ACTION
AGAINST
HUNGER

LEARNING
REVIEW

2017

FOREWORD

Dr Robina Shaheen

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In this 2017 Learning Review we focus on a very diverse range of subjects and contexts that provide an insight into the groundbreaking work that Action Against Hunger is doing, often in some of the most difficult contexts and with the most vulnerable populations. This Learning Review is testimony to the programmatic outreach that Action Against Hunger has, which allows us to gain vital experiences. These, when documented well, become a rich resource for future use to help us improve our knowledge, attitudes and practices at the individual level. At the organisational level these resources become a tool that enable us to advocate for change internally and externally. We want to be recognised as a learning organisation that values evidence and strives to use it for improving our programmes, policies and approaches.

Our challenge, however, is often not so much about generating evidence, as demonstrated through our research streams and increasingly our internal and external monitoring, evaluation and learning services. It is about how we use what we have generated to influence others and our own work. We often speak of producing 'lessons learned'; actually what we are doing is identifying lessons from our experiences, research and evaluations, as we have done in this Learning Review. If we assign actions against some of these and then track progress, it is likely that we are able to make the necessary change. This means having monitoring, evaluation and learning systems and processes that allow us to do this effectively. In this regard and as the articles within the Learning Review on 'Evaluation trends and 'MEAL Approaches' show, it is a very exciting time to be at Action Against Hunger. I am delighted that we are channelling our efforts and expertise in this area.

Thank you to everyone that has contributed their valuable time in working with us to develop this year's content. I hope you enjoy reading the Learning Review as much as we have enjoyed developing it. Let us together create opportunities to share our learnings and lessons more widely to advocate for what we stand for. Because we will never give up. Until the world is free from hunger.

LET US TOGETHER CREATE OPPORTUNITIES TO SHARE OUR LEARNINGS AND LESSONS MORE WIDELY TO ADVOCATE FOR WHAT WE STAND FOR. BECAUSE WE WILL NEVER GIVE UP. UNTIL THE WORLD IS FREE FROM HUNGER.

CONTENTS

ACRONYMS

BA	Barrier Analysis		**HDDS**	Household Dietary Diversity Score
BFS	Baby Friendly Space		**HoD's**	Head of Departments
CaLP	Cash Learning Partnership		**HQ**	Headquarter
CHS	Core Humanitarian Standard		**ICT**	Information and Communication Technology
CMAM	Community Management of Acute Malnutrition		**IDC**	International Development Committee
CSI	Coping Strategy Index		**IDRU**	International Donor Relations Unit
CTP	Cash Transfer Programme		**IEC**	Information Education & Communication
CV	Community Volunteer		**IFRC**	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
DFID	Department for International Development			
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo		**IGA**	Income Generating Activities
DRM	Disaster Risk Management		**(I)NGO**	(International) Non-Governmental Organisation
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction		**IOM**	International Organization for Migration
ECHO	European Civil Protection And Humanitarian Aid Operations		**KAP**	Knowledge, Attitude and Practices
			Link NCA	Link Nutrition Causal Analysis
ELA	Evaluation, Learning and Accountability		**MHCP**	Mental Health and Care Practices
FSL	Food Security and Livelihoods		**MEAL**	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning
FGD	Focus Group Discussions		**M&E**	Monitoring and Evaluation
FFP	Food for Peace		**MERO**	Middle East Regional Office
GBV	Gender-Based violence		**MUAC**	Mid-Upper Arm Circumference
HAP	Humanitarian Accountability Partnership		**NHF**	No Hunger Forum

NFI	Non-Food Items	**SoS**	Secretary of State
OECD/DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's / Development Assistance Committee	**ToR**	Terms of Reference
ODK	Open Data Kit	**UK**	United Kingdom
oPt	occupied Palestinian territory	**UN**	United Nations
PDM	Post Distribution Monitoring	**UNDP**	United Nations Development Programme
PLW	Pregnant and Lactating Women	**UNICEF**	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
PUNC	Pool d'Urgence Nutritionnelle au Congo	**UNHCR**	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
RoI	Return on Investment	**UNOPS**	United Nations Office for Project Services
REFANI	Research on Food Assistance for Nutritional Impact	**USAID**	United States Agency for International Development
RCT	Randomised Controlled Trials	**WASH**	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
SAM	Severe Acute Malnutrition	**WARO**	West Africa Regional Office
SLEAC	Simplified Lot Quality Assurance Sampling Evaluation of Access and Coverage	**WFP**	World Food Programme
SQUEAC	Semi-Quantitative Evaluation of Access and Coverage	**WHS**	World Humanitarian Summit

INTRODUCTION

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There is more than one reason why I am excited to introduce the 2017 Action Against Hunger Learning Review, but I am going to start with one: after quite a few years of working for the organisation, this is the first year that I have managed to be involved in the production of the report from beginning to end... And so I witnessed the incredible enthusiasm of our staff in numerous countries which made this product possible for the seventh year since the first Learning Review in 2011.

This year the Learning Review comes out among several other publications compiled by the MEAL team at Action Against Hunger UK. This meant exciting times for Action Against Hunger due to the wealth of information and knowledge that can fit into different reports. For instance, for the first time this year the Research Report is a standalone publication focusing on Action Against Hunger's research projects and initiatives. This has also meant that we were able to position the content and utilisation of the Learning Review as internal, practical and reflective for staff in the organisation, and

encourage contributors to share not just successes and good practices, but also failures and lessons from the areas where we can do better.

What is also different this year is that we want to stimulate thinking around how we, across different programmes and countries, collect evidence and generate learning – thereby highlighting the process of learning and not just the outcome of a specific approach or intervention. This may still be work in progress, but it aligns with our mandate to strengthen learning and evaluation in Action Against Hunger, and to develop a culture where the process of learning is as important as the learning itself. Ultimately, we aspire to collect evidence and learning throughout the year or at regular times and not just as a 'one-off'; and we can start applying this approach for next year's Learning Review...

The 2017 edition presents experiences and practices from Action Against Hunger globally. The range of articles encompasses learning from approaches that failed or that yielded successes, evidencing the impact of our programmes for communities

and individuals, as well as global-level approaches and initiatives that can be relevant to the whole Network. We also take the opportunity to reflect on the organisation's evaluative approaches, particularly the intention, process and utilisation of evaluations, and our regional approach to Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning.

LEARNING FOR CHANGE

We should remind ourselves why we want to learn. Ultimately, it is not about us and what we do or don't do, but about the communities we serve. We believe that people in need have the right to better quality humanitarian assistance. We believe that learning, and acting on our learning, allow us to grow, change, and do things better. We want to improve our approaches and we do it for our beneficiaries, communities, staff, partners and donors.

Thank you for your continuous effort to learn and improve. We hope that you will enjoy reading this Learning Review and keep contributing to the learning of Action Against Hunger.

A PROTECTION PERSPECTIVE ON CASH AND NUTRITION

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This article presents reflections on lessons learned and the way forward to design contextually appropriate Cash Transfer Programming.

INTRODUCTION

Cash based programming has become part of Action Against Hunger's strategic approach to achieving our nutrition security mandate. Increasingly development and humanitarian actors are examining the impact of cash transfers on health and nutrition objectives. Several nuanced but generally positive results have been observed in this area, especially from conditional cash transfers.

While cash transfers have demonstrated benefits as a flexible form of social assistance, certain risks are frequently associated with these programmes. As humanitarians we are obliged to learn how to prevent, monitor, and address negative and unintended consequences within cash transfer programmes (CTPs).

Action Against Hunger has gained critical insight on this topic from current and previous CTPs. With a view towards greater programme quality and accountability, this article proposes that a protection perspective must be rigorously applied in the design, targeting, delivery, and monitoring and evaluation of Action Against Hunger's cash based programming.

This article presents two examples of learning on protection risks in CTPs documented from our programmes, before concluding with several ways forward.

1 CHILD WELFARE REPERCUSSIONS OF CASH TARGETED THROUGH CONTINUOUS REGISTRATION OF SAM HOUSEHOLDS

Context: In 2017, Action Against Hunger implemented integrated cash and nutrition programme, providing financial support to households with children under treatment for severe acute malnutrition (SAM). The selection of households was designed to address underlying financial causes of child malnutrition and mitigate the risk of relapse. It mirrored a similar programme implemented by UNICEF in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where an impact evaluation identified positive results from a targeting approach based on nutrition status. In the Action Against Hunger programme, households were registered for cash transfers on a continuous basis (i.e. newly malnourished children were eligible) over the course of one year. The cash transfer was valued at approximately US$62 per month, which amounted to around 65-70 per cent of the local food basket and was notably higher than the salary of government health workers.

Protection Challenges: Negative incentives quickly arose based on this targeting criteria, creating a serious child health and protection challenge for staff. Reportedly both health workers and programme staff accepted bribes to enrol children who did not meet criteria. Several shocking unconfirmed rumors arose claiming that services were sometimes denied to children whose caregivers could not pay. We are aware of several cases of households requesting community health workers to incorrectly apply

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MUAC tape to facilitate enrollment in the CTP. Other rumors relayed to the team mentioned cases of households borrowing some SAM children as they are desperate to be enrolled in the cash transfer programme… Some even approach community volunteers (CVs) with incentives to register them as SAM.

Lessons learned: The situation described is clearly a direct contravention of Action Against Hunger's nutrition mandate. It also underscores the necessity for responsible design, targeting and monitoring of cash interventions to mitigate risk in communities. Some of the most important lessons gained from this experience were: 1) to avoid using nutrition status as targeting criteria; 2) to systematically ensure independent verification of household eligibility; 3) to determine a contextually appropriate transfer amount; and 4) to ensure sufficient internal controls including monitoring and accountability systems are available for communities to share anonymous feedback.

2 GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND OTHER SECURITY RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH CASH TRANSFER PROGRAMMES

Context: Action Against Hunger has taken important steps to improve the gender-sensitivity of our programmes, including through the Gender Initiative and the launch of a global gender-based violence (GBV) and nutrition project. Increased gender awareness in our organisation carries over to understanding better the effects of our cash-based programming on women, men, boys, and girls.

Protection Challenges: The body of evidence relating CTPs to gender-related outcomes is mixed. Research generated by the Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP) and International Rescue Committee have found positive impacts of cash on women's empowerment. A 2012 evaluation of a GBV prevention and livelihoods programme implemented by Action Against Hunger found more tenuous linkages between cash transfers and reduction in GBV. What is clear is that, for certain households, inequitable power structures, physical violence and psychosocial harm affecting both genders can be exacerbated by CTPs if they are not carefully designed and monitored. The same evaluation found that targeting cash towards women's village savings and loan groups (VSLA) in a post-conflict setting contributed to negative psychological effects among some men. Male household members were reported to suffer

from greater depression and feelings of diminished masculinity, leading to negative coping mechanisms such as alcoholism and domestic violence. A woman from this programme sought help from Action Against Hunger through our internal hotline to address a situation of domestic violence linked to a household cash transfer. Less extreme but still serious is the consideration of household decision-making around expenditures linked to nutrition security. From monitoring data in multiple contexts, we have found that it is normal for women to relinquish control of cash assistance to the male head of household, who then makes decisions on household purchases. A Link NCA completed in 2017 found that in more than 75 per cent of households, decision-making power rests with men alone.

Lessons learned: Action Against Hunger does not systematically monitor cash programmes with a view towards uncovering potential harms related to gender, and the information available is based largely on anecdotal reports from monitoring and accountability systems. Indeed, the 2012 evaluation referenced above notes that "GBV incidence, and GBV-related mortality and morbidity are difficult to establish without a systematic design for their measurement. Incidence is particularly difficult to measure because of the inherent risks of under-reporting by GBV survivors for reasons of safety and the risk of stigma."

We already know that it is important to mainstream gender protection and empowerment considerations into cash-based programmes if we intend to make gains in nutrition security.[1] While Action Against Hunger still has much to learn, the key lessons around mitigating GBV / protection risks linked to cash are: 1) to conduct a thorough gender and conflict analysis prior to implementing a cash programme and before targeting cash towards a single gender; 2) to carefully monitor GBV and protection risks in the programme through multiple channels; and 3) to consult and include both genders in our efforts to mitigate GBV risks linked to cash transfers.

PROPOSED WAY FORWARD

These experiences underscore the need to carefully reflect on the use of cash-based approaches to achieve nutrition security objectives. Implementing cash assistance through a protection lens will help ensure we 'Do No Harm' with respect to nutrition security, and further align our cash strategy with humanitarian standards and principles.

We propose several actions that cover both near-term and longer-term steps.

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1   Gender-Related Barriers to Service Access and uptake in nutrition programmes identified during coverage assessments. World Nutrition, 2018. https://worldnutritionjournal.org/index.php/wn/article/view/148

1 On design:

Evidence indicates that no single CTP approach or targeting strategy will meet all objectives in all contexts. Moreover, certain modalities and targeting strategies can lead to unintended, harmful effects. To optimise the use of cash for nutrition security objectives, Action Against Hunger should carry out or utilise existing assessments that examine barriers to services.[2] The assessments should first inform the decision on whether cash transfer programming is appropriate to achieve the stated objective and, if yes, what type of modality and targeting is best suited. When a cash-based programme is under consideration, relevant questions to inform the design should be systematically integrated into these assessments.

