



Learning from Evaluations

A Review of 16 Mid-Term Evaluations of USAID-funded Food Security Development Programs from 2015-2020

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IMPEL | Implementer-Led Evaluation & Learning Associate Award



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ABOUT IMPEL

The Implementer-Led Evaluation & Learning Associate Award works to improve the design and implementation of Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) funded development food security activities (DFSAs) through implementer-Led evaluations and knowledge sharing. Funded by the USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA), the Implementer-Led Evaluation & Learning Associate Award will gather information and knowledge in order to measure performance of DFSAs, strengthen accountability, and improve guidance and policy. This information will help the food security community of practice and USAID to design projects and modify existing projects in ways that bolster performance, efficiency and effectiveness. The Implementer-Led Evaluation & Learning Associate Award is a two-year activity (2019-2021) implemented by Save the Children (lead), TANGO International, and Tulane University, in Haiti, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Madagascar, Malawi, Nepal, and Zimbabwe.

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ACRONYMS

BHA	Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance
DFAP	Development food assistance project
DFSA	Development food security activity
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
DRM	Disaster Risk Management
FFP	USAID's Office of Food for Peace
FFW/FFA	Food for work / Food for assets
GBV	Gender-based violence
HH	Household
IP	Implementing partner
IYCF	Infant and young child feeding
MTE/R	Mid-term evaluation/Review
NRM	Natural resource management
IMPEL	Implementer-Led Evaluation & Learning Associate Award
MEAL	Monitoring, evaluation, analysis and learning
TOC	Theory of Change
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
MCH/RMNCH	Maternal and child health/reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health
PLW	Pregnant and lactating women
SBC	Social behavior change
SBCC	Social behavior change communication
RFA	Request for applications
VSLA	Village saving and loans association

INTRODUCTION

Since 2015, USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA)¹ has sponsored highly participatory mid-term evaluations or reviews (MTE/R) of their development food security activities (DFAPs and DFSAs) at the mid-point of each activity's five-year term. These mid-term evaluations or reviews included staff members of the implementing organization and BHA and were led either by external consultants or by BHA staff. The findings and recommendations from these MTE/Rs have primarily been used to inform the activity's plans, leading to modifications that aim to improve results.

This report is a high-level review of the recommendations and findings of these MTE/Rs to identify common themes or trends that could inform future programming more broadly, and lead to improved food security outcomes.

We begin by providing a high-level quantitative overview of the types of recommendations made by the MTE/Rs, both in terms of what types of sectors or themes they address (agriculture, natural resource management, nutrition, gender, etc.), and in terms of what operational or management recommendations they make. This is followed by exploring the content of the recommendations in more detail and identifying certain trends that might be useful to understand for future program design and implementation. Finally, we offer some recommendations for key discussion themes for a proposed workshop for BHA-funded food security development program stakeholders.

The MTE/Rs included in this review are identified below (Table 1).

Table 1: MTE/Rs included in this review

Country	DFAP/DFSA	Report Finalized
Bangladesh	Nobo Jatra	2018
	SHOUHARDO III	2018
Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)	Budikadidi	2020
	FSP-Enyanya	2020
	Tuendele Pamoja II	2020
Ethiopia	Ethiopia Livelihoods and Resilience Program	2019
	Targeted Response for Agriculture, Income and Nutrition	2019
	Tigray Productive Safety Net Program 4	2019
	Strengthen PSNP4 Institutions and Resilience	2019
Guatemala	PAISANO	2015
	SEGAMIL	2015
Haiti	Kore Lavi	2016
Madagascar	ASOTRY	2017
	Fararano	2017
Malawi	UBALE	2017
	Njira	2017

¹ Until June 2020, DFAPs and DFSAs were funded through the USAID Office of Food for Peace (FFP). In June 2020, FFP was merged with OFDA (the USAID Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance) to form the new Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA).

The review was limited to analyzing the MTE/R reports and recommendations made in those reports. It was not possible to assess what changes were made to activity plans as a consequence of these MTE/Rs, nor what the impact of those changes was. No attempt was made to solicit qualitative feedback from the implementing partners (IPs) as to how useful they found the MTE/Rs. These questions, while important, are beyond the scope of work for this review. Consequently, there is no analysis as to the usefulness of the MTE/R recommendations, nor whether program performance increased as a consequence or not.

The full scope of work for this analysis is presented in Annex 1.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The 16 MTE/Rs reviewed in this report provided 743 separate recommendations with 3,032 references to the 68 themes and categories listed in Table 2. The nature of recommendations varied greatly from specific suggestions for changes to individual interventions, to broad high-level strategic guidance with implications for the whole activity. The plethora of diverse recommendations is indicative of the complexity of DFAPs and DFSAs, and the wide range of contexts within which these activities are implemented.

We carried out a quantitative review, analyzing the recommendations against broad themes (e.g. Household Access to Food, etc.) comprised of specific categories of interventions (e.g. agricultural production, conditional cash transfers, etc. — see Table 2 for details). Figure 1 shows the breakdown of the recommendations by theme. A third of the recommendations referenced broad technical themes, with Household Access to Food (agricultural production and livelihoods interventions) and Reduction of Malnutrition (health- and nutrition-related interventions) each comprising 13% of the total references. Cross-cutting themes (gender, sustainability and exit, community capacity building, good governance, private sector engagement, etc.) form 18% of the references, with Management and Operations (MEAL, staffing, project management, etc.) also making up 18% of the references.

Figure 2 shows all categories referenced by 50 or more recommendations. Nearly 50% of recommendations referenced intervention design, with participant training and project management being referenced by 19% and 18% of recommendations, respectively. The next three most highly referenced categories are the technical areas of agricultural production (17%), nutrition (15%), and MCH/RMNCH (14%) respectively. These above findings are not surprising in the context of the priorities for DFAPs and DFSAs.

There are, however, three surprises that we consider to be significant in this analysis. First, there are limited references to the activities' Theory of Change (TOC) which is mentioned only once each in five of the MTE/Rs (see Figure 3). The TOC has become the primary activity analysis and design tool required by BHA and should be guiding activity implementation, so a more significant focus could be expected. Secondly, one of BHA's primary target activity participants are the most vulnerable members of a population. Vulnerability targeting is only specifically referenced by three MTE/Rs, despite the fact that most DFAPs/DFSAs find the most vulnerable to be the hardest group to reach. Finally, BHA aims to achieve impact at population level through these activities which requires an indirect impact on the broader population. Understanding that this indirect population impact has

been problematic to achieve for most DFAPs/DFSAs, it is surprising that there are only 10 references to impacting indirect participants across seven MTE/Rs.

The qualitative analysis of the MTE/Rs, linked with the findings from the quantitative analysis, revealed a range of trends, some that cut across technical areas and some that were focused on specific technical sectors.

Cross-cutting trends:

- **Number of Interventions.** Without exception, all the MTE/Rs had recommendations for reducing the overwhelming number of interventions implemented by the DFAPs/DFSAs. Key recommendations were 1) to reduce the number of interventions and focus on those having the best chance of achieving sustainability, and 2) to reduce the workload of community volunteers so that they could focus on specific high-impact interventions.
- **Quality of activity interventions.** There were repeated recommendations related to the quality of activity interventions, not just in terms of quality of implementation, but also in terms of the suitability or appropriateness of the technical approaches chosen by the activity. In particular, quality of social and behavior change (SBC) interventions was deemed low, as was the quality of trainings provided to participants; refresher training courses were not provided to either staff, community volunteers, or community participants; there was insufficient focus on the quality and appropriateness of promoted technologies (especially in agriculture); poor adoption of promoted technologies (especially in agriculture); and inadequate tailoring of support packages for target groups.
- **Sustainability.** In keeping with the strong emphasis FFP (and subsequently BHA) has put on the sustainability of DFAP/DFSA outcomes and impact, there were many recommendations related to sustainability across all but two of the MTE/Rs. These recommendations focused on the lack of, or insufficient staff knowledge about, sustainability plans; concerns about building a dependency/entitlement mentality among participants; increased focus on private sector “fee-for-service” models for service delivery; reliance on public sector extension services which are not likely to be sustainable; and issues with continued motivation of volunteers once the activity had ended.
- **Targeting and reach of activities.** Several of the MTE/Rs had recommendations related to reaching remote or outlying areas. These can be grouped into two—seemingly contradictory—sets of recommendations. One approach was to provide recommendations on how to best support services in these remote areas, recognizing that remoteness is one of the primary factors contributing to vulnerability, and that reaching the most vulnerable is a primary focus for BHA. The other approach was to recommend removing the remote areas from the activities’ geographic targeting and focus resources on areas more easily reached by activity personnel. The context within which the programs were being implemented may well explain this seeming contradiction, but it highlights the dilemma and trade-offs between reaching the most vulnerable with quality programming and maintaining cost-efficient implementation.
- **Collaboration with and learning from other activities.** Most of the MTE/Rs had recommendations about increasing the collaboration and sharing of information and approaches between DFSAs in the same country, as well as increasing collaboration with other donor- or government-funded projects being implemented in the same area.

