose 1 and 2, where approaches and activities target individual/household behavior change, this component relies substantially on collective action and good governance, which places more external constraints on performance. When there was synergy between national capacity and community interests, the results were positive, such as for cyclone and bush fire management. NRM results were generally weak in terms of scale and sustainability, as they were project-driven and not well integrated with Purpose 2.

Gender and Youth (Cross-Cutting)

Project monitoring and final evaluation data provide evidence of gender-equitable access to and participation in project interventions, with women integrating farmer groups and SILC groups and reached by multiple MCHN

activities, often together with their spouses. Though Fararano faced challenges ensuring Youth Group access for the youngest target youth, the project learned lessons about improving access in future projects. The central lesson regards the need for an intentional, well thought-out strategy for targeting and engaging the youngest youth in general. Fararano (initially) gave a lot of liberty to community authorities to identify the members of the Youth Groups, which gave preference to older youth and to "youth" even older than 25.

Community engagement emerged from the qualitative study as the most significant change resulting from Fararano's gender/youth integration strategy. Women and youth benefited from expanded roles and strengthened relationships with their peers, in their couples, and with other members of their communities. The qualitative study found no evidence of increased risk of gender-based violence to Gender Champions, Youth Group members, or members of target households, related to project participation, which suggests Fararano implemented its gender/youth approach with sensitivity. However, the



Photo Credit: Catholic Relief Services

final evaluation data show the project was less successful at achieving equitable distribution of benefits across genders and generations. Direct participant female-headed households consistently fared worse than both male-headed households and indirect participant female-headed households on FFP's poverty indicators. Direct participants' endline values for women's dietary diversity were stagnant even as Household Diet Diversity Score values improved. Fararano was also challenged to close the gender gaps in decision-making about MCHN and use of household revenue. The qualitative data suggest redistributing power between old and young may be at least as challenging as between genders. The main factors associated with reduced effectiveness of gender/youth integration were found to be limited project financial and human resources, which lowered the levels of coverage and quality of gender/youth activities. But the endline data also reveal a need for greater consideration of the structural drivers of gender and generational inequalities in program design.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall

- For future integrated food security programs, take a more focused approach in terms of geographic scope and the number of intervention models.
- Prioritize community intervention models with high inherent sustainability and strong linkages to the private sector or local government structures.
- Maximize integration by engaging all households targeted for MCHN interventions in one or more livelihood activities to enhance their ability to sustain health and nutritional gains.

Nutrition and Health

- Provide sufficient supervision and coaching for Lead Mothers to ensure the success of the Care Group approach.
- Reduce the time expected of Lead Mother volunteers by limiting the distances they need to travel for home visits, and reducing the ratio of mothers per Lead Mother.

- At sites where food assistance is used, design and implement measures to avoid dependence and minimize negative impacts. Avoid relying on food distributions for attaining awareness-raising/ Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) targets.
- Actively engage local authorities in the implementation of sanitation activities.



Household Income

- Integrate a systematic outreach mechanism into the Lead Farmer model to promote broader adoption of promoted practices. Involve more trained farmers in Producer Organizations and cooperatives to realize the benefits of collective purchasing and marketing, and form such groups as early as possible.
- Continue to implement the SILC/PSP model, but seek to achieve the highest possible levels of group formation early in the project.
- Take a more rigorous approach to ensuring the long-term impact and sustainability of any infrastructure assets put in place using the FFA approach.



Community Capacity to Manage Shocks

- Implement NRM approaches and activities primarily through the agriculture/livelihood component.
- Make drought a more explicit and central focus of resilience-building efforts in drought-prone areas, and coordinate with wider drought management strategies.



Gender

- Consider waiting until SILC groups are operational before implementing SBCC on gender-equitable decision-making about use of household revenue.
- Systematically mobilize traditional leaders as advocates for reimagining rigid gender-based roles and identities.



Youth

- Target local and traditional leaders, parents, and even project staff with SBCC designed to lift social and cultural barriers to youth empowerment. Consider approaches that promote youth-driven problem solving and learning to enable progress from youth mobilization to true youth engagement.
- Create separate groups for older and younger youth, with approaches tailored to members' age- and gender-specific priorities and needs.

MIXED-METHODS METHODOLOGY

- Population-based survey (PBS) (June 2019)
 - 1,093 households in the three project regions
- Quantitative analysis compared baseline and endline indicators
- Disaggregation by geographic zones
 - East (humid): Atsinanana and Vatovavy Fitovinany
 - South (hot and dry): Atsimo Andrefana
- Qualitative study (15 fokontany in six regions) (Oct-Nov 2019)
 - 80 focus group discussions (399 F, 226 M)
 - 45 key informant interviews (national and site-level) (19 F, 29 M)
 - Observations of 12 infrastructure assets built or rehabilitated with project support
- Review of project documents, project monitoring data, and secondary sources