2 On monitoring:

In the cases documented above, monitoring and accountability systems have been indispensable in revealing protection concerns arising within cash programmes. As an organisation, we need to ensure dedicated resources for the MEAL function in order to support programme quality and risk management. Monitoring tools should be adapted

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2   This might include SQUEAC/SLEAC, gender analyses, barrier analyses, socio-cultural assessments and other context analyses, needs assessments, and Link NCAs.

SPHERE PROTECTION PRINCIPLE 1:

AVOID EXPOSING PEOPLE TO FURTHER HARM AS A RESULT OF YOUR ACTIONS.

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to enable analysis of programme performance through a protection lens. For cash programming, monitoring should also support rigorous registration processes including through biometric verifications. The MEAL function should ensure feedback mechanisms and channels for community participation are built into the programme. Furthermore, as an organisation we must strive for more efficient integration and harmonisation of relevant policies and how they are operationalised, e.g. the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, risk policy, fraud policies, and M&E guidelines.

3 On learning and knowledge transfer:

To date the evidence on CTPs has been dominated by scientific research like randomised controlled trials (RCTs). While RCTs often provide the most robust evidence of causal impact of cash interventions, this article underlines the valuable contributions of operational research

and learning. Action Against Hunger should rigorously document and share its operational learning on the effect of CTPs (positive and negative) on nutrition security and protection by: developing case studies of situations such as those described in this article; participating in relevant international working groups; and transferring knowledge on successful approaches to using cash for nutrition objectives within communities of practice.

LONGER-TERM:

1 On research:

More evidence is required to design CTPs that maximise impact on nutrition security and gender equity. Action Against Hunger should develop a framework for internal research which addresses core questions like: What modalities of cash transfers work best to improve nutrition outcomes? What are effective and appropriate conditional cash transfers in different contexts? What are

effective, appropriate, and gender-sensitive targeting strategies? The time is also ripe in Action Against Hunger, as we move forward with both the gender initiative and our organisational cash strategy.

2 On strategy and guidelines:

Based on evidence from both research and operational studies, Action Against Hunger should develop a strategy for using cash to achieve nutrition security objectives. This should come with a clear Theory of Change and associated practical guidelines for field teams. Based on lessons learned, we can already recommend the strategy include: context-specific design of cash modalities sensitive to key health behaviours and risks, clear communication of targeting and selection criteria to stakeholders, sensitisation of households on the importance of nutrition, and systematic monitoring against nutrition security objectives.

THE USE OF NUTRITION VOUCHERS TO PREVENT MALNUTRITION AND IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF DIET

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This article examines the implementation of a new and innovative approach around the use of nutrition vouchers, in the framework of a nutrition intervention in the North-West department of Haiti.

BACKGROUND

The nutrition voucher approach is the last 'leg' of the Maternal-Infant Health and Nutrition component of Kore Lavi (a four-year long programme funded by USAID, extended for two additional years) that aims to prevent undernutrition for pregnant and lactating women (PLW), as well as children aged 6 to 23 months. The activities of this programme included, among others, communication for health and nutritional behaviour change, as well as distribution of food rations and support to health facilities for the management of moderate acute malnutrition. The food rations were distributed on a monthly basis to PLW and to children 6 to 23 months of age, in addition to a supplementary ration distributed to the family.

Since the beginning of the implementation of the Kore Lavi programme in September 2013, Action Against Hunger highlighted the need to develop a small pilot by using nutritional vouchers to replace these rations, for different reasons. Firstly, in a context like Haiti's, a food safety net has to be closely linked and integrated with nutrition services for it to be effective; secondly, the institutionalisation of a food aid approach cannot work efficiently if it is based on imported foods, as was previously the case with rations distributed within the programme. This learning came from previous experience with rations that were neither cost effective, nor culturally adapted to the Haitian diet, in addition to the fact that imported foods were logistically difficult to manage and delays were common.

The Kore Lavi consortium (composed of Action Against Hunger, CARE and WFP) consequently started thinking about piloting nutritional vouchers composed of locally available and locally produced foods, and about documenting certain aspects related to the composition of the nutritional voucher. In order to understand better whether the implementation of the voucher would be feasible, the consortium looked at the acceptability of this voucher by project beneficiaries and the possibility of permanently replacing imported rations with this voucher. The consortium decided that Action Against Hunger would implement this voucher pilot in the commune of Baie de Henne in the North-West Department of Haiti (see map below). The Kore Lavi consortium proposed to implement this pilot activity by targeting 650 beneficiaries with a budget of USD 500,000.

Haiti's Departments

North-West Department

Baie de Henne Commune

THE NUTRITION VOUCHER APPROACH

The nutrition voucher has the same objective as the ration distributed to the beneficiaries: it aims to prevent malnutrition and promote growth by supplementing and improving the quality of the diet of PLW and children aged 6-23 months.

The composition of the voucher follows these principles:

1 Availability: The voucher includes only locally available and locally produced foods, with the exception of oil (which is imported);

2 Cultural relevance: The food items included in the voucher are adapted to the Haitian culture;

3 Nutritional content: The calorie intake of the voucher is very close to the one of the ration distributed within the Kore Lavi project. A fixed amount of money is included in the voucher for the purchase of fruits and vegetables;

4 Cooking: The voucher includes quick and easy cooking products that do not require much time or fuel;

5 Adapted to children: Young children's guardians will receive a specific voucher with foods that are adapted for that age;

6 Fresh products: Manufactured industrial products are not included in the voucher with the exception of vegetable oil. Health education sessions were conducted within the community network and through mother leaders to promote food hygiene and dietary indications along voucher distributions.

The vouchers' distribution was implemented over 12 months, from July 2017 until June 2018, throughout the municipality of Baie de Henne. Beneficiaries received their vouchers on the third week of every month at the same sites where they were receiving rations.

The objectives of the pilot were to improve the acceptability and appropriateness of food distributions by using vouchers instead of rations, as well as to determine whether the nutritional intake of PLW and children 6-23 months would increase with the consumption of fresh and varied food from the markets.

COLLECTING (BASELINE) DATA

In order to evaluate the appropriateness and the utilisation of the nutrition vouchers by the beneficiaries of this project, the project team conducted a baseline survey that included indicators related to the satisfaction, use and appropriateness of the vouchers, and also food security indicators such as Household Dietary Diversity Score (HDDS) and Coping Strategy Index (CSI). Then, throughout

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the project implementation, two Post Distribution Monitoring (PDM) surveys were conducted (a third PDM is planned for the last month of vouchers distribution) and three respective Focus Group Discussions (FGD) with a sample of PLW from the community of Baie de Henne. The results of the PDMs and the FGDs, both of quantitative and qualitative nature, helped the project staff to understand whether the objectives set at the beginning of the project were finally met. Most importantly, these preliminary results provided insights on the replicability of the approach and adjustments needed for future programming.

DETAILS ON PDM AND FGD METHODOLOGY BY THE PROJECT TEAM

"For the PDM we randomly selected the beneficiaries' households for the survey by using a simple random sampling methodology for the first PDM and a random sampling (by clusters) for the second PDM. We realised that for this type of survey and for the context, where it is logistically difficult to move from one location to another, we needed a more structured survey design and that is the reason why we changed the methodology from the 1st PDM to the 2nd PDM. As for the FGD, we conducted one FDG with caregivers of children 6-23 months, one FGD with pregnant women and one FGD with lactating women. We selected the participants to the FGDs following a purposive sampling method."

RESULTS OF THE PILOT PROJECT

The results of the two PDMs and the FGDs provided information on a range of indicators such as the use of the vouchers, their acceptability in the community, the quantity of food received by beneficiaries, the distribution process, and changes in the household's diet. Below are some learning points generated from the implementation of this pilot:

• When we designed the content of the nutrition vouchers, we considered the ideal nutritional intake[3] for the PLW and the child of 6-23 months, as well as the days of consumption of the items, which are supposed to be used throughout the whole month. Both the PDM and the FGD indicated that most of the food is used within the first 10 days of the voucher exchange in the market, which was a long way off from our original assumptions.

• When asked the question of who benefits the most from the food exchanged with the vouchers, the parents or guardians of children confirmed that it is the children who benefit the most (81% at 1st PDM and 90% at 2nd PDM). Similarly, the PLW responded that they themselves mostly benefit from the nutrition voucher's products (approximately 70% on average

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3   Total calories (g) 1027.8. Total Protein (g) 28.3. Calories from Protein (g) 113.3. Total fat (g) 49.7. Calories from fat (g) 447.1. % calories from protein (%) 11%. % of calories from fat 43.5%

from two PDMs). Nonetheless, during the 2nd PDM the food consumption of the target beneficiaries had decreased, and the food consumption of the rest of the household had increased.

• The vast majority of respondents (over 95%) affirmed that they prefer the nutrition voucher over rations. The FGD revealed that recipients managed to have more diversified food by using vouchers with the quality being significantly better. However, when participants were asked on their preference of cash over vouchers, they all confirmed that the cash would be the preferred option since the food products exchanged with vouchers are often overvalued.

• The HDDS at Baseline was 4.25, followed by a score of 4.36 at PDM 1 and 6.83 at PDM 2.[4]

• Additionally, the respondents of the FDGs affirmed that they feel like they have more food available at the

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4   The household dietary diversity score (HDDS) is meant to reflect, in a snapshot form, the economic ability of a household to access a variety of foods, applying a score from 0 (minimum) to 12 (maximum). An increase in the average number of different food groups consumed provides a quantifiable measure of improved household food access. For this pilot, the increase in household dietary diversity (from 4.36 to 6.83) reflects an improvement in the household's diet.

household level and that their diet is more varied thanks to the nutrition vouchers. It should be noted that the increase of dietary diversity was reached by adopting a twofold strategy: on one hand, the vouchers included a list of food items that were not largely purchased by the household so far (mostly because of the lack of financial means). On the other hand, Action Against Hunger conducted sensitisation sessions on the importance of a complete and diversified diet for PLW and children.

CONCLUSIONS

The nutrition voucher pilot could be considered overall a positive experience, mainly for these reasons:

• It allowed the beneficiaries to have access to better and fresher food compared to the rations;

• The households had access to more diversified food due to the fact that food items were already pre-determined and were based on calculations of the adequate nutritional intake for PLW and children;

• It allowed Action Against Hunger to support the local market by encouraging merchants to accept vouchers in exchange for money from a monetary institution.

This approach has also been used in

other contexts;[5] such approaches work in environments where markets are functioning and monetary institutions are available in the area of intervention to exchange the vouchers received by local merchants. In addition, since the objective of the nutrition voucher is focused on the nutritional intake of fresh food including categories such as meat and fish, this approach can be used only in those contexts where food is locally produced and where a decent variety of products can be found at the market.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE PROGRAMMES

The following elements should be taken into consideration for the implementation of the nutrition voucher for future actions:

• The voucher recipients often felt that they received less quantity of food with the nutrition vouchers compared to paying in cash at the market. This could be easily avoided by closely monitoring the market prices

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5   As a reference, see the Research on Food Assistance for Nutritional Impact (REFANI), 3-year research project funded by UK aid from the UK government, and co-financed through humanitarian aid from the European Commission (ECHO). For more information: https://www.actionagainsthunger.org/refani

(something that was not done during this pilot) to ensure the merchants exchange the correct amount of food with the vouchers.

• It is advisable to combine the use of vouchers (which can ensure a balanced food diet) with cash, so that beneficiaries feel they have more control over their purchases at the market.

• As mentioned above, it became clear that most food products were shared amongst all household members. The fact that the voucher included fresh products certainly had an influence on the number of days of food consumption, which seemed to be quite low compared to expectations. For future programming, it is suggested to trial several voucher distributions throughout the month to adapt to the households' food consumption habits.

• Consider increasing the quantity of food provided through the nutrition voucher in order to cover the consumption of other household members, as there is little Action Against Hunger can do (or should do) to avoid sharing of food within the household of with neighbours.

• Explore the possibility of conditional cash instead of vouchers, to keep supporting the local market but at the same time providing more choice to beneficiaries and reducing the risk of price inflation connected to the use of vouchers.

CONNECTING COMMUNITIES THROUGH EMPLOYMENT IN GEORGIA

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INTRODUCTION

Back in 2015, when the South Caucasus office was piloting the Employment Shuttle[6] approach, nobody anticipated how significantly it would affect the participants that joined the projects. The methodology was both simple and flexible, yet also comprehensive and well rounded. With the guidance of Action Against Hunger Spain, the shuttle approach was first applied in Georgia in 2015 to support the economic empowerment and access to labour markets of Internally Displaced Persons (from the conflicts of the early '90s and 2008) and their host communities. However, when analysing the results of this first programme, which came through staff observations and beneficiary feedback, it became apparent that the positive outcomes went far beyond the number of employed individuals, or those who returned to education. The Employment Shuttle approach also managed to create lasting connections among groups of people who had never met before. It allowed a diverse group of individuals to work together, to share ideas and opinions and to discuss issues of mutual interest and concern. In a small and diverse region like South Caucasus, which has suffered a number of conflicts and political upheavals, connecting people and building confidence is of high importance.