- **Recommendations about the need for layering and integration of different activity interventions at household level.**
- **Lack of knowledge of and lack of use of baseline data.**

Sector-specific trends:

- **Agriculture and Livelihoods.** Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs) were universally found to be successful and the MTE/Rs contained recommendations on how to leverage their success. There were many recommendations focused on improving income-generating interventions for off- and non-farm livelihoods, in particular for youth and women.
- **Health and Nutrition.** Key recommendations indicated that there was often poor understanding of the importance of the 1,000-day approach and how different interventions, e.g. food distribution to pregnant and lactating women (PLW), Care Group learning, cooking demonstrations, etc., were all linked together to achieve a common nutrition end. There were many recommendations related to the training and strengthening of community nutrition and health volunteers. In more recent MTE/Rs there were recommendations about moving from food to cash and voucher transfers.
- **Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH).** The majority of recommendations under WASH were focused water point management issues; lack of water quality testing; and the poor uptake of improved WASH practices due to poor SBC interventions.
- **Youth.** Most recommendations focused on the difficulty activities have with reaching youth, in particular with livelihoods interventions.
- **Gender.** Recommendations indicated that gender interventions were often done in silos as specific men's and women's interventions, rather than being integrated into all program interventions. Also, gender integration is more than just collecting gender-disaggregated data. These issues seem to occur less in recent DFSAs, perhaps due to stronger systematic guidance and requirements around gender integration in recent requests for applications (RFAs).
- **Monitoring, Evaluation, Analysis and Learning (MEAL).** MEAL recommendations focused on the following issues: too many indicators being collected overwhelming MEAL systems; MEAL systems not generating data to serve learning agendas and adaptive management; data management systems taking too long to become functional and deliver useful data; inadequate data quality; and MEAL systems focused on tracking outputs rather than monitoring program quality.
- **Food/cash for assets interventions.** Recommendations often indicate that these interventions are not implemented with appropriate quality, either due to poor design or poor construction quality.
- **Community level governance.** Most MTE/Rs had recommendations related to strengthening community-level governance.
- **Number of research activities.** For recent activities implemented under the R&I process, recommendations focused on limiting the number of research activities to those critical for refining the DFSA design and implementation plans.

METHODOLOGY OF ANALYSIS

Each MTE/R assesses the progress of the DFAP/DFSA against its work plan and strategy, identifying areas where the activity is not performing as planned and analyzing the reasons for this lack of performance. Recommendations are provided to address the identified issues in order to improve performance, or to realign the activity to, for example, a changed operating context.

Due to time constraints, this analysis was restricted to a review of the recommendations and did not attempt to assess the full analyses and findings of MTE/R teams.² Since the recommendations addressed issues that were identified during the MTE/R analyses, it is expected that this analysis will track the findings of the overall MTE/R reports quite closely. Where there was extra explanatory information provided with the recommendation, this was included in the analysis. For instance, while a recommendation might state: “It is recommended that the linkages between producer organizations and private sector providers are strengthened,” the accompanying explanation may state that this is primarily to strengthen the sustainability of extension services provided to farmers after the activity closes. For analysis purposes, the findings are relevant to common categories of MTE/R recommendations including “Sustainability and Exit,” in addition to “Private Sector Engagement.”

The qualitative analysis provided in the MTE/R reports was analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The quantitative analysis assesses how many times specific themes or topics were addressed in the recommendations, and the qualitative assessment identifies trends emerging from the actual content of the recommendations.

Description of the Quantitative Analytical Framework

The secondary quantitative review of qualitative MTE/R data analyzed each recommendation against a set of categories that were grouped into a set of major themes: Technical, Cross-cutting, Management and Operational, and Type of Recommendation. The Technical theme was further broken down into subsidiary themes: Household Access to Food, Reduction of Malnutrition, Other, DRM, and National Safety Nets. Classifying the recommendations against these categories and themes helped building an understanding of what areas of DFAP/DFSA implementation were addressed in the recommendations of all the MTE/Rs analyzed in this review. The set of major and subsidiary themes and corresponding categories used in this analysis are summarized in Table 2 and described in more detail in Annex 2. These categories were developed from the analysis of the recommendations with the aim to reflect the intent of the evaluation teams’ recommendations, rather than attempting to be a definitive list of all possible categories in a DFAP/DFSA.

² The author read the executive summary of each report and all the recommendations. If the intent of a recommendation was not clear, he also read the corresponding analysis to ensure that the recommendation was represented accurately.

Table 2. Themes and categories used for recommendation analysis

Major Themes	Subsidiary Themes
TECHNICAL THEMES	Household (HH) Access to Food Agricultural production and value chains, post-harvest and storage, off-farm livelihoods and entrepreneurship, agricultural extension, migration and remittances, employment and workforce development, and access to capital
	Reduction of Malnutrition MCH/RMNCH, IYCF, rations, conditional cash transfers, homestead/kitchen gardens, nutrition, and household WASH
	Other Literacy, natural resource management (NRM), conflict mitigation, climate change, community WASH
	Disaster Risk Management (DRM) DRR and DRM, plan development, information sharing, infrastructure/public works, mitigation interventions
	National Safety Nets Vulnerability targeting, cash and/or vouchers, early warning, safety net capacity building
CROSS-CUTTING THEMES Sustainability and exit, gender and women's empowerment, gender-based violence (GBV), male engagement, youth, private sector engagement, mobile approaches, good local governance, community institutions capacity building, government institutions capacity building, FFW/FFA, community volunteer capacity building and numbers, community volunteer incentives and motivation	
MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), M&E design, data quality, indicators, Theory of Change, learning, program quality, staff training, commodity management, staffing, project management, USAID recommendations (i.e. recommendations made to USAID by the MTE/R evaluation team), Refine and Implement	
TYPE OF RECOMMENDATION Training of participants, SBCC, research, integration, community accountability, strategy, small grants, intervention design, linkages, impacting indirect participants, targeting	
MISCELLANEOUS Anything that does not fit under the above categories and which did not warrant a separate category	

The author recognizes that some categories could easily be extended across multiple themes or be allocated to different themes. However, the purpose of this analysis is not to get into a theoretical discussion about food security frameworks, but rather to carry out a quick review to learn from trends in MTE/Rs, and better understand the potential significance of those trends for future programming.

In addition, the author needed to use judgement when classifying different recommendations, and a different reviewer might have made different decisions in some cases. Despite this potential for different judgments on specific recommendations, the author tried to make consistent decisions

regarding classification and is confident that at the aggregate level, the analysis provides a fair overall reflection of the MTE/R recommendations as a whole.

The results of this analysis are recorded in a spreadsheet with each MTE/R allocated to one tab. The total number of times a category is addressed is totaled at the top of each category column. Then the totals for all the MTE/Rs are summed up in a summary tab at the front of the spreadsheet. The summary tab is included as Annex 3, and the full spreadsheet is accessible through Annex 4.

Virtually all recommendations are multifaceted, addressing more than one category, so most recommendations generated entries within multiple categories. For example, a recommendation such as “The project should consider stopping the Lead Farmer approach to training farmers, which has not been effective at getting farmers to adopt new production practices, and learn about and adopt the Farmer Field School (FFS) approach implemented by the other DFSA which has been more successful in promoting improved practices. This may require training staff and community volunteers in the new approach and the reallocation of staff to effectively implement FFSs,” would generate entries for the following categories: Agriculture Production, Agricultural Extension, Learning,³ Linkages, Intervention Design, Capacity Building of Community Volunteers, Staff Training, and Project Management.

Several of the MTE/Rs grouped their recommendations into overall themes or areas for improvement, with accompanying recommendations related to those themes (SHOUHARDO III is an example of this). Other MTE/Rs had topline recommendations, with a list of more specific lower-level recommendations that contribute to achieving the topline recommendations (PAISANO is an example of that). However, the majority of MTE/Rs just split up their recommendations by Strategic Objective or Purpose, plus Gender and M&E. Regardless of the style of recommendation presentation, this analysis attempts to capture all the recommendations presented by each evaluation team.

Methodology of the Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative analysis was a simple process of reviewing the content of the recommendations across all the MTE/Rs and identifying trends of repeated themes within recommendations. For example, comments about the number of different interventions being implemented by the DFSAs and the need to focus and reduce the number of interventions appeared within all the MTE/Rs.

Comments on MTE/R Data

While the evaluation teams attempted to ensure that members gave adequate attention to every theme, this was not always possible. For some MTE/Rs, certain technical areas were not covered in as much detail as other areas. This was particularly so for the area of Gender and Youth where there were no specific Gender/Youth recommendations in four of the MTE/Rs.

³ In the context of this review, *Learning* is considered to be more a management activity related to learning about what works, for example, and then applying that learning to change/improve project implementation or activities. This may be a fairly quick or informal process, as opposed to *Research* which is a formal activity with a specific technical focus with a detailed scope of work often carried out by an external team.

