

Refine & Implement in Action

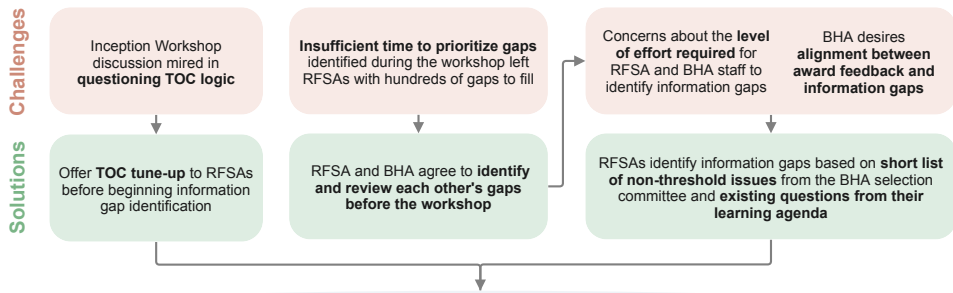
Information Gap Prioritization



The information gap identification and prioritization process is a key element of resilience food security activity (RFSA) and USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) preparations for the Refine and Implement (R&I) Inception Workshop. Identifying and prioritizing information gaps helps RFSA to:

- Test theory of change (TOC) pathways with unproven hypotheses, including clarifying whether all proposed preconditions are necessary and sufficient in the given context and exploring new approaches for interventions that did not achieve anticipated results during previous cycles of food security programming.
- Enhance contextualization of the RFSA design.
- Test external assumptions.

This process has evolved with each round of Inception Workshops as Program Cycle Support (PCS) has piloted solutions to identified challenges and made many of them standard practice. The diagram below shows this evolution and how these changes have resulted in the successes of recent RFSA.



RFSA Spotlight: Ayiti pi Djanm

The Haiti RFSA, Ayiti pi Djanm (APD), provides an example of a successful information gap prioritization process. The number information gaps discussed during their Inception Workshop was manageable and the RFSA and BHA were able to reach broad agreement on appropriate methodologies for many of the learning areas. As a result, both parties left the workshop with a mutual understanding of what APD would include in their refinement period scopes of work.

The notable improvements seen in the Haiti RFSA Inception Workshop, when compared to previous rounds of R&I Inception Workshops, were thanks in large part to the successful preparations by the APD team and the support provided by PCS.



Information Gap Identification: APD identified its information gaps in preparation for the Inception Workshop in early 2022 as PCS piloted a new approach to reduce the time required for BHA and RFSA preparations. Rather than identifying and reviewing information gaps separately, as had been standard in the past, APD identified learning opportunities that responded to outstanding areas of interest that the BHA selection committee shared in an annex of their issues letter. BHA reviewed these gaps and shared questions with the RFSA in advance so that both parties were prepared for productive discussions.

This process resulted in a more streamlined list of information gaps to discuss during the workshop, a more manageable level of effort for RFSA and BHA preparations, and more thoughtful observations and clearly articulated questions for APD during the workshop.

"The pre-work of organizing and consolidating the information gaps was really helpful."

[What I most appreciated about PCS' pre-inception support was] the time to look in detail, the patience to bring the best out of the team and the technical knowledge/expertise that was demonstrated throughout the sessions."

RFSA Staff

Information Gap Prioritization: APD also made significant efforts to prioritize key information gaps before the workshop. Their clear research justifications for most of the identified gaps strengthened their presentations to and discussions with BHA and allowed them to more easily agree on how to move forward with their proposed refinement period research.

The screenshot shows a research prioritization tool with two main sections. The left section is titled '2 NUTRITIOUS FOOD AVAILABILITY AND MARKETABILITY: COMMUNITY COMMITMENT TO IMPROVED NUTRITION'. It includes a 'Y1 research (SOW)' label and a 'RFSA Staff' label. The right section is titled '1 SOC FOR CLIMATE-SMART AGRICULTURE: NUTRITIONAL PLANNING: Member Engagement FUNCTIONALITY OF SAC (Common Agriculture Office)'. It includes a 'Pilot' label and a 'RFSA Staff' label. Both sections contain detailed research questions and justifications.

PCS supported APD to display their prioritized information gaps and research justifications, including relevant gender and youth considerations, on their TOC. This was used to guide discussions with BHA during the virtual Inception Workshop.

PCS Technical Assistance: Inception Workshop participants noted that PCS' pre-workshop support to APD and BHA contributed to the success of APD's information gap identification and prioritization and the quality of the workshop discussions. APD took advantage of PCS' technical assistance sessions, including TOC tune-up sessions, which helped them streamline their TOC before reviewing it for information gaps, and dry-runs, which helped them refine their presentations to BHA. RFSA staff appreciated the unique insights that surfaced during these discussions with PCS.

APD also benefited from the PCS' resources and guidance for organizing and consolidating their information gaps, including the Excel tool that helped them to prioritize gaps and ensure a strong rationale for each proposed gap.

"PCS did a good job making sure we understood every detail of the workshop.... I felt really engaged and it was helpful to our ability to support CRS."

"You all at PCS are SO GOOD at running these workshops, including all the intense background work you do with BHA and IPs [implementing partners] leading up to prepare for the actual week itself."

USAID/BHA

How can PCS and BHA continue to improve this process to ensure future successes?

Ensure sufficient time for information gap identification process. BHA and PCS adapted the information gap process just two months before APD was due to submit their information gaps. This left a short timeline to work through any challenges that surfaced as a result of this new process.

PCS has already applied this in the preparations for the next RFSA Inception Workshop and will continue to monitor how this impacts the success of those discussions.