The Way Forward for
Improved Food Security and Nutrition Program Implementation
in the East Africa Region

Results from the FSN Network East Africa Knowledge Sharing Meeting:
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, June 11-13, 2012

The USAID/Office of Food for Peace (FFP)-funded TOPS Program held its third Food Security and Nutrition (FSN) Network Regional Knowledge Sharing Meeting to bring together food security and nutrition grantees, donors, and researchers for peer learning, knowledge sharing, and networking. More than 130 participants from 35 organizations came together to discuss promising practices, new evidence, and implementation challenges in addressing food security and nutrition needs in the East Africa Region.

At the end of sessions addressing 26 different technical or management topics, participants were asked to consider the ‘way forward’ for the topic under discussion. Namely, what actions does the larger global food security community need to take to move this topic forward toward stronger and more effective implementation?

The following document is a summary of participant suggestions. Copies of presentations and handouts for these sessions are available at: www.fsnnetwork.org

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Sessions that discussed the way forward include:

1. Does Gender-Based Programming Really Lead to Empowerment? A Discussion on Unintended Positive and Negative Impacts of Program Activities
2. Early Warning Systems and Indicators: What’s Working, Key Challenges and How to Make Them Better
3. Enhancing Resilience to Food Security Shocks: Resilience 101
4. Exit Strategies: How to Ensure Sustainability of Impact after Program Exit
5. Financial Products in Agriculture
6. The Gender “Lens”: Examples of Introspective Steps to Improving Gender Programming for Organizations
7. Improving Program Outcomes: Workshop on the Uses of Title II Reporting Requirements
8. Influencing the Influencers: Tools for Engaging the Community to Improve Maternal and Child Nutritional Outcomes
9. Leveraging Agriculture for Improved Nutritional Outcomes
10. Linking Vulnerable Households with Markets
12. Measuring Gender Impact
14. Natural Resource Management: Reclaiming Lost Land
15. Networking and Collaboration Mechanisms
16. New Horizons in Outcome Monitoring
17. Outcomes for Addressing Food Security in a Conflict Context: Lessons and Tools from the Field
19. Program Learning and Adaptations: Integrating Field Experience and Realities into Improved Program Design, Implementation and Results
20. PVO Accountability and Fraud Prevention in Food Aid Commodity Management
21. Sharing Strategies for Capacity Strengthening of Local Organizations and Government Counterparts
22. Timed and Targeted Counseling for Nutrition
23. Triggering Hope in an Environment of Dependency, Disincentives and Despair
24. Using Care Groups to Build Resilience in Food Security and Community Health Programs
25. Using Motivation 3.0 with Community-Based Workers
26. Using New Food Aid Products for Prevention to Enhance Resilience
1. Does Gender Based Programming Really Lead to Empowerment? A Discussion on Unintended Positive and Negative Impacts of Program Activities

Knowledge Sharing
There needs to be better knowledge sharing around unintended consequences. A cultural shift is necessary in how we discuss our work with more focus on reporting on ‘failures’ and extracting this information from reports.

More information is needed on constructive male engagement- especially in the context of food security and agriculture

Promising practices should be identified for emergency programs that are low-cost and creative and that can respond to different gender needs

Use the TOPS small grants program to study best practices and lessons learned in integrating gender into development and emergency programs

Monitoring and Evaluation
For gender indicators, quantitative information or data may not give a good picture of gender perspectives. Quantitative information should be supplemented with discussion of gender issues in a qualitative manner with narrative.

More thought is needed around gender monitoring and evaluation within the project cycle: at what points does it best fit in, and to what degree should gender M&E stand alone?

Program Design
Communities need to be better involved in the design of every project, and cultural norms, too, need to be acknowledged.

Gender issues are very program specific. It is necessary to undertake program and context-specific analysis in every new situation.

Donor Policy and Practice
Standard gender Indicators should be required for all programs, just like the environmental indicators that are now included

How can donors better develop gender sensitive programming in contexts that are culturally conservative?
2. Early Warning Systems and Indicators: What’s Working, Key Challenges and How to Make Them Better

**Knowledge Sharing**

Need an open knowledge sharing workshop on what early warning indicators are being used programmatically.