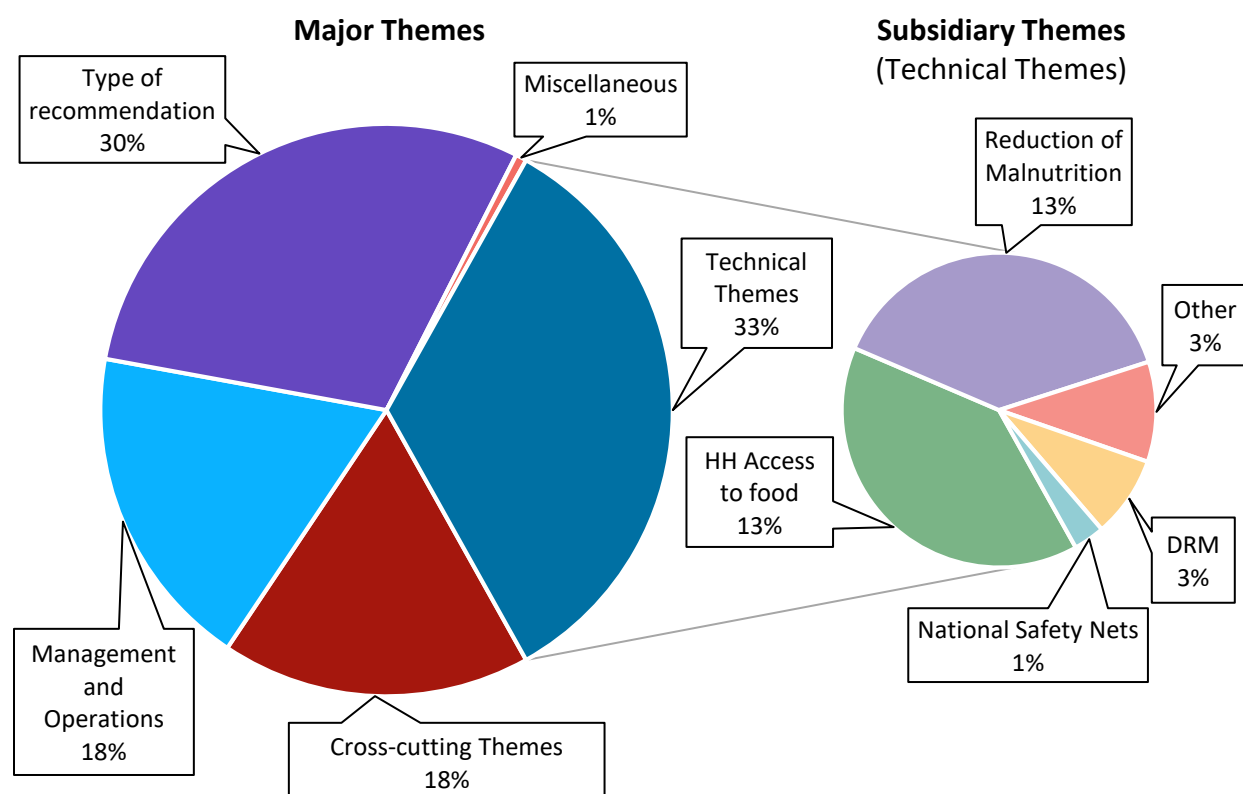
The nature of the recommendations also varied significantly between MTE/Rs. Some MTE/Rs tended to include large numbers of specific recommendations suggesting detailed changes to individual interventions, such as adjusting a training manual to include some missing item. Other reports tended towards recommendations that were high-level and broad, and more strategic in nature. This variation in style meant that comparisons between recommendations from one MTE/R to another were sometimes like comparing apples and oranges. For instance, suggesting that an agricultural training course should consider incorporating some specific soil conservation technique is very different from a recommendation suggesting that the activity should carry out a review of what practices are successfully being adopted, and why, and updating their training program to accommodate that learning. However, in the quantitative analysis both recommendations would be categorized by Agriculture Production and Agricultural Extension despite them being fundamentally different in many respects. Consequently, the nature of the quantitative analysis will hide significant differences in recommendations.

There are certain important aspects of DFAP/DFSA implementation, such as the Theory of Change (TOC), that may not show up as having many references from the recommendations, but are clearly still exceedingly important from the perspective of implementation. So, while there may be several recommendations in each MTE/R related to Nutrition, there may only be one or perhaps two references to the TOC in each MTE/R. For those types of categories, the issue may not relate to the number of references, but more to the absence or presence of any recommendations related to that category.

QUANTITATIVE REVIEW AND OBSERVATIONS

Sixteen MTE/Rs were reviewed covering seven countries through the years from 2015 to 2019. These MTE/Rs contained 743 separate recommendations with 3,032 references to the categories in Table 1. The number of recommendations per MTE/R varied from a low of 20 for the UBALE review to a high of 74 recommendations for the SEGAMIL review, and an average of 48 recommendations per MTE/R.

Figure 1 shows the percentage distribution of the 3,032 category references across the Major and Subsidiary Themes. Technical Themes, not surprisingly, were the largest category making up 33% of the references. Thirty percent of the references related to the Type of recommendation being made. Management and Operations and Cross-cutting themes each made up about one sixth of the references. Miscellaneous, or uncategorized references, make up less than 1% of the total references, which indicates that the categories listed in Table 1 cover nearly 100% of the recommendations' content.

Figure 1. Breakdown of recommendations by theme

When we look at the Subsidiary Themes that are the subsections of the Technical Themes (see the pull-out pie chart in Figure 1), Reduction of Malnutrition and Household Access to Food are the major components, each having 13% of the total references. Again, this is not surprising. These two are followed by DRM and Other (which includes a range of unconnected categories), with National Safety Nets being the smallest Subsidiary Theme. The DFSAs that specifically worked to strengthen or develop national safety nets are the four Ethiopian DFSAs and the one Haiti DfSA. Interestingly, there were not many references that fell into the National Safety Nets category in the Ethiopian recommendations.

Figure 2 shows all categories that were referenced by 50 or more recommendations. See Annex 2 for the full list. Again, there do not seem to be many surprises in this list. Intervention design was referenced by nearly 50% of the recommendations. As the majority of an activity's programming is implemented through specific interventions, you would expect that altering or improving specific interventions would be key for evaluation teams to focus their recommendations on to improve the activity's impacts. The second most common category is training of participants. Again, most activity interventions involve training participants on improved practices or behaviors,⁴ so this is also unsurprising. Many recommended changes might require a significant project management

⁴ While *SBCC* and *Training of participants* are clearly different types of intervention and are listed as different categories under *Types of recommendations*, it was not always clear if the different evaluation teams were consistent in their use of terminology between these two categories. The author used the terminology used by the evaluation teams even if it seemed that the recommendation might actually be more accurately classified under the other term.

intervention, and project management is unsurprisingly the third most common recommendation category, followed by three of the usual DFAP/DFSAs primary intervention areas, agricultural production, nutrition, and MCH/RMNCH as the fourth, fifth, and sixth most mentioned categories.

Figure 2. Highest occurring categories by number and percentage of recommendations