With that idea in mind, in 2016, the Employment Shuttle approach was implemented again, this time as a means to connect two communities - ethnic Georgians from Akhmeta town and ethnic Kists from Pankisi Gorge in Akhmeta Municipality, that, although they are only half an hour driving distance from one another, have limited interaction and engagement. The project team came up with the idea following the COBERM[7] call. Programme staff organised a workshop to discuss the possibility of incorporating successful approaches from the previous project within this new call. Considering that the new project location had limited employment opportunities, and that Employment Shuttles had been mostly successful in areas where there are more job openings, an entrepreneurship component was added to complement the project. Furthermore, meetings and field visits were planned with the local partner organisation, Kakheti Regional Development Foundation, to learn more about the specificities of the remote target area and to adapt the project design to the needs of the future participants.

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6   An Employment Shuttle is a group of 20-25 motivated, unemployed people who are guided by a coach over the period of 5 months to develop their skills, knowledge, professional competences and connections that will allow them to find employment. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=keJkkCCs2z8&t

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7   Confidence Building Early Response Mechanism funded by the European Union and implemented by UNDP.

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RATIONALE FOR THE INTERVENTION

Pankisi Gorge is one of the most remote and ethnically diverse parts of Akhmeta Municipality, situated towards the northern Georgian border with the Russian Federation. The majority of the Pankisi population is Muslim, whereas the population of Akhmeta town is Christian Orthodox. Following the influx of refugees from Chechnya between 1999 and 2002, the Pankisi Gorge became an area with a high level of insecurity. Nonetheless, following the active engagement of the Georgian authorities, and support from international and local organisations, the area has once more become safe and peaceful.

The socio-economic situation, however, remains largely undeveloped, due to a poorly developed business sector, a heavy reliance on subsistence agriculture, very limited employment opportunities and underdeveloped infrastructure. The population in Pankisi lives a very isolated life and has little interaction and contact with communities outside the gorge. Cultural and religious differences and misconceptions have also periodically led to strained relations between the Georgian and Kist communities.

THE PROJECT AT A GLANCE

To address some of these issues, from 2016 to 2017, Action Against Hunger implemented the LINC project: "Leveraging Employment Initiatives and Networking to Build Confidence among ethnicities in Georgia". The project's overall objective was to enhance confidence building by contributing to increased participation of local ethnic groups in joint activities. Main activities included awareness raising, training sessions on

STORIES FROM LINC PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

AKHMETA TOWN, MALE

"Here in Akhmeta you are somehow isolated from the outside and we have very few opportunities available. I don't think that we've ever had a similar project implemented here before, so I am very happy for having had the opportunity of being part of it.

Together with other topics we discussed important issues such as tolerance and gender equality and we also learned about entrepreneurship. We had a very interesting corporate volunteer visiting, who didn't just come to teach us something, but he walked us through his story, how he established his start-up and how it developed into a large business venture. It was a truly inspiring and eye-opening experience, just like the entire project.

Team work sessions allowed us to get to know one another better and also to have fun while doing so. It broke down barriers, not only among Kist and Georgian participants, but between Kist men and women too. You know, you look at things in such a different way when you have the chance to meet people from other cultures. I've become friends with Kists and I know we'll stay in touch in the future too."

KIST, FEMALE

"We are living in a very religious society, my parents always tell me to never have any kind of interaction with Georgians, because they are Christians, but having met them and having the opportunity of travelling together in Kazbegi or in Tbilisi... I know that they are people whom we can trust, and I am not expecting bad things from them now..."

confidence building, entrepreneurship training and grants funding. Most importantly, this project used the employment shuttle methodology (as a five-month coaching and peer-learning course for personal and professional competences' development) while simultaneously also supported community project initiatives implemented by local youth from Akhmeta and Pankisi and the provision of entrepreneurship grants. Twenty young people from Akhmeta town and twenty from the Pankisi Gorge participated in all project components. This experience gave them the opportunity to meet regularly, learn about each other, develop their competences, initiate joint community projects and establish their own business start-ups. But most importantly, the project created a space for dialogue and intercultural exchange, breaking down the stereotypical views that exist in both communities.

The Employment Shuttle approach was used as a tool to connect young people and allow them to work together towards a shared objective. Because of the very limited employment opportunities in the region, Action Against Hunger decided to add an entrepreneurship component to the project and give self-employment opportunities to the most motivated individuals with the best business ideas. Throughout its duration, the project enjoyed strong support from the local government and the Akhmeta local authorities contributed to the implementation of the community initiatives by providing services and financial resources.

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KIST, FEMALE

"I am so happy that I had an opportunity to meet Georgians in an informal environment. It helped me to understand that they are not enemies. And they can understand that we are Muslims wearing our traditional clothes, but still we are the women from Georgia."

PANKISI GORGE, FEMALE

"I used to be a very good student, but as I got married when I was still in high school, I didn't get the chance to continue my studies. This always affected my self-confidence and I thought I wouldn't be accepted into the programme. Luckily, I was wrong. But even after joining the team and meeting my peers, I thought they knew more and were much more capable than I was, as they had studied in the university. So, I was very shy and unsure at first.

However, the welcoming and friendly environment allowed me to express myself and share my ideas. I'll never forget the day when my team members selected me to be the one making the presentation. I felt so confident and brave. I have so many responsibilities at home but, somehow, I found time for everything. I woke up earlier than usual each day, full of enthusiasm and motivation to get things done and be able to go to Employment Shuttle sessions.

I haven't felt this happy and empowered in a long time. Looking back at those months, I realized that it helped me find myself. I discovered that I can be self-confident, I can believe in my own capabilities and I can find a job. Currently I am taking an English language and a computer course."

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GOOD PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED

1 Strong local partnerships

The project benefitted hugely from the engagement of a competent local partner within Akhmeta Municipality, without whom it would have been very difficult for it to be successful. Kakheti Regional Development Foundation (KRDF) has been working in the area for a very long time and has established a high degree of trust within the two communities, as well as with the local authorities and representatives of the Council of Elders, who are highly respected, non-formal leaders of Pankisi Gorge communities. This strong relationship helped provide a secure working environment for project implementation and resulted in high levels of engagement of the local population.

2 Active community involvement and adaptability

The activity that supported the highest level of confidence building was the joint Employment Shuttle sessions where the two shuttle groups came together twice a month. As the project developed, there was a high demand from participants to increase the frequency of such gatherings as they found these meetings both interesting and useful. Consequently, the approach was adapted accordingly allowing increased interaction among participants.

Likewise, the community component of the LINC project significantly supported the confidence building process within the communities of Akhmeta and Pankisi, while they were developing their project ideas. Later on, communities worked on the library rehabilitation in Akhmeta town and built an outdoor fitness park and playground in Pankisi.

3 Focus on building entrepreneurship skills

Since most participants did not have any previous knowledge, or experience in entrepreneurship, more time needs to be dedicated on business skills' trainings in the future to ensure that participants have the necessary knowledge and capacity to lead their own ventures. Another approach for the project suggests forming separate groups for employment and entrepreneurship shuttles, or including entrepreneurship related questions during the selection process to better evaluate participants' interests, capacities, and goals regarding self-employment.

LEARNING FROM LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND RESPECTING LOCAL SOCIAL NORMS

Abdulkhaleq Alwan

WASH Head of Department
Yemen

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Three years of ongoing conflict and economic decline in Yemen have exhausted the population's adaptation mechanisms, destroyed infrastructure and seriously disrupted the country's economy. The number of districts facing potential risk of famine has significantly increased as the situation rapidly deteriorates.

The complexity of the situation is not only related to malnutrition and food insecurity, but also to other underlying causal factors aggregated by the conflict. The Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) situation has increasingly worsened, the total number of people in need of WASH assistance has reached 16 million and now includes 11.6 million in acute need. The lack of sufficient clean water, latrines and solid waste disposal, further aggravated by the arid and humid climate and flood risk, multiplies the risk of WASH-related disease outbreaks such as cholera, acute diarrhoea, malaria and dengue, especially for Internally Displaced

Persons and host communities. 50 per cent of undernutrition in Yemen is associated with infections caused by poor WASH, while cholera outbreaks is deemed to have been vastly induced by contaminated water resources.

One of the three governorates targeted by Action Against Hunger is A Hudaydah Governorate which has the largest share of the country's cholera cases with 158,958 suspected cases, 14.6 per cent of the country's total caseload.[8] Here we are implementing a multi-sectoral humanitarian response including Nutrition, Health, WASH, Food Security and Livelihoods. Our WASH sector interventions continue to build the capacity of the local communities and WASH public counterpart agencies. Among its different learning and accountability measures, Action Against Hunger WASH collects lessons learned during the delivery of our various WASH interventions to advise, and further improve, the delivery of WASH in

future projects.

HOW WAS THIS 'LEARNING' COLLECTED

These learnings were recorded when the WASH Head of Department in Yemen conducted a field visit to one of Action Against Hunger's WASH in Nutrition projects[9] in the Hays District of Hodeidah governorate, together with the WASH hardware team in country. During this visit some major lessons were learned from the targeted communities which has informed the way the team works with communities, when installing water facilities.

COMMUNAL WATER DISTRIBUTION POINT IN BAIT HODAISH VILLAGE:

When arriving in Bait Hodaish village, the WASH team found that the water

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8   WHO, 3rd of April 2018 Weekly Epidemiological bulletin Week #13

9   WASH in Nutrition project 'Emergency assistance to crisis affected population in north and south Yemen targeting priority governorates of Hodeida, Hajjah, Abyan, and Lahj' funded by SIDA.

well, and the associated distribution tank facility, that had been installed by the Action Against Hunger project were functioning, however, they discovered that the targeted local community had made some changes. They had replaced the tank facility's main water outlet and distribution pipe with another larger outlet pipe, and re-installed the four water distribution taps. Additionally, two of those four water distribution taps had been fitted with 2m long plastic hose extensions. When discussing the reasons for these changes with the local community, the WASH team realised two major shortcomings with their original water distribution design:

• The pressure of the water flow coming out of the tank facility was low. This was due to the small diameter of the original outlet pipeline (supplying the four taps) causing the water to come out of the tank outlet flows by gravity only. This led to long water queues and resulted in a longer fetching time. This time could have been spent on other activities such as family care, education or food production. Replacing the original outlet pipe with another one with larger diameter could allow for heavier water flow and a shorter fetching time.

• The two water hose extensions added to two of the taps were specifically there to meet the needs of the children fetching water, as the original design was not suitable for them. In the community, children were the ones most often tasked with fetching water by using several

20-litre jerry cans carried by donkeys. Usually the children's parents would tie the jerry cans to the donkey's back to secure them for transport. When the children arrived at the well they were unable to untie the jerry cans from the donkey's back, and would not be able to lift the filled 20-liter jerry cans onto the donkeys' backs in order to re-tie them. The extended water hoses allowed the children to reach the jerry cans while they were still tied to the donkeys and fill them up without having to untie, or lift them.

WATER ALLOCATION SYSTEM IN AL-MIKHRAF VILLAGE:

When the WASH team arrived in Al-Mikhraf village they also found the constructed water-distribution point functioning, however, this time, it looked nothing like the original water outlet and distribution system installed earlier by the Action Against Hunger team. The original water outlet pipe and distribution taps had been removed and replaced by much larger outlet pipes on the four sides of the tank, onto which 20 short lateral distribution pipes with taps had been attached. The WASH team again discussed these changes with the local community and realised that key needs and social norms had not been addressed by the engineered design, provided by the Action Against Hunger contractors.

The community operates a water allocation model in their village, where all families belonging to one tribe have their

own water outlet pipe and tap. This allows the community to allocate drinking water amongst the various tribes in an equitable and satisfactory manner, avoiding social conflict during the daily water fetching. They also showed the team an earlier installed water facility, which allowed for the same water-allocation modality and explained that they had tried to influence the Action Against Hunger design, but that they were not able to change it from the agreed plan.

WHAT WAS LEARNED FROM THIS?

In both cases, it became clear that the best-practice water supplies installed by the Action Against Hunger teams were not fully fit for purpose for the communities in which they were installed. It was also evident that closer consultation with the communities, and a willingness to change the original design based on their feedback, would have delivered something more socially accepted by, and suited for, the local targeted beneficiaries.

HOW WAS THIS LEARNING INCORPORATED INTO OTHER PROGRAMMES/INSTITUTIONALISED?

This experience was a great coaching opportunity for the WASH teams on the importance of listening to local needs during the identification, planning, design and delivery of our WASH projects. It also illustrated how in many cases, and especially during emergency programming, the deciding factors in the field reveal that our systems sometimes have technical shortcomings

when following normative or standard designs.

The team learned the importance of respecting local social norms and the customary rules that organise and govern their daily life, recognising that locals are the best source of knowledge about what fits their needs. Accordingly, the team adapted the technical design of similar communal water distribution points that are to be implemented in future WASH projects as part of Action Against Hunger's water well rehabilitation package.

RECOMMENDATIONS: WHAT DO WE NEED TO DO MORE OF?