Case stories or meeting content should be developed examining two or three practical existing examples and talking about what is working well, what is not, and how to make improvements.

Good, practical examples of communicating a warning of rapid onset disaster should be identified and shared. What methods have been successful?

**Research and Evidence Base**

We need a strengthened evidence base for early warning indicators – which work, in what contexts and why? What is the impact or potential impact of using them on food security and nutrition outcomes?

Better understanding of livelihoods systems will allow better determination of which indicators to collect.

A better understanding is needed of the correlation between armed conflict and food insecurity.

**Donor Policy and Practice**

USAID should ensure collaboration between FEWS NET, FFP development and emergency food assistance projects, and national, regional and community early warning systems.

USAID should ensure PVO participation/input in FANTA-3 analysis and guidance development.

Clear guidance is needed, with a detailed list of indicators, including sources of early warning information and how to design early warning systems. FFP should be providing guidance as well into how early warning indicators should fit into broader M&E systems.

A gap exists between state policy and the capacity to implement policy. This gap should be closed.

**Capacity Strengthening and Tools**

Training is needed on the various sources of early warning information, how they work together and how best each can be used.
Capacity should be strengthened on how to build an early warning system using existing resources, including sources of technical assistance, how to structure MOUs, etc.

3. Enhancing Resilience to Food Security Shocks: Resilience 101

Knowledge Sharing
Sharing of frameworks/efforts is needed to prevent redundancy and competition.

Identifying, capturing and sharing local knowledge on coping mechanisms needs to be improved.

Research and Evidence Base
We need a better evidence base for the impact of resilience programming, including demonstrating how investment in resilience efforts is cost-effective.

Processes
The process of moving from conceptual frameworks to practical action on the ground needs to move farther forward, identifying what really works and methodologies that are proven, and replicating these where applicable.

Donor Policy and Practice
More longer-term funding from donors is necessary, and resilience activities must be incorporated into emergency program design/RFAs.

A regional approach is necessary in order to establish an enabling environment, in addition to linkages at the national level.

Donors need to focus better on integrated strategies as opposed to isolated programs/projects.

Coordination is necessary but coordination mechanisms proliferate: need coordination of coordination mechanisms.

4. Exit Strategies: How to Ensure Sustainability of Impact after Program Exit

Knowledge Sharing
Establish a working group to discuss issues related to exit strategies and sustainability of programs. There may be advantages to regionally focused groups.
More cross-sectoral workshops like this! Nutrition outcomes are very dependent on other sectors so more information sharing is needed to better integrate, think about targeting differences among beneficiaries in the same project, etc.

**Program Design**
For health and nutrition, integration with some sort of savings and lending, or agro-enterprise would seem to be key to increase sustainability. There has to be some point at which additional household resources are generated to cover ongoing costs.

**Research and Evidence Base**
USAID should fund additional retrospective studies, where the key elements of exit strategies were properly incorporated in planning. Because sustainability is very context-dependent, studies need to be funded in several countries, but results shared across the humanitarian community.

A study should focus on a combination of interventions (a graduated package of interventions) and how they leverage each other on the four attributes critical for exit strategies.

**Donor Policy and Practice**
Clear exit strategies must be requested in the RFA in order that they’ll be addressed from the design stage. Programs incorporating sound exit strategies should be viewed favorably at the funding stage.

RFAs could specify allocating funding for return trips to assess sustainability as a standard part of programs from proposal stage (E.g. for each 5 year program, allocate $30,000 for an evaluation team to go back in year 7)

**5. Financial Products in Agriculture**

**Knowledge Sharing**
Need better knowledge sharing around experiences with financial transfer systems in different countries and regions, on working with banks and larger financial products in vulnerable areas, and about how financial products, micro finance and village loan groups function/can best respond in complex social environments, e.g. with corruption and mistrust at the community level.

Better information is needed on potential costs and benefits of different kinds of financial products and services

It’s important to better link the food security/agriculture community and financial services community so that practitioners can exchange knowledge/approaches.
More knowledge needs to be shared on successfully overcoming cultural barriers to use of financial products.

**Program Design**
Need to position village savings and loans (VSLs) so that they are a fundamental component of food security programs and the economic strengthening continuum. Ensure they are included in resilience strategies.