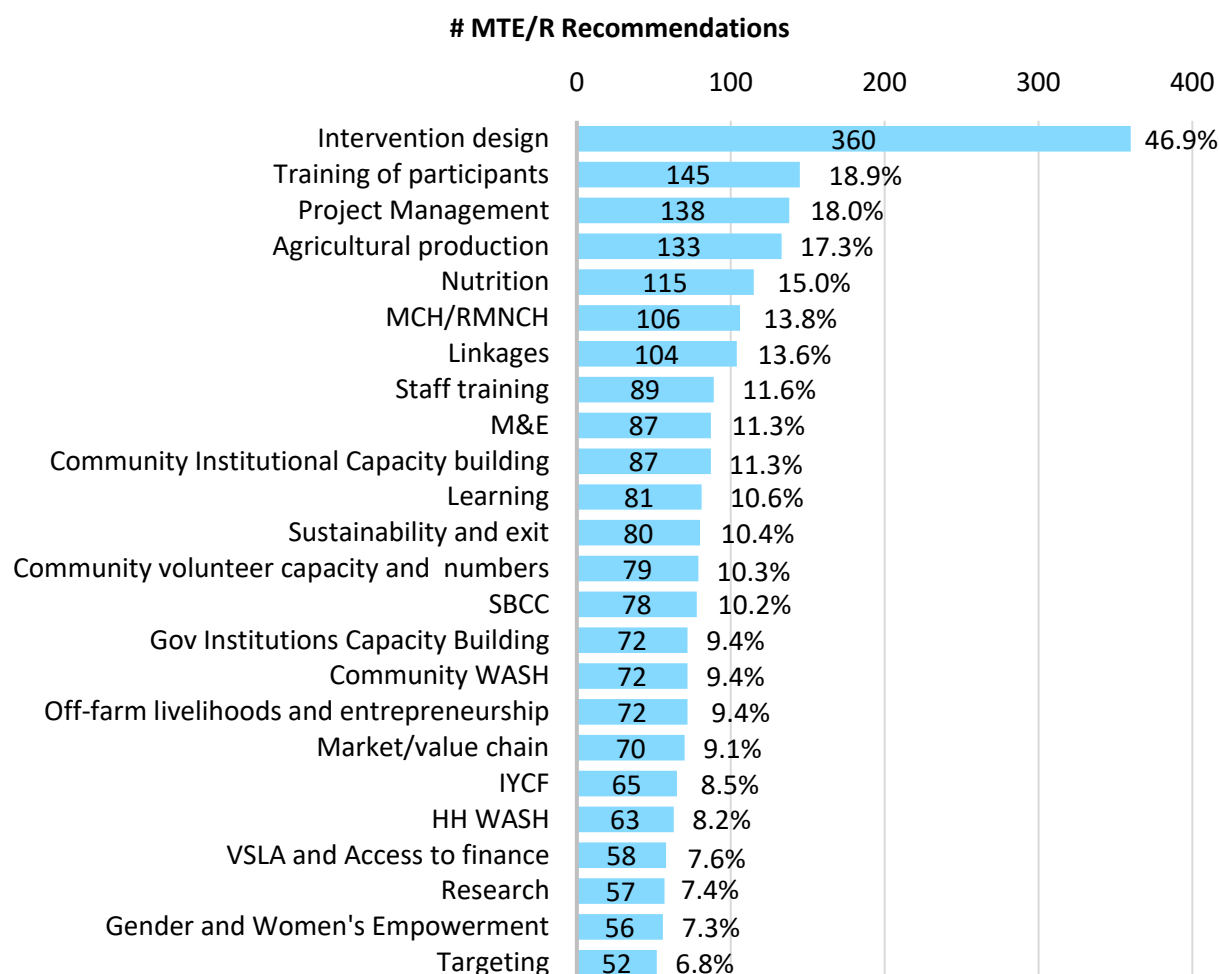
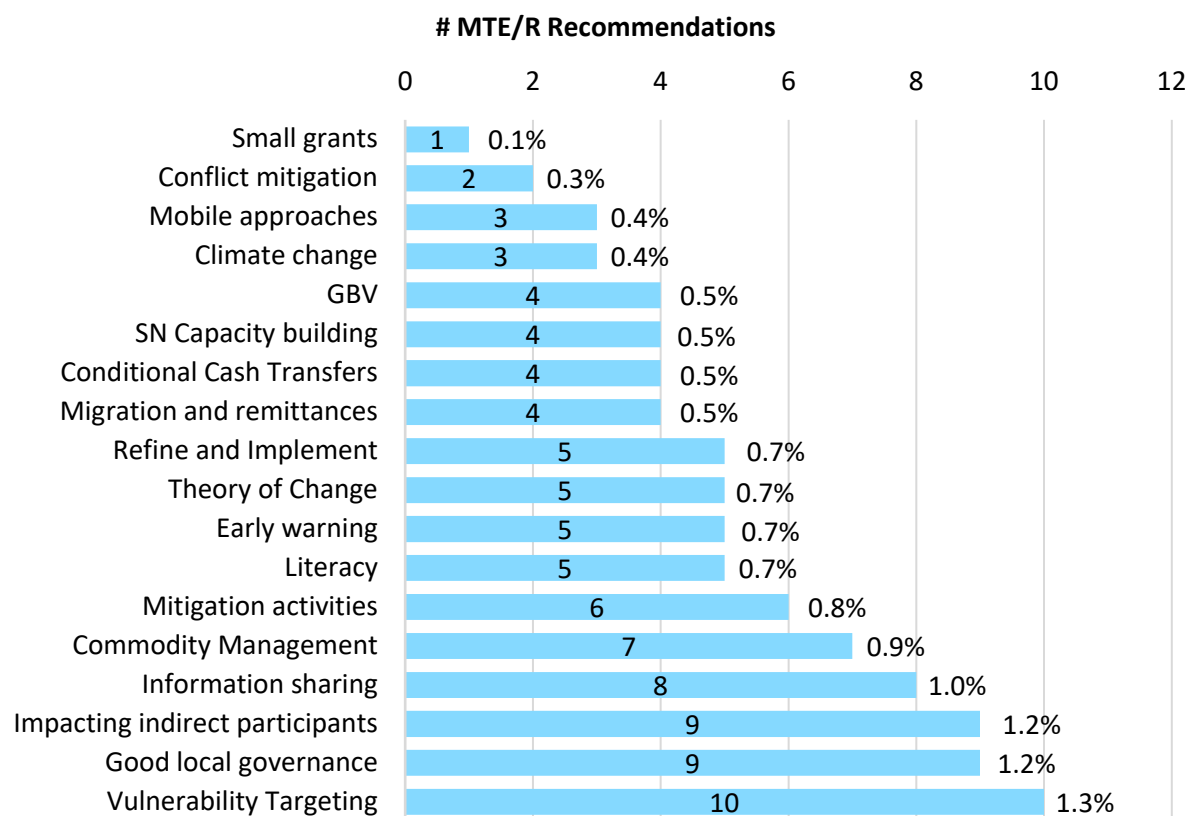


Figure 3 (below) shows the categories of recommendations that appear the fewest times in the MTE/Rs. It is surprising to see that Theory of Change (TOC) was only mentioned in five recommendations, and of those only one recommendation was actually focusing on the TOC. Yet, the TOC has been the primary design and program planning tool required by BHA since the launch of the 2014 DFSAs, which went through their MTE/Rs in 2017. It would seem likely that MTE/Rs done since 2017 would have at least one recommendation related to the TOC. Vulnerability targeting occurs 10 times, and (referencing the Summary page of the Analysis Spreadsheet) eight of those recommendations can be found in the Kore Lavi MTE/R report, meaning that targeting the most vulnerable only appeared in three MTE/Rs in all. Considering that the most vulnerable are a primary target group for BHA, and are the group that DFAPs/DFSAs have most difficulties in reaching effectively, it seems strange that only three MTE/Rs had specific recommendations related to targeting the most vulnerable. The third surprise was around impacting indirect participants, which

was only mentioned in 10 references spread across seven of the MTE/Rs, leaving nine without any mention. BHA aims to achieve measurable impact at a population level, which requires impacts beyond the direct target group of the DFAPs/DFSAs. As this is also an area where programs struggle, it would be expected to receive greater attention from the evaluation teams.

Figure 3. Lowest occurring categories by number and percentage of recommendations



Going beyond the recommendations and reading the full MTE/R reports, reveals that all three of these areas are often mentioned, and many of the recommendations that do not explicitly mention TOC, vulnerability targeting or impacting indirect participants may well be oriented towards achieving those aims. However, when activities are not achieving their planned goals it would be expected that greater effort be made to make recommendations that reference the TOC in some manner. In addition, the lack of recommendations related to two primary goals of BHA, reaching the most vulnerable and having impact at population level, raises questions about the scopes of work (SOWs) on which the MTE/Rs were based.

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS: THEMES AND TRENDS ARISING FROM THE MTE/RS

As the quantitative analysis indicates, there were many diverse recommendations cutting across the broad range of recommendation categories. Despite this diversity, certain trends emerged across the MTE/Rs. Some of these trends were limited to specific technical or sectoral areas, but the majority were relevant to multiple sectors. The themes that generated similar types of recommendations in multiple MTE/R reports are listed below.

Recommendation Trends Cutting Across Multiple Sectors

The quantitative analysis distributed the MTE/R recommendations over 68 different categories with a total of 3,032 references and an average of 44 references per category. This reflects the complexity and technical breadth of activity strategies which are required to address the complexity of the issues contributing to food insecurity in the activity areas. This diversity and volume of interventions had impacts on both the activities' ability to implement those interventions with quality and on communities' ability to absorb the messaging and make the consequent expected changes in behavior or adoption of new technologies.

The first two sets of trends, number of interventions and quality of activity interventions, seem to be direct consequences of the above complexity and technical breadth of activity interventions.

Number of Interventions

- **Too many interventions:** Either directly or implied, every MTE/R had recommendations related to the overwhelming number of interventions being implemented by the DFAPs/DFSAs. Too many interventions had the following consequences:
 - Low quality of implementation
 - IP and government resources being spread too thin
 - Field staff (both government and IP) and community volunteers having overwhelming workloads
 - Effective follow-up training, coaching, monitoring, etc. cannot take place
 - Staff and volunteer skills cannot be developed sufficiently over the wide range of interventions being implemented
 - Community members are overwhelmed by the number of committees they may have to be part of, and meetings and training courses they are expected to participate in. This is especially true for women who are already facing issues around time burden.
- **Narrow down number of interventions to those that have the best chance of sustainability:** Again, either explicitly or implicitly, all the MTE/Rs recommended that the DFSAs should narrow down their interventions to those that have the best chance to create impact that can be sustained after the activity closes.
- **Reducing the workload of community volunteers:** Many MTE/Rs recommended reducing the workload on community volunteers who were often unable to participate in required trainings and implement their roles effectively.

Quality of Activity Interventions

One of the trends raised in the MTE/Rs, and one of largest concern, was the quality of activity interventions. Not only in terms of the quality of implementation, but also in terms of the suitability or appropriateness of the chosen technical approaches. This raises questions about the quality of the knowledge and skills of activity staff, as well as the impact of the number of interventions on the staff (both activity and government) and volunteers' ability to apply their knowledge and skills effectively.