• Involve communities in the identification, planning, design and implementation of our projects and interventions.

• Be willing to change our approach and plans based on community feedback and participation.

• Understand the context, social relations and customary powers, rules and needs of the community and the people we are working for.

• Respect social norms and customary rules to ensure appropriate programming and sustainable solutions.

• Don't be afraid to change plans and project design based on contextual community needs and feedback, best practice in one context might not be applicable in another.

The technical learning from this article can be relevant to other WASH projects, but the overall learning of involving the local communities and beneficiaries in the design of our interventions is applicable across all sectors and contexts that we work in. It is never too late; do not hesitate to approach the local population to get their feedback and learn how to further improve the humanitarian products delivered by your projects.

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New water allocation system in Al-Mikhraf Village

PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP FOR DISASTER REDUCTION IN CENTRAL AMERICA

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**KEY RESOURCES
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https://www.
accioncontrael-
hambre.org/es/
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caciones

CONTEXT

Located in the centre of the American continent, Central America is considered one of the richest regions in terms of biodiversity and resources, but also one of the most vulnerable in terms of damage occurring as result of disasters. This is due to factors such as seismic frequency and volcanic eruptions, prolonged cyclonic seasonality from the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean, and the marked variability that climate change is generating in frequency and intensity, mainly because of hydro-meteorological phenomena.

The Climate Risk Index of Germanwatch (2017), based on analyses of information between 1994 and 2014 on the impact of extreme weather events and associated socio-economic data, indicates that from the Central American region, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua are three of the 10 countries with the highest global climate risk worldwide. These events are generating significant losses beyond what has been traditionally recorded in terms of affected population or damaged infrastructure. In the last five years, the financial costs attributed to disasters within the region reached more than US$300 billion in economic losses.[10]

Within this context, those companies which depend on the stability of their value chains are being affected by increased losses and operational interruptions associated with disasters, such as damage in infrastructure, machinery, raw material losses, problems with drainage, communication, and loss of data and vital information. Additional delays from road and port closures due to the lack of adequate mitigation measures can even result in some companies closing.

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10 Global Assessment Report (GAR) 2015.

THE PROJECT

Based on the approach that the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction established in 2015, it is stated that governments and other development actors must improve efforts to address the Disaster Risk Reduction issues in an integrated manner. In response to this Action Against Hunger initiated the project 'Public-private partnerships to reduce the risks from disasters in Guatemala'.

The project seeks to promote the role of the private sector in the global effort to reduce risk of disasters. To this end, public-private investment initiatives can contribute, among others, to the application of structural and non-structural measures to improve the resilience and the economic, social and cultural conditions of communities and countries, while protecting their assets and the environment.

The most demanding part of the project has been the strengthening of companies, government and community's capacity to interconnect in a systematic way within the different phases of the disaster risk management (DRM) cycle: knowledge, governance, investment, response, recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction. Learning from the project was generated through piloting. This has been used to hold dialogue with the government, civil society and the general population resulting in actions to address and reduce the recurrent impact of floods and droughts. Self-diagnosis and self-protection capabilities have similarly allowed companies to recognise the importance of working on this issue beyond their own facilities. The systematisation of the most innovative methodologies and tools, such as the watershed management model in Guatemala, that includes agreements on floods and droughts management between the sugarcane agro-industry, the civil society of the communities and the government, creates links among all the actors and contributes to developing a structured plan of action.

The strategy used by Action Against Hunger in Central America was to identify actors likely to be part of public-private partnerships for Disaster Risk Reduction at three different levels: a) local b) national and c) regional, and gain access to companies with corporate social responsibility or innovative environmental initiatives. The aim was to couple this with

Action Against Hunger's experience with government institutions, municipalities and community structures, and our technical expertise in disaster risk reduction and resilience in the region.

To operationalise this approach, strategic alliances have been established at three levels:

Local level: two territorial models have been established in Guatemala and Honduras. In Guatemala, a partnership has been developed with the Institute of Climate Change (founded by the sugar industry), mainly focused on: i) a model of integrated watershed management based on an open dialogue between public actors (government, communities etc.) and private actors (sugar, banana, palm oil industries, etc.); ii) the constitution of a Private Sector Coordination Centre for disaster emergency management and iii) the support to development plans and land-use planning that include risk analysis generated by both sectors.

National level: the Centre for Action of Social Responsibility in Guatemala (CENTRARSE) and the Honduran Foundation for Corporate Social Responsibility have allowed Action Against Hunger to access companies and to jointly develop tools to address disaster risk reduction from an integral perspective (tool and guide to evaluate business performance in Disaster Risk Reduction; compendium of good business practices on Disaster Risk Reduction).

Regional Level: an online diploma on business continuity plans and an awareness raising campaign on disaster preparedness among the private sector was developed with key regional actors: the Central American Integration for Corporate Social Responsibility (INTEGRARSE) and the Coordination Centre for Natural Disasters Prevention in Central America (CEPREDENAC).

CHALLENGES AND LEARNINGS FROM THE PROJECT

The biggest challenge has been the coordination of so many actors on a multi-dimensional issue such as disaster risk management. The evidence generated had to be linked to the territory level, along with the elaboration of national and regional strategies and implications for the private sector in these processes. Another important challenge has been the limited duration of the projects relying on different sectors and members of the consortium, although this has also been the basis for the achievements obtained.

Other factors that hindered the project implementation include:

• There was a lack of government clarity to direct objectives and actions throughout the disaster risk management cycle. This makes it difficult to articulate actions, issues and actors within the territories.

• The government bureaucracy, compared to the approach of a cost-benefit analysis within a company, can generate different

timing and dynamics that are difficult to articulate.

• In the case of Central America, the generation of alliances with the three sectors (civil society, government and private) is not common, since there are few established relations, and even confrontations, in countries with a history of polarisation. Carrying out joint actions and developing agreements was therefore not an easy task. Coordination has been more difficult at national level, because

the processes are usually more bureaucratic as opposed to the local level. For the regional level, there are ongoing initiatives that facilitate the integration of these experiences in other spaces, forums, exchanges and initiatives.

This previous experience has served as a platform for new initiatives in Central America where a new project that explores private partnership with the tourism sector is being developed.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE PROGRAMMES

• The identification of common problems is key to the search for joint solutions, which allow contributions from each sector within a vision of dialogue and coordination. This strategy used facilitated agreements and joint actions.

• Transform the conditions that generate risks within the territories, based on a previous identification of threats and vulnerabilities, since this maintains the interest of the different actors to remain in the process.

• To achieve public-private partnerships, it is necessary that some of the actors have expertise in disaster risk management. This is to ensure the common thread and follow-up of the established agreements.

• In order to enhance partnerships, it is important to identify specific products that support the complementarity of actors involved and that will help promote the established alliances.

• The interventions agreed must be well focused and should prioritise the integral phase of the disaster risk management cycle, specifying which actors and what territorial level of intervention are to be worked with.

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MENTAL HEALTH, CARE PRACTICES, GENDER AND PROTECTION:

WORKLOAD ANALYSIS OF PREGNANT & LACTATING WOMEN ATTENDING BABY FRIENDLY SPACES AT NGUENYYIEL REFUGEE CAMP, GAMBELLA, ETHIOPIA

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Endale Dlasso

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BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Action Against Hunger established its Ethiopia office in 1985 in response to severe drought and subsequent famine. In 2014, they responded to the influx of refugees from South Sudan by initiating an emergency nutrition, Mental Health and Care Practices (MHCP) intervention in the Gambella Region. With nutrition security at the core of its work, the MHCP team worked in collaboration with the nutrition teams on integrating MHCP with a community management of acute malnutrition programme within the refugee camp. The intervention provided a number of baby friendly spaces to 13,262 pregnant and lactating mothers and their children (under two years old), who are some of the most vulnerable people in the community. The objectives of the programme were to provide a holistic, psychosocial service to:

1 Prevent the increase of malnutrition, morbidity and mortality rates

2 Help caregivers to adapt and provide optimal childcare practices

3 Improve the well-being of pregnant, lactating women and their infant children

WHY DO A WORKLOAD ANALYSIS, AND WHAT IS IT?

As a means to understand beneficiary needs, practices and challenges, a number of assessments and surveys of pregnant and lactating mothers were conducted at field level.[11] These showed that competing

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11 Nutritional Causal Analysis (LINK NCA) 2017, and MHPSS Rapid Assessment and Gender Analysis 2016 – Gambella (ongoing in May 2018).

demands on a mother's time were a major contributory factor to child malnutrition; mothers did not have sufficient time to provide the best childcare practices for their children, especially infants and young children, who are more vulnerable to malnutrition and illness. This lack of time was also evidenced in the high amount of defaulting or lack of consistent attendance in sessions at baby friendly spaces.

However, these assessments and surveys did not fully uncover exactly what household duties mothers were occupied with. As such, a Daily Activity Clock study was conducted in November 2017 to get a fuller, more detailed understanding.

Data was taken from 200 randomly selected mothers who used the Action Against Hunger BFS, located in four

different nutrition sites spread across the camp. All participants were either pregnant or had a child under two years old. The study was conducted by the MHCP team of psychosocial workers, led by a psychologist. The benefit of using the MHCP team was that they had experience of running group activities with mothers and had established a relationship that was more conducive for open discussion and sharing.

The data was collected using the Daily Activity Clock sheet, a simple form where mothers list their activities from when they get up in the morning until they go to bed. Data was collected for the five days of the week (Monday to Friday), as these were assumed to represent typical daily household duties, as most government and NGO services are closed at the weekend.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND LESSONS LEARNED

KEY FINDING 1
The results showed that the amount of time provided for childcare was very limited as household activities took up a significant proportion of the mothers' energy and time. These duties impacted upon their ability to participate in psychosocial support activities such as the Mother-to-Mother Support Groups, and to regularly attend the sessions in the baby friendly spaces. Data showed that the main daily duties for a mother were: cooking for the family, travelling to and queuing at different sites to collect food rations

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and non-food items, fetching water from water points, and collecting firewood in the surrounding areas, typically outside of the camp perimeter. Collectively this consumed 76 per cent of their daylight hours.

Lessons learned: Because mothers have limited time in which they can attend the baby friendly spaces, it has been made available all day for walk-in visitors. Women often schedule their activities at the baby friendly spaces to coincide with child food distribution days. The result is that the baby friendly spaces reaches almost all beneficiaries with at least one session (when they attend distribution), but that many are too busy to return until the next distribution day. To address this, the MHCP psychosocial workers operate outreach activities including home visits, defaulter follow-up, and co-facilitate mother-to-mother groups in each block.

KEY FINDING 2
One of the more difficult and time consuming tasks was getting firewood for cooking; the study showed that most mothers spent 2.5 to 3 hours per day doing this. This task was increasingly challenging due to the hot weather, and the fact that mothers have to walk further and further due to the expansion of the camp/reduction of available wood. Mothers often need to take their youngest child with them, or leave the child with other family members (most commonly young daughters who are children themselves). This leads to poor childcare practices and a greater risk of malnutrition and sickness.

For the mother, there is also an inherent protection risk with women being exposed to attack and rape when foraging.

Lessons learned: One of the key findings from the workload analysis was the amount of time taken to collect firewood, and the related protection issues. Possible solutions to this could include the introduction of locally made clay stoves/ovens that are more efficient and result in less wood consumption, encouraging United Nations Refugee Agency investment in building a bio plant to produce biogas from organic waste, and to consider women-led group-cooking and firewood collecting cooperatives.

KEY FINDING 3
It was evident from the diversity of their duties that there was an absence of support for mothers, especially for physical tasks. Women and children represent over 80 per cent of the camp population, because men are typically away protecting their family's homestead in South Sudan, may be involved in fighting, or have been killed.

Lessons learned: The programme aims to expand its activities at community level by generating greater awareness of the needs of mothers by targeting men and other adults in the household, who can help share the burden of work. The MHCP team will introduce discussion and awareness groups for men and other potential adults such as mother in laws and relatives in order to deliver this. It is important to

note that this will have to been done with sensitivity due to the strongly defined traditional gender roles that exist commonly throughout the country. For example, women generally take care of all household chores, children and the elderly, while men are engaged in manual labour, trading in the market and searching for work across the region.

WHAT DID WE LEARN BY CONDUCTING A WORKLOAD ANALYSIS?

In addition to programmatic learning, the team learned a lot about the process of conducting a workload analysis, which may inform future analyses:

The individuals conducting the analysis (MHCP team) were already known and trusted by the participants. This created an open environment for mothers to share, and increased accuracy of the data.

The Daily Activity Clock exercise is simple and quick to implement. The questionnaire is technically simple and takes very little time, and because mothers were already accessing the centres regularly, they were easy to access. In addition, beneficiaries were happy to engage, and have a platform through which to share their challenges.

Compiling 200 daily activity response sheets was time consuming, and as many of the activities were the same, standardising, coding and using tick boxes would speed up data compilation. The use of tablets to conduct the interviews would

be a low cost efficient tool to use.

The team noticed that there was less detail on activities in the evening than those during the day. Based on anecdotal information, it is presumed this may be because activities conducted during this time may be more sensitive forms of commerce, including making alcohol, selling and trading goods and commercial sex work. Because mothers may be less likely to disclose such activities, this data can be difficult to acquire.