Program design needs to address increasing access of poor to collateral. Farm assets (like trees, crops, livestock) could be used as collateral to get a loan. This approach is not yet operational in Ethiopia but it could be helpful for farmers.

Microfinance institutions need to be promoted for/within pastoralist communities

Programming should support linkages between irrigation and micro finance.

Programming should also support linkages between financial service approaches, e.g. linking VSL associations to micro-finance institutions (MFIs), or mobile broadbanding and VSLA/mobile wallet or VSLA’s acting as agents. Also it is important to foster linkages not only with financial service providers but also with input and output markets.

Programs should work to further expand into remote and other rural areas through using mobile technologies and other approaches

**Processes**
Need consensus on standards for beneficiary entry points / promotion for each type of financial product or service in terms of asset ownership, incomes, and skill levels. Also, consensus/ better understanding needed on when it is appropriate for people to move beyond safety-net transfers to one or more of these activities, especially to VSLs.

As financial services approaches take hold, it’s critical to examine customer rights and protections, and ensure transparency in interactions, interventions and programs.

**Research and Evidence Base**
Researchers should review the positive and negative impacts for various financial products in the pastoralist context.

Reliable impact assessments needed of the impact of different financial products, services and approaches such as VSLA, savings and internal lending communities (SILCs) etc. on household incomes and assets.
Stronger evidence needed for how financial services can impact food security. Increased income doesn’t necessarily mean improved food security and nutrition outcomes.

**Capacity Strengthening/Tools**
More training and capacity strengthening of program staff and implementers on microfinance is needed, and then onward at the community level.

Tools/approaches are needed to assess the impact of VSLAs / SILCs on household nutrition security

**Donor Policy and Practice**
Missions need to explore integration of financial products with agriculture in different contexts. The most effective approaches may differ according to the context.

Micro-finance is very under-developed in South Sudan. The rate of urbanization is very high, and migrants are very resource-poor. Need to inject donor funding in the MFI / micro-banking sector.

**6. The Gender “Lens”: Examples of Introspective Steps to Improving Gender Programming for Organizations**

**Knowledge Sharing**
Make technical resources available on gender and diversity, the Ag Source Book (ed. now available on fsnnetwork.org)

Access to more resource materials for gender training and guidance on gender networking within and between organizations would be beneficial.

**Processes**
Develop better clarity on terminology such as “gender integration” and focus on internal buy-in and education on gender and diversity; with partners as well (i.e. require gender training for all staff and partners)

Promote affirmative action and coaching strategies, etc. to recruit and retain women; share strategies for doing this

**Monitoring and Evaluation**
Develop clarity on how to measure success in being a gender-sensitive and diverse organization; develop organizational baselines and dashboards
Capacity Strengthening and Tools
Create a co-branded FSN Network gender analysis tool through the FSN Network Gender Task Force (start with the Save the Children tool as a basis and adapt).

Create a short document detailing standard criteria that any gender analysis should meet.

Technical support needed for agencies to conduct organizational gender scans.

Donor Policy and Practice
Conduct country-wide gender needs assessments, link to local gender forums

7. Improving Program Outcomes: Workshop on Uses of Title II Reporting Requirements

Capacity Strengthening and Tools
As data collection becomes more detailed, more needs to be done to assist implementing agencies with standardized tools, more training, etc.

Donor Policy and Practice
Web-based reporting: This new system may be good for the future, however, currently, internet connectivity is slow and the window given within which the report is to be completed is not long enough, especially if one has to report from remote locations.

The electronic reporting system is interesting, but in terms of data collection and reporting at the field level, much is still "primitive." Too much data, too many forms!

8. Influencing the Influencers: Tools for Engaging the Community in Improving Behaviors to Improve Maternal and Child Nutritional Outcomes

Processes
The topic was very interesting but may not be appropriate for short-term programs or emergency projects. It would be beneficial to explore approaches which could be effective within a shorter period of time.

Capacity Strengthening and Tools
Efforts should be made to offer training to nutrition practitioners on this topic
9. Leveraging Agriculture for Improved Nutritional Outcomes

Knowledge Sharing
TOPS should create a platform where nutritionists and agriculturalists can share experience and plan jointly (ed. see Nutrition and Agriculture Linkages in Africa interest group on fsn-network.org)

Offer this session at future knowledge sharing meetings.