- **Low quality of SBC approaches:** Many of the MTE/Rs spoke to the poor quality of SBC interventions and the need for systematic training of IP and government staff and community volunteers in SBC⁵ methodologies and approaches. Key issues related to lack of understanding of SBC methodologies amongst frontline staff and consequent poor implementation, as well as inconsistent design quality of SBC interventions (some interventions had high quality designs, others less so).
- **Low quality of training provided to participants:** Similar to the above finding, many of the MTE/Rs had recommendations around the poor quality of training, in particular the lack of knowledge of adult learning methods amongst staff and consequently community volunteers, and the need to more effectively train staff and community volunteers in such methods.
- **Lack of refresher training courses:** Related to both of the above findings, many recommendations focused on the need for refresher trainings at both staff, community volunteer, and community participant level. There seemed to be a consistent approach across the DFAPs/DFSAs that it is sufficient to train once, and assume volunteers/participants know the technique or information being trained in. On the contrary, most skills development needs reinforcement, mentoring, and other types of follow-up to achieve the desired effect of the training program. This is related to the bullet point above about too many interventions, meaning that even with the best of plans and intentions, there is insufficient time for effective follow-up. This clearly also has implications for sustainability; if refresher training cannot be sustained during the activity, it is highly unlikely to be sustained after activity completion.⁶
- **Insufficient focus on the quality and appropriateness of promoted technologies (especially in agriculture):** There were many recommendations that clearly questioned the appropriateness of a number of technical approaches selected by the DFAPs/DFSAs for promotion. In addition, even when the technologies were clearly appropriate, there was often insufficient focus on the quality of implementation of those technologies, which led to the failure of those technologies and consequent non-adoption.
- **Non-adoption of promoted technologies (especially in agriculture):** Recommendations related to the failure of adoption of promoted technologies, or behaviors, usually included addressing many of the above-mentioned issues.

⁵ This is consistent with findings in the FANTA Review of SBC Methods in BHA DFSAs:

<https://www.advancingnutrition.org/resources/report-review-social-and-behavior-change-methods-and-approaches-within-food-peace>

⁶ Also see the FANTA Sustainability and Exit Strategies report where one of the 4 key factors for sustainability is identifying a means for sustaining technical and managerial capacity: <https://www.fsnnetwork.org/ffp-sustainability-and-exit-strategies-study-synthesis-report>

- **Inadequate tailoring of support packages for target groups:** While many activities aim to tailor support packages to the specific needs of different target groups, there was a consistent trend of recommendations that indicated that this was not happening.

Sustainability

BHA has put a strong emphasis on sustainability for many years, in particular requiring plans that systematically and explicitly address the four key factors for sustainability identified in the FANTA Sustainability and Exit Strategies report.⁷ What is clear from these MTE/Rs though, is that even when the DFAPs/DFSAs had sustainability plans in place, these plans were not widely read by activity staff and did not necessarily have a significant impact on implementation.

- **Lack of, and/or insufficient knowledge of, sustainability plans:** Most of the MTE/Rs had recommendations indicating that either there were no sustainability plans in place, or when there were plans, staff and partners had little knowledge or understanding of them.
- **Dependency/entitlement mentality:** Several recommendations expressed concerns about further fostering a dependency/entitlement mentality among participants through too many handouts such as free seeds, agricultural tools, etc., and cash and food transfers.
- **Private sector “fee for service” models of service delivery:** Most of the MTE/Rs had recommendations for DFAPs/DFSAs to develop “fee for service” private sector models of service delivery, for both agriculture/livelihoods and health/nutrition sectors.
- **Public sector extension services not likely to be sustainable:** Related to the above bullet is the observation in most MTE/Rs that reliance on public sector extension services is not likely to be a sustainable solution for service delivery, due to insufficient investment in those extension services by governments. In many instances, the extension services were only able to function while the activity continued to provide transportation, per diems, etc.
- **Motivation of volunteers:** There were a number of recommendations related to maintaining the motivation of volunteers, both while the activity was still ongoing and in particular once the activity had ended.

Targeting and Reach of Activities

- **Difficulty of reaching or servicing remote areas effectively:** A number of the MTE/Rs had recommendations about the need to reach remote or outlying areas more effectively, or to stop trying to deliver activity services to those areas and divert resources to more accessible areas. Reaching remote, outlying areas can constrain both the ability to deliver services consistently, cost-effectively and with appropriate support, as well as compromise the ability of the activity to implement with sufficient quality and provide regular oversight and monitoring of interventions in those remote areas. While some MTE/Rs made recommendations about how to deliver services more effectively in remote areas, other MTE/Rs suggested removing those remote areas from the DFSA target areas due to the difficulty of monitoring implementation and maintaining quality programming in those areas. Clearly, understanding the differing

⁷ Rogers, B. & Coates, J. (2015). *Sustaining Development: A Synthesis of Results from a Four-Country Study of Sustainability and Exit Strategies among Development Food Assistance Projects*. Washington, DC: FHI 360/Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance III Project (FANTA). Available at: <https://www.fsnnetwork.org/ffp-sustainability-and-exit-strategies-study-synthesis-report>

contexts within which these recommendations were developed by the MTE/R teams is important in understanding why seemingly conflicting recommendations were made. However, as geographic remoteness is one of the common features of the most vulnerable members of the population and since BHA wishes to reach the most vulnerable, but also wants to be cost-effective in reaching target populations, the dilemma highlighted by this issue could well be a fruitful discussion area for BHA and IPs.

Collaboration with, and Learning from, Other Activities

In recent years, USAID has increasingly focused on the benefits that can come from collaborating with, and learning from, other projects, in particular with those also funded by USAID. It has long been a requirement in proposals to identify other projects with which the DFAP/DFSA can collaborate to leverage knowledge and complementary interventions, in particular eliminating the need for the activity to address certain domains of interventions that are already being addressed by other projects. However, the recommendations from the MTE/Rs indicate that such collaboration, even with other DFAPs/DFSAs in the same country, is often not happening effectively.

- There were many recommendations suggesting greater collaboration and sharing of approaches, manuals, etc. between DFAPs/DFSAs in the same country:** The extent to which this sharing and/or collaboration was taking place usually seems limited to meetings at Chief of Party level and the recommendations were seeking to extend this sharing at least to senior technical staff levels. These ranged from a recommendation for one DFSA to consult with the other DFSA in the same country on the development of a Care Group module to avoid a lengthy development process and time, to a recommendation to develop strategies for information sharing on challenges and successes between all the DFSAs in the same country, as they were facing many of the same challenges and could greatly benefit from hearing about and understanding the diverse approaches to addressing these challenges. These strategies could include regular conference calls involving technical leads as well as site visits between the different DFSAs.
- Similar to the above bullet, most MTE/Rs had recommendations about increasing collaboration with other projects in the same area:** These included recommendations related to building on the capacity of community health volunteers already developed by other projects, rather than developing their own cadre of health volunteers. They also suggested to coordinate better with other projects to ensure that all agricultural interventions are covered rather than assuming that those interventions are being covered by other projects.

Miscellaneous

- Most MTE/Rs had recommendations about the need for layering and integration of different activity interventions at the household level.** The benefits of households receiving multiple interventions (livelihoods, nutrition education, sanitation behavior change, etc.), as opposed to only receiving one intervention, are well known and mentioned in BHA RFAs. However, the recommendations related to integration and layering of interventions indicated that many activities had difficulty in providing an effectively integrated set of interventions at the household level.
- Lack of knowledge of and lack of use of baseline data:** BHA invests significant funding into carrying out baseline surveys at the population level. There were a number of

recommendations across several of the MTE/Rs that indicated that staff had either not read the baseline reports or were not using the information contained within the reports even if they had been read.

Sector-Specific Trends

The agriculture production category generated the highest number of references from the recommendations so it might be expected that it would also have the highest number of sector-specific trends. However, the context-specific nature of agricultural production meant that there was tremendous diversity in the specifics of the agricultural recommendations leading to fewer common trends.

This contrasts with the health and nutrition sector where the widespread use of Care Groups and the focus on the 1,000-day approach meant that there were significantly more common technical trends emerging from the recommendations.

Of course, all the technical sectors contributed to the cross-cutting trends already mentioned above.

Agriculture and Livelihoods

- **Promotion of income-generating interventions, in particular for youth and women:** Recommendations in this area, in particular for off- and non-farm livelihoods, indicated that it is considered important, and also an area that is problematic in many DFAPs/DFSAs often due to the lack of profitable and sustainable entrepreneurship opportunities in the very remote areas most DFAPs/DFSAs operate.
- **Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs):** These informal financial service organizations, especially those managed by and for women, were universally viewed as successful and sustainable interventions, and there were many recommendations about how to leverage this success.
- **Access to quality livestock feeds:** Recommendations related to improving access to quality livestock feeds were present in several MTE/Rs.

Health and Nutrition

The majority of recommendation trends under health and nutrition seemed to indicate that there was a lack of understanding around the entire 1,000-day approach. It seems that while the diverse set of interventions (targeted food distribution to PLWs, Care Group messaging, growth monitoring and referrals, cooking classes, kitchen gardens, etc.) form part of an overall coherent strategy focused on reducing childhood malnutrition, there was widespread lack of understanding of this strategy on the part of both field personnel and community members, with the different interventions often seen to be separate and unconnected. This lack of understanding was no doubt related to the other main set of recommendations around the (lack of) ongoing training and supervision of field staff and community volunteers.

- **Lack of understanding of the importance of the 1,000-day approach amongst both participants and, sometimes, staff:** Participants, and sometimes staff, often did not understand the relationship between, and the reasons for, the different interventions—food distribution to

PLWs, Care Group learning, growing of nutritious foods, cooking demonstrations, etc.—that 1,000-day mothers participated in. These were often viewed as separate interventions that had little connection with each other, rather than a package of interventions that complemented each other and contributed to improved nutritional health for both mother and child.