We believe this study could easily be replicated in other contexts across Action Against Hunger. The data being collected is not culturally sensitive (making it easy to apply in other countries), but provides context-specific understanding of the burden on mothers. This is vital in helping us to prevent children from developing malnutrition, and realise our strategic goals of reducing childhood mortality and the prevalence of both chronic and acute undernutrition.

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DEVELOPING A MEANINGFUL INFORMATION MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT IN ACTION AGAINST HUNGER COUNTRY OFFICES:

LESSONS LEARNED FROM SYRIA

Mikel Belausteguigoitia

Information Manager Syria

The information management function for Action Against Hunger Syria was established in 2017. The purpose of this article is to share the key elements to consider while establishing an innovative and meaningful information management department, based on lessons learned in the past year.

PRINCIPLES OF INFORMATION MANAGEMENT: FROM DATA TO INFORMATION, KNOWLEDGE AND BEYOND

Information management in Syria has been built on the principle that "information is the foundation on which decision-making for a coordinated response is based". In order to produce meaningful **information**[12] we need to collect and analyse **data**, which is then contextualised.

Contextualising information is critical. It involves taking our data and examining if and how it is significantly connected to other known information (from other departments, experts or International NGOs). By framing our information with a wider lens, the information acquires a new utility value.

When we produce meaningful, contextualised information from data, we produce knowledge[13]. However, knowledge is only useful if it can be used. By structuring the knowledge in a way that can be easily utilised by those leading the humanitarian response, we can influence the decision-making process. Thus, we should use our knowledge to define the questions that will answer the known unknowns, and more importantly, the **unknown unknowns**.

This opens the door to **humanitarian intelligence**.

Finally, this information can only be capitalised upon if we store it in appropriate repositories. Easy to use libraries (such as the Library Search Tool) to efficiently find the relevant documents, and interactive dashboards (such as the Vulnerability Profile Tool) with visually summarised and extractable information sets, are good examples of information and knowledge management repositories.

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12 Data can be defined as raw unprocessed streams of facts, and information as data processed and shaped in a meaningful form.

13 Knowledge can be defined as structured environment and framework for evaluating and incorporating new information. In organisations, it often becomes embedded in documents and repositories, among others.

SUPPORTING THE SEARCH FOR ANSWERS TO KEY QUESTIONS IN SYRIA

In the above section, we discussed the process of identifying questions; here we provide concrete examples of the questions the information management function aims to facilitate answering in Syria. One year ago, six key themes were identified and phrased in the following manner:

1 From the complex crisis affecting Syria and its population, what are the key factors[14] relevant for the office to provide its humanitarian response?

2 How is humanitarian access for Action Against Hunger blocked in Syria? How does this affect the Project Cycle Management? How can we overcome these challenges?

3 How does the above affect the financial execution rhythm[15]? How do these external factors combined with the internal operational limitations affect both regular and emergency response? Can we forecast these to anticipate and prepare necessary actions?

4 What is the process followed for the identification of locations based on needs? What is the vulnerability profile of the population to which Action Against Hunger is responding? What should be the rationale and the information needed to take these decisions? By who?
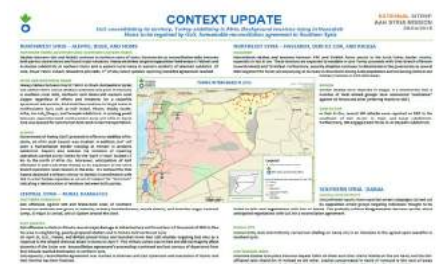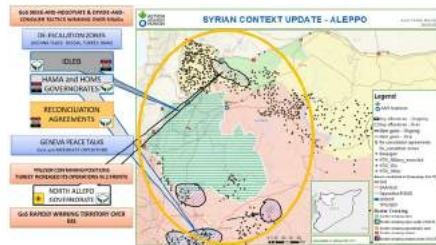
5 How are other INGOs overcoming these same challenges and what are they doing? Where is Action Against Hunger's competitive edge and with whom and on what can we strengthen our coordination?

6 How can we transform the answers from the above questions into a strategic vision and into operational action points?

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14   In this content factors refers to critical operational aspects that either provide a significant challenge or constrain the office's activities (as bottlenecks like not having visas for expats, not be able to open a warehouse, etc.); to those that provide an added value, like the office historic presence in the country: as well as those that add a competitive advantage like a strategic partnership that might allow Action Against Hunger to provide an otherwise impossible modality of response, or a base located in a hard to reach area with limited humanitarian access.

15   The financial execution rhythm refers to the rate at which the projects funds are consumed.

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Contextualising information is key: Two context maps and a context situational report from Syria

CONTEXTUALISING INFORMATION AND A CONFLICT-SENSITIVE APPROACH ARE KEY FOR HUMANITARIAN INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

In the Syrian crisis, access to primary data is scarce, people are afraid of sharing information, and official authorities do not accept the principle of accountability to beneficiaries. This **lack of access** to primary data is even more acute for the information management function because the function is hosted in Beirut (due to the constraints of working in country). On top of this, meaningful analysis of data is difficult due to the challenge of ensuring data is representative, coherent, and complete. Dealing with missing information, compounded by the fact that resources never meet needs means that, in this context, we end up framing conclusions with significant limitations.

Engaging with coordination platforms is the solution for filling these gaps in information, while also allowing us to contextualise our operations within the wider humanitarian community in Syria. Our engagement allows us to gather key information, which adds value to our constant and methodical review of secondary information. These secondary documents range in **scope** (from response plans and in-depth context analysis, through technical reports and assessments, to briefings and meeting minutes) and source (e.g. UN agencies, humanitarian research initiatives, academia, news and coordination forums).

To properly organise this plethora of information and contextualise our own evidence, we also need to take a **conflict-sensitive approach**. Each humanitarian crisis has specific conflict dynamics that affect project implementation. Likewise, projects vary from country to country, and affect the conflict surrounding them. Thus, to identify how the conflict affects projects and vice versa, which sets of data are meaningful to the country office, and how to weight and frame each set of information, we must consider a conflict sensitive approach. From here, we will be able to frame and include technical, financial, and logistics indicators that may be relevant for our analysis. **Going beyond MEAL** and reaching out to an interdepartmental level (in country) will provide a proper operational framework through which to interpret the results of the analysis.

THE IMPACT OF USING DATA VISUALISATION IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

The wealth of information generated through primary and secondary data analysis cannot be easily used for decision making if not visualised in an engaging manner. Examples of this include a simple and concise PowerPoint, an executive summary supported by graphs, a map generated with GIS software (such as Arc GIS), or by displaying complex information in a one page dashboard made with Power BI.

Not only does visualisation generate a summary of key ideas, but it also provides an additional step in the analytical process. By filtering out excess data, analysis, and reports, and by focusing on what adds value and a competitive edge, we provide decision makers with leverage in the discussions and negotiations to come. **However, one of**

Using data visualisation in the decision-making process

the greatest challenges of visualisation is extracting what is most relevant.

The decision on what information to extract when visualising depends on the topic and the audience. As an example, the same set of financial figures can add value differently if these are geo-referenced in a map, graphed in a pie chart showing percentage per programme, or numerically analysed by type of costs. Furthermore, the Financial Coordinator in the country office, the Regional Advocacy Manager, or the Desk Officer in the Headquarter will interpret each visualisation differently. Furthermore, these stakeholders are likely to see a different use for each set of data and each visualisation, depending on how they relate to their field of expertise and area of responsibility. The content not only defines the *what*, but also the *how*, and the audience not only defines the *how*, but also the *what*.

At this stage, remaining objective and remembering that **the role of information management is to support decision makers** is key to help us **define the scope** of each product. Lastly, we need to consider the different needs in order to understand how the information and knowledge produced can be used in the best way possible. Asking for feedback and understanding the information needs of the different users is helpful to identify information gaps. **By listening to our surroundings, we can identify the questions that need to be answered.**

INNOVATION AS A RESPONSE TO CONTEXTUAL CHALLENGES

The main challenge in setting up the

Information Management function has been to define the criteria, systems, tools, products and processes from scratch, and therefore remaining accountable and transparent throughout the process has been crucial to building trust. Additionally, the Syria mission faces unique challenges, such as the fact that information management is considered sensitive in the Syrian context, and therefore everything has to be done remotely from Beirut. Complexity, a fast pace environment, and limited resources for ambitious objectives have been the day-to-day realities of the work.
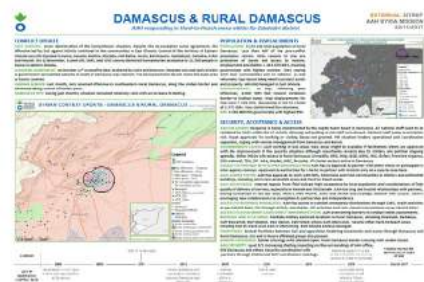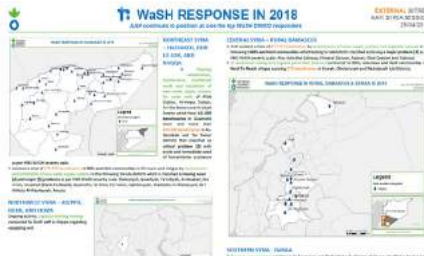
In spite of these challenges, the focus has remained on producing information that can support decision-making and decrease the knowledge gap. Ultimately, we have maintained motivation to transfer the ownership of all the knowledge, practices and lessons learned throughout this innovative year to the country office and to those who will continue the process from here and beyond.

LESSONS LEARNED

Having now shared some of the key elements for creating a successful information management function in Syria, we can share three key learnings:

1 Identify the gaps in our knowledge, and the questions that need to be answered

We need to identify what secondary information is going to add value as well as a competitive edge to each country office. We have to ask ourselves, what are the main operational challenges? If there is a challenge in providing an excellent technical

response, then it might be good to look for technical data. Is the main challenge related to scarce funding opportunities? In that case, look at which arguments in the proposals are the weakest. What data can strengthen them? Is the main challenge access, like in Syria's case? Then, which indicators would support with evidence the advocacy policy papers and talking points? How is the country office structured and where are the information gaps? Consequently, which sets of information better support decision-making? By understanding the questions that need answering, we are better placed to source this information, and to present it in a way that is useful for decision makers.

2 Proximity to information is key

Identifying the questions that need to be answered is key. When working in country, we usually hear or run into conversations that provide us with this information naturally, but while working in a remote management scenario we do not. Though most of these encounters do not provide a 'lightbulb moment', we only need to identify one unanswered question to produce a meaningful and useful information management report. This was the case for the information products that received the best feedback in the Syria country office.

We have learned that even in the best remote management scenario, with local contacts and strong coordination, we need to be present at some stage and identify the people who can identify the questions that need answering, and provide information. By being close to where coordination forums are taking place,

to where decisions are taken, and programmes are running, we are also closer to the sources of information that can answer these questions.

3 Integrate information management into existing processes and functions

In order to foster similar successes in other country offices we need to always remember that information management is a support function, and a relatively new one, that needs to adapt to what is already established. For this, we need to identify the positive changes in terms of processes, staff, and objectives aligned with the objectives of the Information Management function. This must be done at all levels: coordinator roles, senior managers, and potential information management talents. Examples of management tools to strengthen this process are: joint and/or aligned department strategic objectives; asking for feedback for each product allowing different staff to provide their point of view, developing strong induction sessions, and sharing with staff the reasons behind the decision taken in developing each product, the Information Management system, and key strategic decisions.

While new questions continue to appear on the horizon, the information management function will continue to add value, and to reach out for the answers.

ADVOCATING FOR CHANGE:

RESULTS FROM A FOOD SECURITY AND LIVELIHOODS PROGRAMME WITH INCOME GENERATING ACTIVITIES TO EMPOWER WOMEN IN GAZA

Elena Olymbia A. Dikomitis

Advocacy and Communication Coordinator
The occupied Palestinian territory

This article highlights the power of linking advocacy to programmatic data, no matter how small-scale the programme is.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Action Against Hunger has been working in the occupied Palestinian territory since 2002, aiming to reduce vulnerabilities and respond to humanitarian needs, while protecting and strengthening the resilience of Palestinian communities. In food security and livelihoods, our projects aim to provide viable and sustainable sources of income and livelihoods opportunities.

In the Gaza Strip, our food security and livelihoods projects target the most vulnerable communities through cash-based interventions, rehabilitation of agricultural assets, provision of agricultural inputs and managerial training. A decade under Israeli blockade and three full-scale wars has heavily affected the lives and resilience of two million Gazans, and certain groups such as female heads of household are known to be particularly vulnerable. Needs assessments have repeatedly underlined women's limited access to resources and markets as an issue; it increases their vulnerability to poverty, food insecurity, and malnutrition, which was again exacerbated by the 2014 conflict.

SUPPORTING WOMEN THROUGH INCOME GENERATING ACTIVITIES

To address this, Action Against Hunger launched a food security and livelihoods project in 2016 specifically targeting 160 female single-headed households whose businesses were damaged or lost during the last war. The main objective of the programme was to support small income generating activities in order to increase disposable income for these highly vulnerable families. The income generating activities combined cash assistant for women's micro-business generating activities, managerial training courses and business plan development.