Identify cases of integrating agriculture and nutrition from FFP’s Food Aid and Food Security Assessment (FAFSA) review and present them at the next FSN Network knowledge sharing meeting.

Broaden the discussion to involve other specialties (e.g. behavior change, social marketing, value chain/market analysis) in discussions over integration.

Develop and disseminate lists of high-value foods both in terms of value chains as well as nutrient content.

Program Design
Promote agriculture and nutrition joint meetings from the design phase, through development of action plans, and from the beginning to end of project implementation.

With new seeds being introduced, communities need to be educated and understand the benefits of the crops before planting.

Good sound, nutrition-sensitive planning is needed, with linkages, identification of potential problems using community-level participatory methods, prioritizing key health and nutrition problems, and mapping and identifying the nutrition profile of crops.

Capacity Strengthening and Tools
More guidance is needed on how to measure nutritional outcomes from agriculture projects, especially in short term/recovery projects where it might be difficult to see a change in nutrition.

Capacity must be built in social and behavioral change approaches for both nutritionists and agriculturalists.
10. Linking Vulnerable Households with Markets

Knowledge Sharing
Ensure knowledge management on graduation approaches through documentation of what works and what doesn’t work, as well as unintended outcomes both positive and negative.

TOPS should create information and resource centers on this topic to create opportunities to learn from others’ experience.

Enhance feedback mechanisms, documentation and knowledge management of best practices. This includes extending information sharing strategies down to the beneficiary level.

Program Design
More effort has to be made to engage the private sector but more vulnerable households also need to be prepared before ‘graduating’ to work with the private sector. This should involve training, awareness raising on basic economics, business planning, finance management, marketing.

Processes
Work with the Ethiopian government to better define criteria for Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP) graduation and develop an accountable feedback loop to determine adherence.

Research and Evidence
A better understanding is needed of whether specialized value chains targeting one specific program are better than multiple value chain dealing with diversified products.

Donor Policy and Practice
Private sector actors who are willing to work in vulnerable communities should be supported. Investment in an enabling environment for the private sector will allow the market to take the lead in finding solutions for the sector.

Provide long-term predictable market and livelihoods support instead of short term project funding

Knowledge Sharing
Expand efforts to identify and disseminate standards and best practices on partnering, including working with the private sector, local organizations, etc.

Capacity Strengthening and Tools
Leadership management training is key, and should be carried out for new consortium project technical and management leads.

12. Measuring Gender Impact

Capacity Strengthening and Tools
More training/capacity strengthening is needed to enable capture of gender indicators by implementers.

Donor Policy and Practice
Need more detailed guidance from FFP on a list of indicators for different sectors and domains and how to integrate gender. This includes cross cutting issues like family planning, HIV, etc. as well as adaptation to local contexts.

USAID should consider inclusion of nutrition indicators in the agriculture index indicator.

FFP should provide a list of key indicators to include in baseline and endline surveys. There are limited resources to conduct separate surveys for the full Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index.

USAID and other donors should consider an index on social dynamics rather than gender / women’s empowerment.


Research/Evidence Base/Program Pilots
Building markets for fodder could help to enable sustainability of programs by increasing availability of fodder supplies in dry season and easing price fluctuations. This would reduce need for external fodder inputs. Use of voucher schemes is one possibility.
Opportunities for building veterinary health programs into drought cycle management programs should be explored as one means to sustain animal health through links to activities/resources outside the intervention.

Low intensity conflict will change practices/migration/location of children and herds. A better understanding of coping mechanisms in insecure environments is needed to properly adapt this program to other contexts.

During the dry season, migrating animals still produce milk which is often wasted because children are located far away. There is a need to explore ways to preserve and distribute this milk (e.g. from camels, cattle camps) back to the households where children are located.

**Donor Policy and Practice**
Need for more funding for practical action research

### 14. Natural Resource Management: Reclaiming Lost Land

**Knowledge Sharing**
Systems need to improve for transferring knowledge and skills across people and across locations.

Adaptive capacity requires accelerated technological change but existing technologies are not known to Title II beneficiaries. Better knowledge systems are needed for this technology transfer.