- Linked to the above, community members were sometimes unclear that the purpose of the nutrition food and cash transfers was specifically to address nutrition needs of PLWs and children under 2 (CU2). Many recommendations seemed to indicate that PLWs viewed these transfers more like emergency food transfers where the purpose was to address family food shortages leading to sharing and use of the transfers for other interventions not related to child nutritional outcomes.
- **Strengthening the training of nutrition promoters, lead mothers, and community health volunteers:** Related to the earlier comment about inadequate training capacity, this was particularly emphasized through recommendations in the health and nutrition sector.
- **Supervision of community nutrition and health volunteers:** Linked to the above bullet, there were also consistent recommendations about improving the support to and supervision of community nutrition and health volunteers.
- **Purpose of, and capacity for, anthropometric measurement:** Also linked to the bullet about training in this section, were recommendations related to the lack of knowledge amongst community health and nutrition volunteers of the correct method for anthropometric measurement and the purpose for such measurements. Clearly, without understanding the reason for carrying out anthropometric measurement, it is likely that its impact in terms of the early detection and treatment of malnutrition in children will be diminished.
- **Improving the quality of home visits:** The quality and frequency of home visits by lead mothers in Care Groups generated a good number of recommendations across the MTE/Rs, usually related to the quality of information imparted during the visit and the reason for the visit. Home visits are usually an integral part of the Care Group model and are supposed to be an opportunity for lead mothers to reinforce messages from the group sessions and address specific needs of individual mothers. However, the recommendations seemed to indicate that home visits were usually generated by the lack of attendance by a mother at recent meetings, which meant that the home visit was used to catch up on training from the missed meeting.
- **In some more recent MTE/Rs there were recommendations about moving from food to cash/voucher transfers:** Recently, BHA has developed its strategy around alternative modalities to food distribution and made Community Development Funds (CDF) available to effect those modalities. Older DFAPs/DFSAs, that had RFAs that required food distribution and had specific budgets for Title II commodity purchases (the majority of the activities in this study), do not have CDF available to change their transfer modality to cash/vouchers. These recommendations seem to be an indication of where BHA thinking has moved forward, while the types of resources allocated to older DFAPs/DFSAs have stayed the same. More recent RFAs have provided more flexible funding sources, e.g. CDF, allowing DFSAs to choose cash/voucher modalities or local and regional purchase of commodities in preference to Title II.
- **Issues with the distribution of kitchen garden seeds:** Sometimes seeds are distributed to the lead mothers for demonstration purposes, but little thought or support is given to the access and sustainability of seed supplies for the other mothers.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

- **Water management financing issues:** Recommendations here indicated insufficient understanding about water management financing issues related to setting of user fees, etc.
- **Water quality testing:** Recommendations indicated a consistent need for water testing to assure water quality.
- **Uptake of improved WASH practices could be improved significantly:** Recommendations included launching a robust, systematic handwashing campaign to integrate SBC sessions that use experiential methods to support the understanding of the importance of hygiene.
- **Latrines:** Recommendations indicated problems with latrines, including the cost and quality of construction and ongoing maintenance.

Youth

- **Many recommendations indicated that youth were not being reached effectively by the activities, in particular with respect to livelihoods interventions:** A typical recommendation in this area was to give more deliberate attention to the targeting of, especially out-of-school, youth with a particular focus on building capacities in entrepreneurship, civic participation, and public service.

Gender

- **Gender was often viewed by DFAPs/DFSAs as an area addressed in silos of ‘gender’ groups (e.g. women’s and men’s groups) rather than being integrated across all interventions:** This seems to be less of an issue with the newer DFSAs, perhaps due to stronger systematic guidance and emphasis on integrating gender programming through the RFA and proposal design process.
- **Gender integration is more than just collecting gender disaggregated data:** Again, this seems to be less of an issue in recent DFSAs.

Monitoring, Evaluation, Analysis and Learning (MEAL)

Many of the recommendations related to MEAL indicated that the complexity of the activities and their MEAL systems, the lack of data quality, and the delayed development of data management systems, has meant that many of the MEAL systems were not providing useful and timely data for management purposes.

- **Too many indicators to be collected:** An example of this was an observation that a MEAL system was being overwhelmed by the number of performance indicators adopted by the activity, and the impact that has on the ability of data management systems (see below) to provide timely and accurate data for reporting and management decision-making.
- **MEAL systems not serving learning agendas and adaptive management:** A number of recommendations suggest that the MEAL systems should be further developed so as to provide data for learning and decision-making, and meetings should be organized to systematically analyze data and the data’s implications for program design. Also see bullet below on monitoring of program implementation quality.

- **Data management systems:** Several of the DFAP/DFSA data management systems were taking too long to become functional, often still not functioning by the time of the MTE/R, and cloud-based systems were beset by internet connectivity issues.

Even when the data management systems were functional, as mentioned in the above bullet, the data was not being analyzed for management purposes, and was primarily being collected and analyzed for reporting purposes.

- **Inadequate data quality:** Significant data quality deficiencies due to field agent data collection issues (too lengthy due to number of indicators, often paper-based and not updated to the latest electronic input systems, field agents not trained sufficiently for data collection, conflict of interest between collecting monitoring data and performing their other tasks), lacking effective verification systems, and major delays in inputting data into the database.
- **Lack of knowledge of qualitative M&E methodologies:** Recommendations indicate that training should be provided on methods of effective process monitoring using qualitative tools.
- **Lack of monitoring of program implementation quality:** While the monitoring systems of the DFAPs/DFSAs generally tracked outputs well, their MEAL systems did not track the quality of implementation for the most part. Without tracking implementation quality, the activities were not able to promptly identify implementation issues that prevented outcomes from being achieved, which sometimes led to technical teams developing their own parallel systems for monitoring implementation quality. Clearly, not being able to monitor the quality of implementation also inhibited the ability of the MEAL systems to support adaptive management information needs.

Miscellaneous/Other

- **Quality and quantity of food/cash for assets interventions:** There were a number of recommendations indicating that FFA/CFA interventions were not implemented with appropriate quality. In some cases, the design was inadequate, perhaps indicating that the design work was carried out by technicians with insufficient training for the task. In other cases, the construction or implementation was not of sufficient quality. Both of these issues can lead to, for example, erosion of newly constructed roads, poor water harvesting catchment, low survival rates of tree seedlings, etc. In some cases, poor selection of the asset meant that the asset favored, for example, certain members of the community at the expense of other members, or did not serve the purpose for which it was supposedly selected.
- **Recommendations about the need to strengthen community-level governance:** Most of the MTE/Rs had recommendations related to strengthening community-level governance. Some recommendations were specifically focused on community-level groups supported by the DFAPs/DFSAs and building up their capacity to function and govern themselves effectively, for example, water management committees or community level planning/coordination committees. Other recommendations were focused on building the capacity of community groups to hold government agencies accountable through, for example, community score cards.
- **For more recent activities implemented under the R&I process:** Limiting the number of research activities to those critical for refining the activity design and implementation plan.

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR THE PLANNED MTE/R WORKSHOP

The author will work directly with IMPEL and USAID/BHA counterparts to prepare for a 1/2-day workshop/consultation (online or face-to-face depending on COVID-19 restrictions) to discuss key findings of this high-level review. The objective of the workshop/consultation will be to engage interested USAID representatives and implementing partners in a discussion of thematic findings and potential implications for the design, implementation, monitoring, and adaptive management of DFSAs. A detailed agenda and process for this workshop will be developed in due course, however the author proposes that the workshop/consultation focusses on the following key trends:

1) Cross-cutting trends:

- a. Sustainability
- b. Number of Interventions
- c. Quality of activity interventions, including quality of FFA/CFA interventions
- d. Targeting and reach of activities
- e. Collaboration with, and learning from, other projects and activities
- f. MEAL⁸

For each of these trends workshop participants would develop recommendations for how to address issues early, to avoid that they become problematic by the time of an MTE/R. This could, for example, include recommendations to IPs for addressing certain issues at various stages, such as during proposal development, during the refinement year of R&I DFSAs, or during implementation, etc. It could also include recommendations to BHA for adjustments to RFAs, production of guidelines for IPs, etc.

2) Sector-specific trends:⁹

- a. Agriculture and Livelihoods
- b. Health and Nutrition
- c. Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH)
- d. Youth¹⁰

Discussions focused on these sectors should not just address the trends identified within the sector-specific trends section, but also the cross-cutting trends applied to these sectors. For example, discussions around the agriculture sector should address sector-specific issues of program quality in agricultural interventions, as they may well have different causes than program quality in nutrition interventions.

As with the cross-cutting trends section, these discussions should develop recommendations for addressing issues early on, so that they do not become problematic by the time of an MTE/R.

⁸ While MEAL is not a cross-cutting trend *per se*, it does have implications across all technical areas and should be addressed during these discussions.

⁹ I am not including gender in this list as the trends identified are not particularly robust and are being addressed through the more rigorous gender requirements on recent RFAs.

¹⁰ While only one trend was identified for youth, it is a significant issue across all DFAPs/DFSAs and requires some significant thought as youth employment/livelihoods is increasingly seen to be a critical area within DFSAs.