USING A SMALL-SCALE INTERVENTION TO ADVOCATE ON THE BIG ISSUES

Because 2017 marked 10 years of blockade on Gaza, and 50 years of Israeli occupation in the occupied Palestinian territory, Action Against Hunger launched an advocacy campaign alongside the income generating activities programme. The campaign used the stories of 10 of the targeted women to advocate on the broader issues in Gaza such as:

• The impact of electricity black-outs and water shortage

• High unemployment rates, especially amongst women

• Lack of access to quality raw materials due to import restrictions

• The inability to expand businesses and export goods due to restrictions on exports and the movement of people.

ENHANCED DATA AS A RESULT OF STRONGER RELATIONSHIPS

Historically, we have found ourselves advocating on Gaza-related issues without being able to substantiate those messages with real-life examples from our programming. However, the nature of our income generating activities programme meant that we spent time building strong relationships with the targeted women, which gave us the data we needed to illustrate how the key issues in Gaza were affecting them directly. We were then able to create strong and targeted advocacy messages to attract the attention of and influence policy, decision makers, and donors.

ONGOING CHALLENGES

Demonstrating impact on a larger scale: we want to demonstrate that our programme is having an impact on these women's lives, and to demonstrate how the situation in Gaza is affecting them, but to do so requires a lot of strong and timely data. This requires someone with the ability to crunch data and translate it into effective advocacy messages. During this project we had the resources to gather the necessary data but had to limit our expectations in terms of what impact we would be able to show as a direct result of our intervention. In part, this was because the short timeframe only allowed us to show the immediate impact of our

programming, rather than the longer-term change. The other element was that, as a small-scale intervention targeting 160 women and their families, we could not realistically state that the changes in their lives have influenced the economic situation in Gaza on a larger scale.

Short-term funding: short-term funding for interventions means that we cannot show the longer-term changes that result from our programming. This further limits the impact we are able to demonstrate in terms of the high-level results of the income generating activities and a continued advocacy campaign.

WHAT DID WE LEARN?

• Continue monitoring beyond the lifespan of the programme if possible, and use the results to advocate for more funding and further action

• Monitoring and good data crunching are both crucial to creating strong and up-to-date advocacy messages

• Building relationships with beneficiaries in such a targeted intervention allows for greater programme learning, and can bring underlying issues to the surface, which might not otherwise have been captured.

HOW IS THIS LEARNING INCORPORATED INTO OTHER PROGRAMMES?

• **Continuity:** this programme has been followed-up with a new round of funding from the same donor which enables us to build on the data, learning and established relationships we have with the women in this intervention.

• **Sustainability:** we are looking to support these women in gaining business licenses to grow their businesses, and build links between women and the traders, local authorities and ministries that can continue to support these micro-business owners in the future.

• **Changing policy:** the campaign was

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used for advocating on broader issues in Gaza and in turn contributed to policy change, showing how effective this approach could be for future initiatives. Specifically, our advocacy messaging contributed to a stronger condemnation of the electricity cuts by the international community.

Additionally, the 'de-development' of Gaza is an argument often used by European Union Member States when advocating for longer-term interventions in Gaza.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This small project resulted in some big wins from our advocacy push in Gaza, while also having an impact on the lives of the 160 targeted women and their families. For future programmes, we should consider continuing or doing more of the following:

Ensuring good monitoring and follow-up: this is key to measuring impact, and requires sufficient planning, resources and time to be effective.

Celebrating the small successes: Despite this being a small-scale intervention, the impact it has had on the women and their families, as well as the advocacy impact it brought, is well worth celebrating.

Establishing good collaboration between teams: A good working relationship with the technical team

supporting the beneficiaries and gathering the data, and a common understanding of your advocacy messages, is key to making the advocacy campaign as effective as possible.

Being realistic: Your advocacy messages need to be credible to be effective, and it is therefore important to work with the technical team to manage expectations and set a realistic target for your campaign.

Supporting women: this should be done in even the smallest interventions, as this can have great impact on the situation of both women and their families. It can also lead to changes in perception of women's role in society, as was the case in this intervention where the women reported increased trust and respect from male traders.

APPLICABILITY

Although Gaza is a very particular context, an income generating activity programme targeting women is relevant in all contexts where women's access to food is limited due to a lack of access to markets and/or resources.

The learning related to linking an advocacy campaign to a specific intervention is applicable to any context where advocating on broader issues can be helped by substantiating those messages with real-life examples from our programming.

SUPPLY CHAIN EXPENDITURES AND PREPAREDNESS INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN THE HUMANITARIAN CONTEXT

Jean-Baptiste Lamarche

Logistics and Information Systems Director
France

INTRODUCTION

We are currently facing a number of complex challenges in our sector, which are being exacerbated by the growing funding gap for humanitarian programming. Globally, 40 per cent of appeals coordinated through the United Nations remain unmet.[16] In an effort to address this, the international humanitarian community gathered in May 2016 at the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul where a new 'Agenda for Humanity' was shared with the purpose of achieving "better, safer and more efficient aid".

A key element of this is finding efficient (cost-saving) and effective (time-saving) investment and operating approaches to humanitarian programming. In preparation for the World Humanitarian Summit, the Global Logistics Cluster together with Kuehne Logistics University, HELP Logistics and a number of INGOs including Action Against Hunger, published the paper titled 'Delivering in a Moving World'.[17] This paper focused on the importance of logistics and supply chain management for efficient and effective humanitarian operations, discussed the current challenges and provided recommendations for overcoming them.

EVIDENCING THE ASSUMPTIONS IN ACTION AGAINST HUNGER

Action Against Hunger France contributed actively to the paper presented at the World Humanitarian Summit, strongly supporting the key message that the supply chain, as a backbone of humanitarian operations, bears tremendous potential to make aid more efficient and effective.

As a follow-up to the summit, Action Against Hunger France wanted to push the recommendations further and refine our organisational supply chain strategy accordingly. To ensure any changes or recommendations were based on data relevant to us, the first step was to have an evidence-based assessment on the significance of supply chain management within the organisation. In November 2017 Action Against Hunger France completed an 18-month study conducted with HELP Logistics and Kuehne Logistics University on 'Supply Chain Expenditures and

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16   UNOCHA. (2017, April 4). Appeals and Response Plans 2016. Retrieved from https://fts.unocha.org/appeals/overview/2016

17   Guerrero-Garcia, S., Lamarche, J.-B., Vince, R., Cahill, S., & Besiou, M. (2016). Delivering in a Moving World. Logistics Cluster.

Preparedness Investment Opportunities',[18] evidencing how sector assumptions relate to the organisation and providing recommendations for a way forward, both for the organisation and the sector as a whole.

THE COST OF SUPPLY CHAIN

There is a widespread assumption that supply chain represents between 60 to 80 per cent of humanitarian expenditure.[19] To validate whether this was the case for Action Against Hunger we entered into a third-party partnership with Kuehne Logistics University and HELP Logistics who carried out an independent study between June 2016 and September 2017. By analysing Action Against Hunger's costs in six major relief operations,[20] covering natural disasters, complex emergencies

and epidemics in the past 15 years, they found that the supply chain expenses of the examined operations ranged from 62 to 79 per cent with an average of 69 per cent.

While this study validated the assumption that supply chain expenditures accounted for the greater part of Action Against Hunger's previous relief operations, the question of how this knowledge could be used to save money, reduce lead times and enhance service quality for future operations, remained. Though it was now evident that 60 to 80 per cent of our emergency costs were supply chain related, we did not yet have any recommendations on how to make these activities more efficient or effective.

SAVING COSTS BY INVESTING IN PREPAREDNESS

Traditionally, most humanitarian funding is provided after a disaster has happened. The World Humanitarian Summit paper however, highlighted that investments in supply chain preparedness measures could go a long way towards achieving more efficient and effective responses.

A study from the United Nations Development Fund[21] which analysed the resilience of disaster prone countries found that every dollar invested in fighting

people's vulnerability prior to a disaster can save seven dollars in economic losses afterwards. Would this hold true for Action Against Hunger's emergency operations? To find out whether the 1:7 ratio was applicable to our organisation we decided to extend our collaboration with Kuehne Logistics University and HELP Logistics to conduct a return on investment study on the delivery of non-food items in the context of the relief responses to the earthquakes in Haiti and Nepal.

The primary objective of the study was to obtain a better understanding of potential areas of preparedness investment, and to identify the most beneficial ones. The return on investment study also aimed to support Action Against Hunger's International Strategic Plan 2016-2020 and to help the organisation meet the target of developing emergency preparedness and response plans in all country offices.

APPROACH

Based on a pre-defined Disaster Preparedness Framework, Kuehne Logistics University and HELP Logistics developed an analysis tool to compare scenarios with and without investments in the areas of:

- Personnel
- IT/Processes
- Prepositioning

18 Stumpf, J., Guerrero-Garcia, S., Lamarche, J., Besiou, M., Rafter, S. 'Supply Chain Expenditure & Preparedness Investment Opportunities in the Humanitarian Context' Action Contre la Faim – Action Against Hunger France

19 Van Wassenhove, L. (2006). Humanitarian aid logistics: supply chain management in high gear. Journal of the Operational Research Society, 57(5), 475-489.

20 Tsunami in Indonesia (2005), Conflict in Central African Republic (2009-2015), Earthquake in Haiti (2010), Cholera outbreak in Haiti (2010), Ebola crisis in Liberia and Sierra Leone (2013), and Earthquake in Nepal (2015)

21 UNDP 2012, Putting Resilience at the Heart of Development: Investing in Prevention and Resilient Recovery

- Supplier Management, and

- Local Actors/Community

To accommodate both one-off investments and flexible running costs, and to consider the fact that investments take time until they fully unfold, the analysis tool contained dynamic calculation methods. Subsequently, the return on investment is significantly determined by the time that investments are made and the time that disasters happen.

DEMONSTRATING THE POTENTIAL FOR COST-SAVINGS IN OUR EMERGENCY RESPONSES

In the case of the Haiti earthquake, the model demonstrated that an amount of €115,000 invested one year and two months (439 days) before the catastrophe happened could have led to total saving of €938,000. This is equal to 42 per cent of the total expenses.

Likewise, in the case of the Nepal earthquake, it was demonstrated that an investment of €39,000 invested two months (71 days) before the earthquake could have achieved savings of €341,000, or 39 per cent of the total expenses. In both situations the 1:7 ratio occurs at a certain point in time. In addition to the cost savings, the study showed that significant lead time reductions of 21 days can be achieved, where 28 days was the lead time without investment compared to a 7 days lead time with investment.

CONCLUSIONS

Invest earlier and smarter to address the funding gap

The 'Supply Chain Expenditures and Preparedness Investment Opportunities' study proved that the findings from the World Humanitarian Summit report also resonated with Action Against Hunger:

- 60–80 per cent of our emergency costs are on supply chain, making it a key focus for cost savings on our operations, and

- Every euro invested prior to a disaster can save seven euros, if not more, during emergency response.

The results emphasise that humanitarian agencies, donors, governments and commercial partners should recognise and further explore that supply chain and logistics is the critical business component of an efficient and effective response. By examining the significant potential these findings suggest, the humanitarian community should take into consideration that more money is not the only way to close the funding gap. In fact, investing earlier and smarter could ultimately reduce the requirements and help the whole community of humanitarian actors to do more with less.

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TAKING THE FINDINGS FORWARD FOR ACTION AGAINST HUNGER

This study has been officially presented at a number of events[22] to share the findings as widely as possible. In addition to the dissemination of the study and advocacy on greater inclusion of supply chain into humanitarian programming, Action Against Hunger France is using the findings from the study to:

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22 *Preparing For Shock: Is Preparedness the New Frontier?* conference in Geneva on the 14th March 2018 where stakeholders from the preparedness community presented other studies which confirmed the results of our study. *Humanitarian Network Partnership Week* in Geneva on the 6th of February 2018 where donors showed a great interest in the findings. *Global Logistics Cluster* meeting in Leysin on the 28th November 2017, where this reports strongly supports the Preparedness and Advocacy pillar of the Global Logistics Cluster strategy, and will be used by many other organisations. *Forum Espace Humanitaire* (FEH) in January 2018, an event organised by the Fondation Merieux bringing together many INGO CEOs and Humanitarian Experts.

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- Review its emergency response strategy by increasing preparedness capacity in operational countries as well as at the global level

- At the global level, the emergency team now embeds preparedness support activities such as training and accompanying country teams in designing their emergency and preparedness strategies

- Some of the international emergency stocks are being re-positioned and placed directly in countries in order to reduce lead-time

- Framework agreements are negotiated with local suppliers in order to have access to essential goods when an emergency occurs

- Global and field ICT teams are reinforced and empowered to enable an adequate and resilient flow of information

- Information systems are being developed and deployed in the field, especially Link (a supply chain management software), to guarantee access to reliable information on supply chain stocks and flows

By implementing key recommendations from the study, Action Against Hunger is increasing its capacity to respond on time and with a major improvement in efficiency.

