

# Feed the Future Ethiopia Growth through Nutrition Activity – Summary of Workshop on Lessons Learned and Key Recommendations for Multi-sectoral Nutrition Programming Going Forward

## Event Summary Report

For its final learning event with Tufts University, Growth through Nutrition invited partners to share key experiences and lessons learned throughout the duration of the first five years of the project. The event, organized by Tufts in collaboration with Save the Children, was held virtually over Zoom on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> of June 2021 and involved key partners, stakeholders and other development professionals working in multi-sectoral programs in Ethiopia and abroad.

Opening remarks were given by project leaders beginning with Daniel Abbott, Chief of Party from Save the Children, who thanked Tufts for leading the Growth through Nutrition operational research and learning work over the life of the project. He assured participants that although this was the final event with Tufts, Growth through Nutrition will continue having learning events as the project continues to document lessons learned from ongoing and future activities. Jim Sitrick, Nutrition Coordinator at USAID, followed and commended the project for placing an emphasis on learning and adapting to lessons as they come to light, especially since USAID is increasingly focused on integrating CLA (collaborating, learning, and adapting) into development programming. Professor Eileen Kennedy, Principal Investigator from Tufts University, contributed her remarks, commenting that the results and evidence generated through Growth through Nutrition have clear implications for the Government of Ethiopia, and will make an impact on projects and policies going forward.

In the first session of the event, Dan Abbott opened with a brief overview of the Growth through Nutrition Activity, emphasizing the multi-sectoral nature of the project's work. He highlighted the importance of the Learning Agenda, led by Tufts, which aims to drive learning and adaptation through implementation experience, operational research, and events to facilitate discussion with partners and dissemination of key findings. He outlined the different components of the Learning Agenda, specifically highlighting knowledge sharing and capacity building activities, which include the project website, online learning modules, the small grant program, and publication of policy briefs to improve uptake and utilization of research findings.

Rahel Gizaw, Sr. Learning Advisor from Tufts University, led participants through the main lessons learned in each of the five Intermediate Results (IRs) areas based on results from operational research studies conducted under Growth through Nutrition. Some of the key findings showed:

- Cash transfer was deemed better than in-kind provision mechanisms to support beneficiaries according to research done in the Amhara and Oromia regions.
- Institutions and family members (such as schools, places of worship and parents) should play a major role in SBCC activities targeting adolescent girls.
- Key mitigation strategies and recommendations to minimize the negative impact of COVID on health and agricultural services.

The presentation was interspersed with success stories from the field and was followed by a look at the innovative approaches employed in the project, provided by Deputy Chief of Party from

Save the Children, Lioul Berhanu. He explained that while the project primarily aims to strengthen existing nutrition interventions across sectors, it also seeks to utilize novel methods, technologies, and products to catalyze the technical and operational processes to improve efficiency and nutrition outcomes. Among the innovative solutions highlighted were various post-harvest handling technologies, the mNutrition platform, greater engagement with the private sector to improve access to WASH products, and the Grant under Grant scheme.

In the afternoon session, project partners shared reflections from their experiences during Growth through Nutrition, highlighting key learnings in terms of successes, challenges and recommendations:

#### Jhpiego: Pre-Service Education

- Strong collaboration with the government and working within existing systems ensures sustainability of interventions.
- There is still unmet need for staff capacity building in technical and pedagogic areas; universities are a valuable resource to better utilize.
- A comprehensive approach to strengthening pre-service education of a multi-sector nutrition workforce is highly recommended.

#### World Vision: WASH

- It would be more effective to operate in geographically concentrated areas to enhance impact and efficient use of resources.
- Prioritizing Rural Piped systems over point sourced schemes is more effective.
- Consider consolidating implementation of the full WASH package under a single organization.

#### Common Vision for Development Association (CVDA): Enhanced Community Conversations

- Strengthen linkage between IRs for more effective interventions.
- Use SBCC activities as the entry point to livelihood, WASH, and agricultural interventions.

#### St. Francis Integrated Development Organization (FIDO)

- Joint planning with partners at the regional and head office levels could ensure more effective and appropriate use of budget.
- Effective coordination with stakeholders and local authorities on proposed plans can help effect desired outcomes.
- Many local partners only utilized SBCC activities, which is only one part of the project; all components should be promoted and employed to maximize impact.