ANNEXES

Annex 1: Scope of Work for MTE/R Analysis

MTE Review SOW

March 24, 2020

Introduction:

Since 2015 FFP¹¹ has sponsored highly participatory mid-term evaluations or reviews (MTE/R) that, while led by external consultants, also included members of IP and FFP staff in reviewing development food security activities (DFAPs and DFSAs) at the mid-point of the project's 5-year term. The outputs from these MTE/Rs has primarily been used to feed back directly back into the project's plans leading to modifications based on the findings of the MTE/R.

No attempt has been made to carry out an overall review of the recommendations and findings of these MTE/Rs to assess whether there are any common themes or trends that could more generally inform future programming leading to improved DFSA outcomes across the board. In addition, while each MTE/R has meticulously documented their approach, tools, protocols etc., there has been no attempt to try to draw out which if any of these tools and approaches may have provided a more effective learning experience for the IPs.

Taking advantage of the recent investment in the extensive DRC MTE, IMPEL proposes to facilitate a participatory high-level review of the 17 MTE/Rs implemented since 2015 and to draw out lessons learned that can be applied to the design and implementation of future DFSAs, as well as feed into the design of future MTE/Rs to make them stronger learning tools for both IPs and FFP.

Objective:

Pull together learning and recommendations from across the 17 DFAP/DFSA Joint Mid-Term Evaluations and Reviews implemented since 2015 to:

- a. Identify common technical themes and trends arising from the MTE/Rs,
- b. Identify common operational, management and implementation themes and trends arising from the MTE/Rs, and
- c. Identify MTE/R approaches, tools and methods that specifically support improved IP and FFP learning¹².

¹¹ At the time of writing this Scope of Work, the Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) had not yet been established.

¹² This objective was not possible to implement. There was no way to judge the effectiveness of the MTE/R recommendations since there is no way to measure the impact of the MTE/R recommendations based just on the MTE/R reports. In addition, the MTE/Rs used very similar methodologies: desk review of project M&E data, review of project

Process:

1. Carry out a high-level desk review of the 15 MTE/Rs since 2015 to pull out and categorize recommendations and findings identifying major themes and trends. MTE/Rs carried out since 2015 are:
 - a. Guatemala (2)
 - b. Madagascar (2)
 - c. Malawi (2)
 - d. Ethiopia (4) (only recommendations are available, not full reports)
 - e. Bangladesh (3)
 - f. Haiti (1)
 - g. DRC (3)

Produce a report of the high-level review to be used as input into the workshop mentioned below. This review will not contain recommendations or conclusions.
2. Hold a 1-day workshop/consultation in DC or remotely (to accommodate COVID 19 restrictions) with key IP and FFP technical, M&E, and implementation staff, including those familiar with the above MTE/Rs, using the above high-level review as primary inputs into the discussions. Through the workshop identify:
 - a. Recommendations related to the design and implementation of DFSAs that could address some of the common issues arising from the MTE/R recommendations across all the MTE/Rs, and
 - b. Recommendations on the design and implementation of the actual MTE/Rs that could improve them as learning tools for future DFSAs.
3. Output:
 - a. Workshop report summarizing the recommendations and findings from the above process
4. Additional activity if resources available and it seems appropriate:
 - a. Guidelines for best practice MTE/R design and implementation.

reports and documentation, field visits with FGDs, KIIs, observation of project activities, etc. Without being able to differentiate between the methodologies of the MTE/Rs and without being able to measure the impact of the MTE/R recommendations, assessing which MTE/R approaches, tools, and methods specifically supported improved IP and BHA learning is clearly not possible.

Annex 2: Description of Major and Subsidiary Themes and Corresponding Categories Used in the Quantitative Analysis

Recommendation	Recommendation Description
Agricultural production	Crop, livestock, fisheries, tree production
Market/value chain	Value chain, market access, value addition
Post-harvest and storage	Post-harvest processing (drying, grading, sorting, etc.) and storage
Off-farm livelihoods and entrepreneurship	Off-farm income-generating intervention
Agricultural extension	Farmer training in agricultural techniques
Migration and remittances	Rural-urban migration or to another country
Employment and workforce development	Recommendations related to learning job skills or creating jobs
VSLA and access to finance	Village savings and lending and other access to finance recommendations
MCH/RMNCH	Mother/child and reproductive health
IYCF	Infant and young child feeding
Rations	Recommendations related to ration distribution or content of rations
Conditional cash transfers	
Homestead/kitchen gardens	
Nutrition	
HH WASH	House-hold WASH interventions that come under the BHA MCH program area
Literacy	
NRM	Natural resource management
Conflict mitigation	
Climate change	
Community WASH	WASH interventions that take place at community level
DRR and DRM	Disaster risk reduction and mitigation recommendations
Plan development	Development of community level plans for improved resilience
Information sharing	Information sharing for improved resilience
Infrastructure/public works	Infrastructure/public works often, though not always, carried out through FFW/FFA/CFW/CFA, e.g. road rehabilitation, water harvesting/erosion control structures, boreholes, irrigation infrastructure, etc.
Mitigation interventions	Specific recommendations for interventions to mitigate against disasters/shocks
Vulnerability targeting	Targeting of most vulnerable within safety nets work
Cash and/or vouchers	Use of cash or vouchers in activity interventions
Early warning	Early warning systems
Safety net capacity building	Building of capacity of government or community safety nets

Recommendation	Recommendation Description
Sustainability and exit	Recommendations related to the sustainability of an outcome, intervention, or community institution and the exiting of the activity
Gender and women's empowerment	
GBV	Gender-based violence
Male engagement	
Youth	
Private sector engagement	Engaging private sector actors primarily to support sustainability of an activity's intervention
Mobile approaches	Use of mobile phones in the activity's interventions or M&E
Good local governance	Support to improved governance at community or local government level
Community institutional capacity building	Building the capacity of a community institution, e.g. water management committee, village development committee, etc.
Government institutions capacity building	
FFW/FFA	Food for work/food for assets
Community volunteer capacity and numbers	Building the capacity of individual community volunteers and/or increasing their numbers
Community volunteer incentives and motivation	Recommendations related to volunteer incentives or motivation
Training of participants	Training of activity participants, as opposed to training of community volunteers (included above)
SBCC	Recommendation related to social and behavior change communication
Research	Formal research recommendation, either content or approach
Integration	Integration across activity interventions, e.g. between P1 and P2, or the integration of gender-related messaging into agricultural training interventions
Community accountability	Mechanisms to support communities holding their leadership, government and activity to account
Strategy	Recommendations related to activity strategy
Small grants	
Intervention design	Recommendation impacting the design of specific activity interventions
Linkages	recommendation related to forming or strengthening linkages between horizontal and vertical linkages with government, private sector and communities, and between different donor funded projects
Advocacy	Recommendation related to supporting advocacy of community or activity advocacy for specific policy changes
Impacting indirect participants	Recommendation related to growing impact at the population level rather than just focusing on activity participants

Recommendation	Recommendation Description
Targeting	Recommendation related to targeting of specific population groups within the community, e.g. reaching the most vulnerable, the landless, youth, etc.
M&E	Recommendation related to the implementation of the M&E system
M&E design	Recommendation related to the design of the M&E system
Data quality	Recommendation related to data quality of the M&E system
Indicators	Recommendation related to activity indicators
Theory of Change	
Learning	Recommendation related to the activity learning so as to adjust, improve of change its implementation
Program quality	
Staff training	
Commodity management	
Staffing	Recommendation related to staffing in terms of recruiting extra staff, reassigning staff, etc.
Project management	Any recommendation with significant project management implications, e.g. dropping specific components of the activity, use of activity assets (vehicles), etc.
USAID recommendations	Recommendation specifically targeted at BHA/USAID
Refine and Implement	R&I recommendation
Miscellaneous	One-off specific miscellaneous recommendation that does not fit in any of the above categories

Annex 3: Summary of the Quantitative Analysis

						Technical Theme														
						HH Access to food							Reduction of Malnutrition							
			Total topline recommendations	Total sub-recommendations	# of references per MTE	Agricultural production	Market/value chain	Post-harvest and storage	Off-farm livelihoods and entrepreneurship	Agricultural extension	Migration and remittances	Employment and workforce development	VSLA and Access to finance	MCH/RMNCH	IYCF	Rations	Conditional Cash Transfers	Homestead/kitchen gardens	Nutrition	HH WASH
Report Year	# references per theme or type:		487	767	3032	133	70	20	72	30	4	20	58	106	65	26	4	18	115	63
2018	Bangladesh Nobo		32	32	96	5	5	0	4	2	1	0	2	0	0	0	2	4	2	3
2018	Bangladesh SHOUHARDO		16	23	95	1	2	0	3	0	2	0	3	2	1	2	0	0	2	2
2020	DRC Budikadidi		51	51	212	10	5	0	3	1	0	1	5	4	2	0	0	4	6	3
2020	DRC FSP-Enyanya		31	31	106	6	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	6	0	0	0	1	4	0
2020	DRC Tuendelee Pamoja II		33	33	135	7	6	2	4	0	0	2	2	10	0	1	0	2	10	0
No gender and youth	2019 Ethiopia ELRP		18	68	276	9	4	0	6	0	0	3	6	11	13	0	0	0	13	9
	2019 Ethiopia TRAIN		33	64	272	23	8	5	13	2	0	3	5	8	2	0	0	2	9	5
	2019 Ethiopia REST DFSA		30	55	237	16	4	3	7	6	0	6	1	5	5	0	0	0	5	2
No gender and youth	2019 Ethiopia SPIR		22	40	177	7	6	0	3	2	0	1	11	4	4	0	1	0	7	6
	2015 Guatemala PAISANO		16	70	199	8	5	0	4	1	0	0	2	5	1	5	0	0	3	5
	2015 Guatemala SEGAMIL		17	74	214	7	4	0	6	1	0	0	2	3	1	5	0	0	3	8
	2016 Haiti Kore Lavi		61	61	179	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	8	0	5	0	0	6	1
No gender and youth	2017 Madagascar ASOTRY		57	57	254	13	8	5	6	5	0	1	4	12	14	2	0	1	18	7
No gender and youth	2017 Madagascar Fararano		59	59	288	14	6	3	6	6	0	0	4	20	18	2	0	1	22	10
	2017 Malawi UBALE		5	20	139	4	2	1	4	3	1	1	4	4	3	2	1	2	4	1
	2017 Malawi Njira*		6	29	153	3	3	1	3	1	0	2	3	4	1	2	0	1	1	1