APPLYING FINDINGS TO THE SECTOR

Although this piece of work informs the way Action Against Hunger approaches its emergency responses, we need other players in the sector to join us if we hope to see these cost-saving approaches contribute to closing the global funding gap. We have shared the recommendations from the study with other organisations, with the intention of looking at possible pooling of resources as the next step following this study. HELP Logistics and Kuehne Logistics University are also offering to conduct similar studies for other interested NGOs, UN agencies and donors in order to refine the model, validate the results and increase the impact of the findings on a larger scale.

So far, Humanity and Inclusion, Tearfund, and Concern have conducted 60 to 80 per cent of the study and confirmed the results. UNICEF, Save the Children, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the International Organization for Migration have agreed to conduct the 1:7 return on investment study in 2018.

BARRIER ANALYSIS CAPITALISATION

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WHAT IS BARRIER ANALYSIS?

Barrier analysis is a rapid assessment that aims to inform design of behaviour change projects by identifying the main enablers and barriers to behaviour adoption. This qualitative and quantitative method compares 'doers' and 'non-doers' (people who practice the behaviour and people who don't) regarding 12 determinants influencing behaviour. The barrier analysis methodology was introduced a couple of years ago in Action Against Hunger programming and has been used in at least four countries.

CAPITALISING ON BARRIER ANALYSIS

In 2017, Action Against Hunger in France and the USA conducted a review exercise to capitalise on this experience. The capitalisation consisted of interviews with field workers from eight country teams who have completed a barrier analysis. The countries included were Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Haiti, Kenya, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Uganda. A total of 40 barrier analyses were discussed, most completed between 2015 an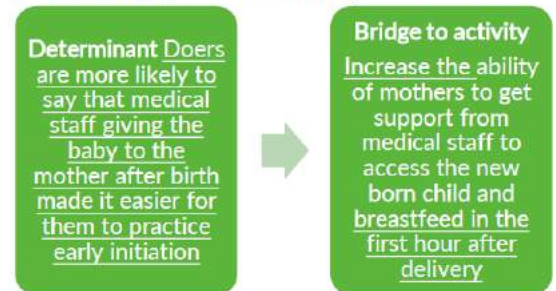d 2017, covering behaviours related to: food security and livelihoods; water, sanitation and hygiene; mental health and care practices; and nutrition and health. The interviews discussed the country office's reasons for doing a barrier analysis, the advantages and challenges, limitations, use of results to design activities, and recommendations.

WHY CONDUCT A BARRIER ANALYSIS?

The main reasons to conduct a barrier analysis were to understand why a specific behaviour is practiced or not, and identify the reasons for which ongoing activities did not lead to a successful behaviour change. Among its advantages, it teaches field workers to really listen to beneficiaries' opinions and help them to understand issues from their perspective; it then allowed them to develop a clear strategy, recommendations, and solutions. Although they may face some difficulties, conducting barrier analyses is an empowering experience for Action Against Hunger field workers. It can help staff to really listen to beneficiaries' point of view and identify the key determinants influencing behaviours. It urges them to reflect on the activities they usually do and to propose creative solutions.

Example: BA, analysis and bridges to activities
Behaviour: Mothers put the new born to the breast within one hour of delivery

Determinant Doers are more likely to say that medical staff giving the baby to the mother after birth made it easier for them to practice early initiation

Bridge to activity Increase the ability of mothers to get support from medical staff to access the new born child and breastfeed in the first hour after delivery

Examples of behaviours studied through BA

Pregnant women eat meals each day that contains food from the 4 food groups.

Mothers of children 0-59 months wash their hands with soap at the 5 critical times each day.

Livestock owners sell their animals before drought to prevent losses.

CHALLENGES IN CONDUCTING AND ANALYSING

Overall the method is easy to use, however several difficulties were mentioned regarding: the use of the Excel sheet for tabulation, the interpretation of perceived risk and severity determinants, data quality due to lack of probing during interviews, and translation. The main challenge remains converting the findings into behaviour change activities. Most of these can be overcome by strengthening the barrier analysis methodology expertise in the field through training and technical support.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1 The barrier analysis methodology is best placed at the beginning of a program and after a knowledge, attitudes and practice (KAP) survey, where project teams can use the results from the survey to study a specific behaviour in the barrier analysis.

2 Training and technical support is important; at least one initial training and timely support at critical stages of the study implementation is needed. A complete barrier analysis training requires five to six days, and at least three days for follow-up training are essential.

3 Use the Designing for Behaviour Change (DBC) Framework as a tool to summarise the barrier analysis and design a behaviour change strategy. Barrier analysis results are generally used to inform activities but so far, translating it into implementation is limited. Teams need to feel empowered enough to make changes. There is a need for technical support on how to adapt activities, but this area remains a challenge. After developing the behaviour change strategy, pilot and monitor the activities to see if the new approaches work and then scale up.

FURTHER RESEARCH TO EXPLORE

More rigorous research would be needed to look at how the findings from barrier analysis influence programming, and evaluate to what extent using barrier analysis leads to better outcomes in terms of adopting practices. Further monitoring and research is also needed, such as looking in detail at project monthly reports and social and behaviour change documents developed based on barrier analysis findings and observation of how the use of barrier analysis influences programming.

QUOTES FROM STAFF INVOLVED IN BARRIER ANALYSES:

"Things that came up (in the findings) were surprising: what we had imagined was different from the reality. It made the team realise that they had to move from their own perception to the beneficiaries' one".

"They adapted the programme sensitisation plans and activities based on the challenges faced by the non-doers. They [the team] were surprised by the social norms results. This was not what was expected."

KEY RESOURCES

Barrier Analysis Principle Manuals

A Practical Guide to Conducting a Barrier Analysis; CoreGroup, October 2013: http://www.coregroup.org/storage/barrier/Practical_Guide_to_Conducting_a_Barrier_Analysis_Oct_2013.pdf

Behaviour Change Toolkit; People in Need, May 2017: https://www.clovekvtisni.cz/uploads/file/1498144203-Behaviour%20Change%20Toolkit_mail.pdf

Advanced Workshop on Designing for Behavior Change: Focus on Activities: http://www.fsnnetwork.org/advanced-workshop-designing-behavior-change-focus-activities

Dropbox of Barrier Analysis Questionnaires: https://www.dropbox.com/sh/6z6nljljxh1jimi/AAD566C7B8_yVPkoos5e7GZGa?dl=0

Presentation Video on Barrier Analysis, CareGroup: http://caregroupinfo.org/vids/bavid/player.html

Behaviour change theories and approach

Scientific and Technical Department, ABC Assisting Behaviour Change, Part 1 Theories and Models, December 2013 Action Contre la Faim – France: http://www.actionagainsthunger.org/sites/default/files/publications/ACF_Manual_Assisting_Behaviour_Change_Part2_Dec13.pdf

WORKING AS A NETWORK: DEVELOPING A DFID PORTFOLIO FOR BANGLADESH

Joanne Honeybone

Senior DFID Relations Manager UK

During 2017, the Action Against Hunger UK Department for International Development (DFID) team worked closely with Action Against Hunger Bangladesh, as well as other teams in the UK and France, to support the Bangladesh programme on its advocacy and fund-raising with the UK Government and the wider sector. We asked Jo to share her experience from this collaboration and to highlight the learnings of collaborating with different teams on a very important objective.

TELL US ABOUT HOW IT ALL STARTED....

The Action Against Hunger UK DFID team is part of the Action Against Hunger Network International Donor Relations Unit (IDRU), as well as the Action Against Hunger UK Operations Department. The main purpose of our work is to support country offices and other teams within the Action Against Hunger Network to inform and influence the UK Government's aid and development nutrition-related policies and programming, and to increase our funding from DFID. We

do this through regular engagement with the network and providing a range of support.

During regular Skype calls with Action Against Hunger's Asia regional director and contact with the Bangladesh and Myanmar country directors, we continue to identify opportunities for funding and for informing DFID's approach, particularly to the Rohingya crisis. While the initial relationship development and discussions were done at the country level, early alert and engagement with the UK DFID team enabled us to be responsive to country offices' needs and provide a range of services.

We supported Action Against Hunger Bangladesh to secure a total of £10,195,938 from DFID-related funds during 2017. This included funding from the Start Fund and the United Nations Office for Project Services (which administer funding on behalf of DFID) to respond to Cyclone Mora and the Rohingya crisis in Cox's Bazaar, and to host the secretariat of the inaugural national Start Fund Bangladesh.

Our support included: liaising with the donors; writing and reviewing proposals and reports, contract negotiations; advising on due diligence requirements; and ensuring strategic coherence with Action Against Hunger's overall engagement and approach with DFID and UK partners.

WAS THERE ANY ADDITIONAL SUPPORT PROVIDED?

Our participation in the UK Rohingya Inter-Agency Group, which meets regularly with DFID and the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, enabled us to co-ordinate with other agencies and to inform and influence the UK Government's approach to the Rohingya crisis, and subsequently raise the profile of Action Against Hunger's work in Bangladesh and Myanmar. We ensured that this complemented Action Against Hunger Bangladesh's communications with DFID and partners in-country.

We also worked with our UK Communications team **to raise awareness of Action Against Hunger's**

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Bangladesh work with DFID and the wider UK public, including a press trip to programmes in Cox's Bazaar with The Guardian newspaper. Our UK fundraising team also raised additional funding from UK supporters, with our UK advocacy manager, monitoring and evaluation, and nutrition teams providing further support.

WHAT MADE THIS EFFORT SUCCESSFUL?

The Action Against Hunger Bangladesh team have been very open to have external support and have regularly engaged with the DFID team and UK office. Through Skype and emails, the Bangladesh team have provided us with regular updates on the emergency situation, needs, operational progress and challenges, as well as their discussions with DFID in Bangladesh and other partners such as the Start Network and potential consortia partners. This has helped us to develop good relations with the country office, enabling us to provide appropriate, informed, and timely support, specifically in co-writing proposals, providing guidance on funding opportunities, developing proposal content and budgets, reporting requirements, and contract amendments and negotiations with DFID and potential partners. This has helped ensure that **our approaches and key messages were consistent and strategic in-country, in the UK, and Network-wide**, and that the discussions we had with donors and partners in Bangladesh could be complemented by discussions with their

counterparts in the UK.

We also developed **good communications and regular engagement** with the Action Against Hunger France Asia desk and regional director through regular calls. The regional director's visits to the UK helped the DFID team and other teams in the UK to learn more about the situation in the region and we successfully used the opportunity to conduct meetings with DFID's Asia advisors. This regular interaction helped to ensure a network-wide approach and to address problems and identify opportunities early and appropriately. Similarly, we engaged directly and regularly with the Action Against Hunger Myanmar office for support on the Rohingya crisis.

We were able to draw on our other teams in the UK (fundraising, monitoring, evaluation and learning services, communications, nutrition and advocacy) for support, sharing information between us to provide a 'complementary package' of support.

Our communications team, for example, travelled out to Bangladesh to gather case studies, photos and content for the Network to use for internal communications and external media work, and posted blogs and stories on our website and social media for International Women's Day. Additionally, when the DFID secretary of state visited Bangladesh, our contacts with the organisation's official photographer meant that we were able to

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IDC/ Rohingya crisis enquiry

https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/international-development-committee/inquiries/parliament-2017/dfids-work-on-bangladesh-burma-17-19/

UK blog on Rohingya crisis

https://www.actionagainsthunger.org.uk/blog/rohingyas-bangladesh

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get photos and interviews of the secretary of state visiting Action Against Hunger's work into the UK mainstream press.

Our nutrition team provided training to different stakeholders, which led to a coverage assessment and remote support. Our UK advocacy manager worked with the regional director and country directors of Bangladesh and Myanmar to engage with the UK Parliament's International Development Committee Rohingya Crisis Inquiry. It led to the International Development Committee requesting a visit to our programmes in Bangladesh and Myanmar and as a result meeting with Action Against Hunger staff in Bangladesh. Our active participation in the UK Inter-agency Rohingya Group also enabled us to co-ordinate with other agencies, raise the profile of our work on the Rohingya crises and meet directly with the UK Government, **so that the experience of our operations with Rohingya populations could inform the UK Government's approach to the on-going crisis.**

The UK fundraising team also secured an additional total of £75,000 from the Innocent Foundation and the Alborada Trust, to support Action Against Hunger Bangladesh's programmes.

Action Against Hunger UK's membership of the Start Network enabled us to provide guidance to the team in Bangladesh on the Start Fund and the Start Network's wider vision on localisation. Our participation in the Start Network Assembly and committees enabled us to link those strategic discussions to operations at country level. The Bangladesh country director was able to participate with us in these discussions. By providing ongoing support on the proposal writing, contract negotiations, budgeting, grant management and Start and DFID liaison, **we supported Action Against Hunger Bangladesh to secure both Phase I and Phase II contracts to host the Start Fund Bangladesh Secretariat (total £5,765,938).**

WHAT IS THE BENEFIT IN ACTION AGAINST HUNGER FIELD OFFICES WORKING CLOSELY WITH THE DFID TEAM IN THE UK?

