

Refine & Implement in Action

Refining a RFSA Sustainability Strategy



USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) encourages a deliberate focus on sustainability within the lifecycle of its resilience food security activities (RFSAs). RFSAs develop and maintain strategies to ensure the sustainability of outcomes beyond the life of the activity, including identifying the **services, inputs, and behaviors** that must continue for these outcomes to be sustained. As part of their sustainability strategies, RFSAs consider four factors that are critical for the identified services, inputs, and behavior-change to be sustained over time:



Motivation of participants and service providers

What will motivate public and private providers to continue providing inputs and services post-RFSA?

What motivates participants to maintain new behaviors and practices?

How will the RFSA monitor and influence their motivation?



Technical and managerial capacity

What capacity-strengthening do local service providers (LSPs) need to improve their accountability and quality?

What capacity-strengthening do participants need to sustain practices and manage resources?

How will LSPs and participants access these capacity-strengthening services?



Access to resources

How will the LSPs access the resources necessary for continued service and input provision?

How will participants access the resources necessary to sustain the adoption of behaviors?



Linkages to other stakeholders

How will LSPs identify reliable linkages to continue input and service provision post-RFSA?

How will participants identify reliable linkages to continue adoption of practices post-RFSA?

How will the RFSA support LSPs and participants to identify reliable linkages?

The **Sustainability Workshop** allows RFSAs and BHA to review progress on sustainability planning, identify areas of focus for sustainability, identify interventions that should be modified, phased out, or eliminated, and agree on key next steps for the RFSA sustainability plan. The RFSA and BHA discuss questions such as:

How do you know the volunteer lead mothers will be sufficiently **motivated** to continue without any financial incentive?

What evidence is there that the government will continue to provide technical support services after the activity ends? How will you build government **capacity** to ensure continuity and quality of support?

How will **resources** be acquired to ensure maintenance of the water point systems? What evidence is there for sustained willingness to pay user fees?

RFSA Spotlight: Takunda

Takunda, a RFSA in Zimbabwe, demonstrates how thorough preparation, clear presentations, and prioritizing topics for discussion can contribute to productive discussions with BHA during the Sustainability Workshop.

100% of BHA participants believe that Takunda competently articulated the outcomes to sustain and their progress on sustainability planning

100% of participants reported that Takunda and BHA identified the most pressing gaps to fill in the sustainability plan

Presentation of Sustainability Strategy: The Takunda team's strong presentations, including the chief of party overview and the detailed presentations of each outcome they plan to sustain, set the stage for productive and targeted conversations. The presentations were clear, concise, and demonstrated sustainability expertise. The team grouped related outcomes, emphasized strategies to address the four key factors for sustainability, and highlighted key focus areas for the next two years and the monitoring strategy. Takunda's presentation strategy drew from PCS resources and templates.

Example Outcome Expected to Sustain: Investment in viable non-farm enterprises

Local Service Providers

Cluster Facilitators/Village Agents

- Provide financial advisory services (reimbursement training, financial literacy, and contract farming) to Village Savings and Lending Association (VSLA) groups.
- Mobilize, form, and train VSLAs, and monitor and mentor groups on the VSLA methodology best practices.

What is Takunda doing to promote sustainability of the outcome?



Motivation

- Private sector and financial linkages
- Government and private sector recognition, which may lead to future opportunities
- Social recognition, leading to increased social capital
- Pilot fee-for-service model



Capacity

- Train LSPs (village agents) on financial inclusion, enabling them to build the capacity of the VSLAs
- Provide monitoring and mentoring to the LSPs
- Facilitate establishment of VSLA groups when prior groups do not exist



Resources

- Provide training guides
- Make linkages with private sector companies for technical resources – e.g., ECONET, Old Mutual, ZWMB
- Linking farmers to credit via loans from VSLAs, banks, and microfinance institutions



Linkages

- Facilitate market linkages with private and public sector companies for financial services and capacity-strengthening.
- Facilitate developing a memorandum of understanding/agreement with engaged market actors

Key Areas of Focus

- Scaling up and strengthening public/private sector linkages and creating networks.
- Promoting enterprise diversification e.g., for VSLA /YSLA groups.
- Monitoring of LSP and participants
- Exchange visits

Key Discussions & Resulting Areas of Focus

In other contexts, the VSLA model rarely generates sufficient revenues to invest in and increase participation in income-generating activities. Is this business model sustainable?

Focus on monitoring to ensure the business model provides sufficient resources.

How will communities monitor competitiveness of available interest rates and negotiate better rates? Will communities be able to avoid predatory offerings sustainably?

Focus on monitoring linkages with financial service providers to ensure sufficient capacity to negotiate and assess quality.

How will participants access updated capacity-strengthening after RFSA close? How reliable will public sector training be?

Consider possible government linkages for capacity-strengthening, focusing on what is realistic. BHA able to support this process.

"It was a] very frank discussion that will help in shaping Takunda sustainability going forward."
RFSA Participant

In addition to their preparations and their clear presentations, several other factors contributed to the success of the Takunda Sustainability Workshop.

Topic Prioritization

BHA and Takunda prioritized the topics requiring the most discussion to make the best use of the limited time.

Facilitation

Effectively managing time and participation allowed all key elements to be discussed. Confirming the areas of focus at the end of the discussions helped ensure clarity and agreement.

Limited Group Size

Including a smaller group of participants with the right expertise allowed for focused, productive discussions.

Productive Discussions

BHA and RFSA participants shared their global and local experiences and showed an openness to learn from one another.