#### Population Services International (PSI): WASH Products and Services

- The multi-sectoral approach significantly helps achieve project goals.
- A one-to-one sales approach of WASH products and services can improve sustainability as it increases awareness and accessibility.
- Tax on WASH products and lack of financing hampered WASH business, so funding for sanitation loans and subsidies is recommended.

## Land O'Lakes Venture 37: Agriculture

- Savings groups can be used as an entry point for technology transfer, nutrition knowledge, and women's empowerment.
- Further Technical Assistance (TA) and follow-up with Model Farmers will ensure sustainable access to NSA inputs that can positively impact nutrition.
- Strengthening of input suppliers' platforms can facilitate sustainable NSA input supply and improve the production and availability of diversified food.

## Tufts University: Learning Agenda

- The private sector can play a significant role in the design, implementation and sustainability of nutrition programs so future projects should incentivize private sector involvement.
- Embrace the use of virtual platforms for wider dissemination of research findings and lessons learned at very little or no cost.
- Small grants are an effective means to empower local researchers conduct studies that could inform nutrition programs, as well create linkages between academia and program implementers.
- Invest in capacity building of government institutions to instill ownership and commitment to sustained nutrition programming.

Day one concluded with a presentation by Professor Kennedy highlighting key data analysis of women's dietary diversity in Ethiopia. Results show that despite the prevalence of low dietary diversity among women, an increased production of food and cash crops (especially two or more) and ownership of livestock can improve diet diversity.

The second day of the workshop focused on key findings from project research, including the Growth through Nutrition small grant studies. Yoseph Kebede, WASH Education and Training Advisor for Jhpiego, presented results from the pre-post NSA and WASH assessments of agriculture students. He discussed how the integration of skill competencies into the revised curriculum and establishment of a functional skills lab may have resulted in a 31.7% improvement in students who passed the assessment, with gender responsive interventions also potentially causing a 26.7% improvement in female student pass rates.

Dr. Abdulhalik Workicho, Research Manager for Tufts University, followed by sharing findings on the role Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) plays in infant and young child feeding practices. He explained that SBCC contributes to improved nutrition behaviors and further expanded on how an added Virtual Facilitator (VF) tool improves the overall effectiveness of SBCC.

The remainder of the workshop was dedicated to brief overviews of the findings from research conducted by Small Grant program awardees followed by an interactive discussion session between workshop participants and researchers on the studies presented:

*Influence of Nutrition Education on Dietary Diversity and Nutrition Status of Pregnant Women in Rural Kebeles of Dessie City, Northeast Ethiopia*, presented by Yeshimebet Ali, Assistant Professor of Human Nutrition at Wollo University, Ethiopia

*Assessing Barriers of Nutrition Service Utilization, Improving Nutritional Status and Associated Factors Among Adolescent Girls in Southern Ethiopia*, presented by Yoseph Halala, PhD candidate, Addis Ababa University

*Effective Teaching Skill Training on Pedagogic Skills of Instructors' and Its Barriers to Apply at Higher Public Education Institution of Ethiopia*, presented by Arefane Alenko, Lecturer at Department of Psychiatry, Jimma University

*Assessment of Perception of rural households towards local complementary food production and sale in rural communities of Jimma zone*, presented by Shimelis Girma, Lecturer, Jimma University

Rahel Gizaw concluded the sessions by highlighting plans for the Learning Agenda going forward during the final year of the Growth through Nutrition Activity. She acknowledged that Save the Children will continue to lead the project research and learning platform to share findings from upcoming studies during the remainder of the project. She directed participants to the Growth through Nutrition website to find all project documents, including study reports, published manuscripts, learning materials, success stories, ECC materials, learning event videos and policy documents. She also shared future plans for the online training modules, which will continue to be available on Hawassa University's [online learning platform](#).

Project leaders Dan Abbott and Dr. Eileen Kennedy closed out the event with remarks and thanks to all those who participated, commending the open and productive collaboration among partners, which has been key to the project's overall success.