Learning visits can help identify and share best practices – especially with regard to pastoralist/regional experience sharing.

**Processes**
As an approach, climate smart agriculture includes sustainability, productivity (production and profitability included), and stability (resilience), but a process needs to be undertaken to define how to include equity.

**Program Design**
Three opportunities should be taken better advantage of: 1) retrieving archival data (e.g. on soil loss) 2) using proven models such as soil loss equations 3) using current satellite technology (including for data for baselines).

**Research and Evidence Base**
Greater collaboration between implementers and research organizations is needed to better understand effective, impactful program approaches.
Program Design
Apply low cost, easily applicable, proven technique at the household level, such as Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration

Promote traditional agroforestry practices, such as inter-planting trees on farm landscape

Support/ diversify livelihoods options for farmers, and give them incentives to protect the environment as the first step for natural resource management

Agriculture has to be more integrated into natural resource development, including making new horticulture varieties and stress tolerant varieties available to NGOs working in agriculture

Capacity Strengthening and Tool Development
Identify and develop tools and information to better design and implement projects that would help communities to better adapt to climate change, including development of integrated guidelines.

15. Networking and Collaboration Mechanisms

Processes
A sustainability plan needs to be developed to ensure the continuation of resource libraries and knowledge management (KM) portals. Previous project that developed resources libraries and KM portals lost funding and these resources were lost. There was an assumption that members would eventually pay for these resources. However, there was never a requirement for members to pay for these mechanisms or cover costs. Both FSN Network and Agrilinks should consider either selling memberships or obtaining funding from foundations or other donors or both. This strategy should start immediately as this takes time. Another critical point is to determine which organization will own the platform library at the end of the project.

16. New Horizons in Outcome Monitoring

Processes
When there is a high variability of shocks like in highly vulnerable communities such as pastoralist communities, it seems challenging to focus on outcomes. More discussion of monitoring outcomes in difficult environments is needed
**Program Design**
Outcome monitoring could be used to monitor adoption of various risk management strategies to determine which strategies are working and should be scaled up.

Outcome monitoring should be participatory through involving beneficiaries in defining and reporting on outcomes.

**Donor Policy and Practice**
Donors should consider applying outcome investments at a pilot level in their programming.

**Capacity Strengthening and Tools**
Other tools that can be used for outcome monitoring should be identified.

17. Outcomes for Addressing Food Security in a Conflict Context: Lessons and Tools from the Field

**Capacity Strengthening and Tools**
Basic capacity needs to be strengthened on ‘Do no harm’ principles.

More training should be provided on conflict sensitization and analysis.

**Donor Policy and Practice**
Conflict and the potential for conflict spreads across borders, and operates at regional, national, local and community levels. To address factors in multiple countries and a multiple levels necessitates a level of donor coordination which does not exist yet.


**Knowledge Sharing**
More presentations/information on pastoralists' livelihoods (traditional, diversified, agro-pastoral, etc.) is needed, as well as where they are located, the percentage of the total population they represent by geography, etc.

More knowledge sharing is necessary to understand the projects current and past projects implemented in pastoralist contexts and their results.

**Program Design**
Include conflict mitigation in programs in pastoralist areas.
Research and Evidence Base
Conduct rigorous action research to generate evidence to inform policymakers on the comparative advantage of pastoralism over alternative land-uses

A greater understanding of trends over time is necessary.

More detailed study is necessary for greater understanding of the opportunities and potential of pastoral production systems.

Better understanding is needed of the connections between pastoralists and those who have migrated and settled in towns and cities – this could be in terms of economics, food transfers, social dynamics.

Explore the opportunities and pitfalls of commercialization and ranching in pastoralist areas. Capitalizing of opportunities could be possible through organizing groups of pastoralists in cooperative ventures.

Donor Policy and Practice
Information on donor investment goals and target groups is desired.

Capacity Strengthening and Tools
Geographical information system (GIS) management training for implementers would be beneficial.