	Report Year	# references per theme or type:	Total top line recommendations			# of references per MTE	Other					Technical Theme					National Safety Nets			
			487	767	3032		Literacy	NRM	Conflict mitigation	Climate change	Community WASH	DRR and DRM	Plan development	Information sharing	Infrastructure/public works	Mitigation interventions	Vulnerability Targeting	Cash and/or Vouchers	Early warning	SN Capacity building
							5	24	2	3	72	14	14	8	44	6	10	14	5	4
	2018	Bangladesh Nobo	32	32	96		1	0	0	0	4	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	2018	Bangladesh SHOUHARDO	16	23	95		0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
	2020	DRC Budikadidi	51	51	212		1	1	0	0	5	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0
	2020	DRC FSP-Enyanya	31	31	106		0	1	0	0	3	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
	2020	DRC Tuendelee Pamoja II	33	33	135		1	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0
No gender and youth	2019	Ethiopia ELRP	18	68	276		0	4	0	0	11	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0
	2019	Ethiopia TRAIN	33	64	272		0	6	0	0	1	1	3	2	7	1	1	1	1	1
	2019	Ethiopia REST DFSA	30	55	237		0	2	0	0	6	1	0	0	8	0	0	0	1	0
No gender and youth	2019	Ethiopia SPIR	22	40	177		0	4	0	0	3	0	1	0	5	1	0	0	0	0
	2015	Guatemala PAISANO	16	70	199		0	0	0	0	7	1	3	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
	2015	Guatemala SEGAMIL	17	74	214		0	0	0	0	10	1	3	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
	2016	Haiti Kore Lavi	61	61	179		1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	3	1	2
No gender and youth	2017	Madagascar ASOTRY	57	57	254		0	2	0	0	6	3	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0
No gender and youth	2017	Madagascar Fararano	59	59	288		0	1	0	0	9	4	0	1	5	1	1	4	0	1
	2017	Malawi UBALE	5	20	139		0	3	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	0	0
	2017	Malawi Njira*	6	29	153		1	0	0	0	2	0	1	1	1	0	0	2	0	0

						Cross-cutting Theme												
						Sustainability and exit	Gender and Women's Empowerment	GBV	Male Engagement	Youth	Private sector engagement	Mobile approaches	Good local governance	Community Institutional Capacity building	Gov Institutions Capacity Building	FFW/FFA	Community volunteer capacity and numbers	Community volunteer incentives and motivation
Report Year	# references per theme or type:	487	767	3032		80	56	4	19	34	46	3	9	87	72	14	79	28
	2018	Bangladesh Nobo	32	32	96	2	1	0	0	0	3	0	0	3	2	0	0	0
	2018	Bangladesh SHOUHARDO	16	23	95	1	2	1	1	6	1	0	0	3	1	0	0	2
	2020	DRC Budikadidi	51	51	212	8	5	0	2	2	3	0	1	10	8	0	5	2
	2020	DRC FSP-Enyanya	31	31	106	5	3	1	1	2	0	0	1	7	2	2	3	1
	2020	DRC Tuendelee Pamoja II	33	33	135	3	2	0	3	2	0	0	0	5	1	1	0	0
No gender and youth	2019	Ethiopia ELRP	18	68	276	3	3	0	1	3	9	0	0	3	2	0	9	2
	2019	Ethiopia TRAIN	33	64	272	0	8	1	0	6	0	0	2	9	14	0	9	1
	2019	Ethiopia REST DFSA	30	55	237	5	7	0	1	2	2	0	0	8	9	0	6	0
No gender and youth	2019	Ethiopia SPIR	22	40	177	7	0	0	0	5	5	2	0	3	4	1	8	1
	2015	Guatemala PAISANO	16	70	199	11	7	0	1	0	5	0	0	3	1	1	0	3
	2015	Guatemala SEGAMIL	17	74	214	12	6	0	1	3	5	0	0	3	1	2	0	7
	2016	Haiti Kore Lavi	61	61	179	0	9	1	3	0	0	0	0	4	11	0	0	4
No gender and youth	2017	Madagascar ASOTRY	57	57	254	8	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	4	4	0	11	2
No gender and youth	2017	Madagascar Fararano	59	59	288	4	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	9	0	2	18	1
	2017	Malawi UBALE	5	20	139	3	1	0	1	2	3	0	2	5	5	3	2	0
	2017	Malawi Njira*	6	29	153	8	2	0	4	1	2	0	3	8	7	2	8	2

Total topline recommendations Total sub-recommendations # of references per MTE						Management and Operations													Type of recommendation																
						M&E	M&E design	Data Quality	Indicators	Theory of Change	Learning	Program quality	Staff training	Commodity Management	Staffing	Project Management	USAID recommendations	Refine and Implement	Training of participants	SBCC	Research	Integration	Community accountability	Strategy	Small grants	Intervention design	Linkages	Advocacy	Impacting indirect participants	Targeting	Miscellaneous				
Report Year	# references per theme or type:	487	767	3032	87	12	23	12	5	81	27	89	7	49	138	21	5	145	78	57	13	15	42	1	360	104	21	9	52	19					
2018	Bangladesh Nobo	32	32	96	2	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	5	2	0	3	2	0	0	1	2	0	13	4	4	2	2	2					
2018	Bangladesh SHOUHARDO	16	23	95	1	0	0	1	0	3	4	7	2	6	6	3	0	6	1	0	0	0	3	0	7	1	0	0	3	0					
2020	DRC Budikadidi	51	51	212	4	0	0	0	1	12	2	9	0	2	18	3	2	4	4	6	2	4	1	1	17	10	0	0	0	8					
2020	DRC FSP-Enyanya	31	31	106	3	0	0	0	0	2	1	6	1	1	6	4	2	5	2	1	1	0	1	0	10	2	1	0	1	1					
2020	DRC Tuendelee Pamoja II	33	33	135	5	0	1	0	0	3	1	2	1	1	20	3	1	3	1	1	2	0	2	0	7	5	0	0	2	0					
No gender and youth	2019 Ethiopia ELRP	18	68	276	9	1	2	0	0	2	6	10	0	3	12	0	0	26	19	5	0	2	5	0	34	4	1	2	0	1					
	2019 Ethiopia TRAIN	33	64	272	7	0	4	1	0	0	1	6	0	0	13	0	0	16	5	8	0	1	0	0	34	6	2	1	6	1					
	2019 Ethiopia REST DFSA	30	55	237	6	2	3	1	0	3	1	8	0	7	14	0	0	17	3	7	0	0	3	0	33	4	2	1	4	0					
No gender and youth	2019 Ethiopia SPIR	22	40	177	6	0	1	0	0	1	2	5	0	0	2	0	0	12	10	1	0	0	1	0	23	5	1	1	3	1					
	2015 Guatemala PAISANO	16	70	199	7	2	0	0	0	6	0	6	0	0	2	0	0	14	5	8	0	2	6	0	34	13	2	0	8	0					
	2015 Guatemala SEGAMIL	17	74	214	7	1	0	0	0	6	0	5	0	0	2	0	0	16	5	6	0	2	7	0	38	12	2	0	9	0					
	2016 Haiti Kore Lavi	61	61	179	12	0	5	4	0	16	0	3	2	6	18	6	0	8	0	5	0	3	0	0	15	1	2	0	2	1					
No gender and youth	2017 Madagascar ASOTRY	57	57	254	3	1	1	2	1	5	4	10	0	8	3	0	0	2	7	1	1	0	6	0	39	11	1	2	3	0					
No gender and youth	2017 Madagascar Fararano	59	59	288	8	1	1	2	1	8	4	4	0	6	3	0	0	4	9	1	3	0	2	0	35	11	2	0	5	0					
	2017 Malawi UBALE	5	20	139	2	1	1	0	1	5	0	4	0	5	5	0	0	4	2	4	3	0	1	0	15	6	1	0	3	1					
	2017 Malawi Njira*	6	29	153	5	3	3	1	1	8	1	4	1	3	9	0	0	5	3	3	1	0	2	0	6	9	0	0	1	3					

*The Njira review includes joint recommendations

Annex 4: Full Quantitative Analysis Spreadsheet



Full Quantitative
Analysis