19. Program Learning and Adaptation: Integrating Field Experience and Realities into Improved Program Design, Implementation and Results

Knowledge Sharing
Program learning efforts should be integrated into roles of all program staff and become a part of organizational culture. This will require building tolerance for discussing and documenting ‘less than success’.

Involve all staff in developing project stories from beginning to end.

Organizations and project staff should seek ways to include other projects, organizations, governments and beneficiaries in learning and knowledge management efforts.
**Processes**
Learning and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) should be treated as related but distinct. Indicators should be identified for measuring and assessing learning and knowledge management as distinct from program performance and accountability.

Define outputs for program learning with standards for quality (e.g., participatory and action-oriented).

Create a comprehensive conceptual framework for program learning and dissemination of knowledge.

**Capacity Strengthening**
Consensus on promising approaches and tools is needed to strengthen capacity in program learning. Capacity strengthening activities are needed to ensure implementation of the practices.

**Research and Evidence Base**
Evaluation of program learning efforts should be carried out and the results/benefits shared with the broader community.

**Donor Policy and Practice**
Dedicated funding for learning and knowledge management and documentation is needed. A program learning component should be asked for in RFAs and incorporated into project proposals.

Donors must be tolerant of “risks” associated with program learning (i.e. revealing short-comings) and be willing to move beyond the success story culture so that more valuable knowledge sharing can occur between implementers and donors.

**20. PVO Accountability and Fraud Prevention in Food Aid Commodity Management**

**Processes**
Better awareness of the issue is needed at the senior management level.

Ensure that organizations adopt/adhere to ‘Preventing Corruption in Humanitarian Operations’ by Transparency International

**Capacity Strengthening and Tools**
Train staff on fraud management and make this part of on-boarding training for new staff at the organizational and project level.
21. Sharing Strategies for Capacity Strengthening of Local Organizations and Government Counterparts

**Capacity Strengthening and Tools**
Five priority capacity gaps were identified by session participants:
1. Management (HR, finance, reporting)
2. Evaluation skills (outcomes/impact)
3. Advocacy/negotiation
4. Results-based management and performance evaluation
5. Capacity strengthening approaches and techniques (how to train others)

22. Timed and Targeted Counseling for Nutrition

**Processes**
There are not always sufficient locally available foods available to provide adequate nutrition so counseling may not be enough. More support is needed to identify and ensure nutritious alternatives or supplements.

23. Triggering Hope in an Environment of Dependency, Disincentives and Despair

**Research/Evidence Base**
Begin to implement formative research to identify “triggers”

More research is needed on the benefits on integrating mental health into programs.

**Knowledge Sharing**
Need to set up documentation systems for program learning/case stories, including examples of improved outcomes of programs that are integrating mental health.

Advocacy for government and NGOs for recognition of this issue is important.

**Program Design**
Better detection of depression in program beneficiaries is needed.

**Donor Policy and Practice**
Have donors prioritize mental health in food security programming – need more explicit and purposeful psychosocial programming, including incorporating mental health into gender programming.
24. Using Care Groups to Build Resilience in Food Security and Community Health Programs

Research and Evidence Base
Explore whether linking Care Group mothers with savings group associations will improve sustainability.

Knowledge Sharing
Make it easier to find the caregroups.org website when searching online (ed. look for link on www.fsnnetwork.org)

Create a ‘caregroups’ Wikipedia page

25. Using Motivation 3.0 with Community-Based Workers

Knowledge Sharing
Share best practices for involving volunteers in active planning.

Capacity Strengthening and Tools
Roll out Motivation 3.0 training/orientation.

Develop guidelines for different contexts and programs, particularly with regard to volunteer vs. paid workers. This could be based on the Care Group model experience.

Develop a tool to help communicate motivation concepts to agents who connect with volunteers

26. Using New Food Aid Products for Prevention to Enhance Resilience

Research and Evidence Base
Examination is needed to ensure that distribution of food aid products does not undermine traditional practices or coping mechanisms.

Better understanding of cost-effectiveness is necessary: cost per child, and in terms of amount of time a child may be on supplementary foods depending on the context.

Food aid products are often sold in order to raise case to purchase non-food items. What is the impact on nutrition of this practice?

Donor Policy and Practice
More support for local production is needed to ensure sustainability of supplies of supplemental food products.