The DFID team at Action Against Hunger has long-standing experience of working with the UK Government. In 2017, for example, we supported the Network to secure 32 new grants, totalling over £33,577,711. Our learning from engaging with DFID and the wider UK sector, and of having an oversight and strategic steer of all of Action Against Hunger's DFID-related engagement and funding, has enabled us to share this experience and knowledge to fully support Action Against Hunger Bangladesh. Similarly, we have been able to use the learning from our work with Action Against Hunger Bangladesh to inform our support and programmes in other countries e.g. the development of other national Start Fund initiatives and liaising with the United Nations Office for Project Services as fund managers for DFID.

REGIONALISATION APPROACH - THE MEAL PERSPECTIVE(S)

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The global humanitarian context is rapidly changing due to the nature, scale and complexity of crises, and as such most organisations are re-thinking their operational models and adapting to the context. Action Against Hunger initiated a process of decentralisation to empower country offices in terms of autonomy and decision-making. The creation of two regional office, the West Africa Regional Office and Middle East Regional Office, in 2009 and 2013 respectively aspired to make technical expertise more accessible to country offices, and to make interactions with regional stakeholders such as donors, UN coordination bodies, regional organisations and local civil society more efficient.

The Middle East Regional Office was established jointly by eight offices in the middle-east and in consultation with the respective Action Against Hunger members (France and Spain). Several technical experts were appointed to provide continuous and timely support to the countries where our projects are implemented, under the leadership of a regional representative who focuses on liaising with regional stakeholders, especially donors.

The regionalisation approach had positive effects in mainstreaming MEAL and integrating MEAL into programmes, particularly in the Middle East Region. Besides that, it promoted collaboration, coordination, and exchange of support at regional level, as well as willingness for harmonisation and standardisation of MEAL systems. Below are some practical learnings and experience that illustrate some progress and benefits of this approach.

CHANGE IN PERCEPTION

The perception of staff around MEAL has improved due to the contribution made and quality of work produced during 2017 by MEAL advisors and heads of department in both the region and country offices, and since then related activities and positions have been dedicated to this function. Through an online satisfaction survey (December 2017), several MEAL staff had some positive reflections:

- "Now everyone seeks our support while developing proposals, conducting assessments, and in all programme-related key decisions."

- "Yes, entirely there was no MEAL in 2016, and we developed a MEAL culture."

- "[...] My mission and I have a clear view about MEAL function and goals in the region."

HUMAN RESOURCES

Currently MEAL is considered as a separate unit/department within most of the country offices in the Middle East. The MEAL structure has improved, meaning an increase in the number of relevant staff who also have clear roles and responsibilities at different levels. The guidance documents are available on the international MEAL space on the Intranet (No Hunger Forum).

THE REGIONAL MEAL INITIATIVE

The regional MEAL initiative started in late 2016. The process was initiated through a MEAL diagnostic, to study the existing MEAL systems, structure and functions within each country office at coordination and programme/project level. This participatory process identified the MEAL 'grey areas', challenges, needs and good practices. The process comprised an online survey addressed to coordination and field staff, followed by a documentary review and meetings with field teams, so the whole process lasted for 1-2 months per country team. The results were formulated into a report with a plan of action for each country office aiming to strengthen the existing MEAL systems. These results were then used to inform a regional MEAL strategy and the creation of several supporting documents (MEAL minimum standards, proposed structure, roles and responsibilities etc.), that country offices could use as guidance and adapt into their context.

INCREASED USE OF MEAL TOOLS IN MONITORING AND DATA MANAGEMENT

The country office MEAL focal points are now more engaged in proposal development, using the Action Against Hunger M&E Guidelines and Toolkit as a guidance document for developing indicators, designing M&E and measurement plans and standardised thematic tools in their routine and periodic monitoring processes. The project baseline and endline, post distribution monitoring, KAP studies and other programme surveys are now carried out in coordination with programmes while utilising these standard survey tools.

During the first Action Against Hunger regional MEAL workshop in July 2017, MEAL staff were trained on business intelligence software (Power BI) in collaboration with iMMAP, which aimed to address the challenges of data utilisation, data analysis, presentation and mapping faced by many teams in the field. The regional effort partnering with iMMAP was viewed as very productive for staff and Action Against Hunger in the region; iMMAP provided free practical training during this workshop, as well as customised training for the Syria and Lebanon office staff. This served as a start to building strong links between organisations. The existence of a regional office demonstrates the opportunity to benefit from these types of services, such as the iMMAP's project on capacity building to NGOs/INGOs in the region (Jordan).[23]

EVALUATION AND LEARNING

The Action Against Hunger Network is very rich in terms of technical resources and expertise in specific sectors. Although information sharing and coordination happens at a higher level between headquarters and field offices when they have direct management links, this was not previously the case for the Middle East country offices in relation to Action Against Hunger non-project implementing members. The decentralisation through regional offices enables better linkages and the provision of services across the Action Against Hunger network. Despite the fact that previously staff in the region were not even aware of the services provided by the ELA team in the UK in supporting the management of external evaluations, in 2017 several evaluations were conducted for Middle East projects, with technical support and guidance from the ELA team.

The regionalisation approach also connects headquarters and implementing countries especially in terms of communication, MEAL related support, sharing good practices, creating linkages with MEAL at network level, and cross country learning as a motivational factor for field offices to progress and bring innovation. **Regionalisation of MEAL functions has also been an opportunity to harmonise** **MEAL standards within the region and align them with the Headquarter MEAL strategy/approach and good practices. This hopefully creates a space for reflection and for generating a coherent MEAL system for Action Against Hunger as a network.**

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23   http://immap.org/office/jordan

REFLECTIONS FROM MEAL AND REGIONAL FOCAL POINTS

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FOR TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Action Against Hunger International is a network of 6 members with 50 country offices worldwide. In the Middle East, we are a significant humanitarian player with eight country offices managed by two different headquarters. This means different MEAL approaches, different tools, and different levels of maturity with regards to MEAL standards. However, donors and, above all, beneficiaries, are global. They share the same expectations and needs. They deserve the same quality in our programming and it is our commitment to demonstrate in full transparency how we implement our operations. It is a question of legitimacy and credibility for all humanitarian organisations. Therefore, it was critical for us to go beyond the differences we may have within our network and propose a uniform methodology at regional level while respecting the specificities of each country office. [...]

This is particularly important because of the nature of the humanitarian crises we have to face in the region, manmade conflicts. One of the main constraints we have to face in the region is access. In such an environment, MEAL plays a bigger role. How can we guarantee to our donors and beneficiaries that assistance reaches the most vulnerable, the most in need? In the light of the recent allegations of sexual exploitation within humanitarian assistance, how can we make sure that feedback and complaint mechanisms are well in place? Today, this is a joint responsibility of our country offices, the regional office and the headquarters. Zero tolerance is our principle; our MEAL departments put tools in place to make sure our principle is respected.

Arnaud Phipps, Regional Representative

THE RELEVANCE OF MEAL

The MEAL regional office has significantly contributed to cover the existing gap in our offices, where no MEAL department or MEAL specific positions have been approved until 2018. The excellence of the MEAL activities in the region has also contributed to visibility for the relevance of MEAL and the importance in harmonising and offering regular supervision and technical support to MEAL teams in the field. The MEAL regional office is highly relevant and much needed in order to build a common and strategic MEAL approach in the Action Against Hunger Network. The high technical quality of the Middle East Regional Office MEAL adviser in particular has helped us to increase the quality, knowledge and relevance of our key MEAL staff, and increase our MEAL outcomes.

Ana Martin, Quality Desk Officer Action Against Hunger Spain

REGIONALISATION AND EVALUATION

Action Against Hunger is evolving towards a decentralised model to make sure learnings are captured and utilised as close as possible to where programmes are implemented. The regionalisation of the evaluation capacity is essential since it demonstrates the value of contextual specificities in shaping relevant evaluation questions and the importance of recognising how much of a priority a certain issue is within a determined geography. For this reason, the role of MEAL support at the regional level is expanding its capacity across the Network to ensure evaluations generate learning that can be used in similar contexts.

The role of regionalisation in evaluation practice is particularly important in an evolving funding environment where unforeseeable risks and volatile contextual forces are defining factors to consider for the success of a programme. For these projects, the attempt to link multi-country evaluation evidence to regional approaches could further position Action Against Hunger as a reliable partner to implement global calls. The role of a MEAL support function at the regional level represents the essential step to maximise the uptake of recommendations produced from

evaluations across programmes that are increasingly larger and more complex, which large donors are keen to finance more than ever before.

As regional approaches in delivering large-scale contracts are increasingly preferred, the establishment of a network of regional MEAL focal points can yield greater returns when positioning evaluation evidence with relevant stakeholders and donors. For example, Action Against Hunger could optimise the use of evaluation evidence through the support of regional MEAL focal points to advocate for future funding with both private and public donors. There is great potential to use high-level change evidence cumulated from the previous years and having evaluation capacity at the regional level could help with using this.

Nicola Giordano, Head of Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Services, UK

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CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Though the decentralisation of MEAL has positive impact, there is still more to do at regional level as well as at network level.

1 Replicating a decentralised model

The decentralisation model including MEAL as functional area could be extended to other country offices that do not currently have additional regional structures. The support can be extended by linking the respective country with a regional focal person to obtain ad hoc support as and when required. As an example of these linkages, the Georgia team managed to participate in the 2017 Regional MEAL workshop.

2 Harmonisation of MEAL standards

Every Action Against Hunger Headquarter with direct management of projects[24] has minimum MEAL standards. These standards vary for each headquarter. It is often quite difficult for a regional focal person to harmonise MEAL systems or staff roles and responsibilities for country offices under different headquarter's management in same region. Even if MEAL systems are harmonised it can be difficult to implement because of different priorities. Therefore, the Network should consider developing common MEAL standards approved by all members and which can be adapted based on the context and donor requirements.

24   Action Against Hunger in France, Spain and USA.

3 Staff Retention and localisation of MEAL Positions

In 2016-2017, there was high turnover of MEAL staff. Those who started the MEAL diagnostic process are no more in the country offices. The turnover is not limited to the MEAL but at all levels (Management, Operations, Technical roles). As a consequence, the effort and time to hire new teams, handover existing work, introduce newcomers to MEAL practices and build good working relationships takes considerably more time. As a recommendation, we should consider our MEAL staff development plans in a way that allow a smooth handover process, managing an additional level, and retaining staff for longer by investing in professional development and building national staff capacity.

4 MEAL at Project Design Stage

The engagement of MEAL staff in proposal design stage is very important for proposal quality, project implementation and the monitoring of results. It has been observed that sometimes project indicators are not properly aligned with results, which leads to poor MEAL budgeting and later quality issues evident at implementation stage. This could be improved through exchange of information within units, capacity building of Grants Officers and proposal writers on MEAL standards and vice versa.

5 MEAL integration in Technical Trainings/Workshops

Annual technical workshops are among the good practices of the Action Against Hunger Network. Engagement of MEAL staff in these trainings can be very productive for cross learning, sharing and understanding of thematic programmes, new developments and future planning. This will not only help MEAL teams to understand the technical aspects of programmes and to better support them in measuring the sector-specific indicators, but also provide project staff with quality survey design, data analysis and visualisation skills.

6 MEAL and Accountability

Accountability is a key requirement for every donor, organisation, government and community. Action Against Hunger has developed various accountability systems such as Whistleblowing, Child protection and Risk Management policies, as well as Accountability guidelines and Feedback and Complaint mechanisms specific to field offices or projects. However, awareness on these policies and guidelines needs to be further strengthened. Therefore awareness raising sessions, meetings, and information sharing through dissemination of information education & communication materials are useful. The MEAL country teams should lead on international quality standards (Core Humanitarian Standard, etc.) and beneficiary accountability mechanisms to improve and strengthen the existing systems, especially in relation to registering and responding to complaints and feedback from beneficiaries.

EVALUATION TRENDS: MOVING BEYOND THE OECD/DAC CRITERIA

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EVALUATION AND ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

One of the latest trends in Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) is adaptive management, which increasingly recognises the importance of evaluation as part of the MEAL spectrum and as an essential step when taking management decisions. One of the greatest benefits stemming from institutional donors' increased focus on adaptive management is a widening recognition of the need to learn, iterate and adapt through evaluation as a continuous activity rather than a separate task. The ability to act based on evidence varies significantly depending on the willingness and expertise of programme managers and MEAL focal points to work together and review multiple kinds of evaluation information at various stages throughout a project life cycle. The current trend indicates that financing inputs is not enough for donors anymore; demonstrating long-term changes is the condition for large-scale projects.

When conducting evaluations with the objective to improve implementation, there are two dimensions to consider; a rigid or a flexible programme approach. In fact, there are two kinds of information needed from baseline to endline: knowledge of what causes change and knowledge of the context where project activities will be implemented. By addressing these two important questions in each evaluation, it will be easier to understand the kinds of data needed to inform how decisions are taken. For example: do we know enough about the target groups and their needs? Do we have enough equipment to improve a certain structural issue in the areas with the most acute exposure to it? Are we addressing an immediate shock or a long-term issue, or do extremes alternate? All these contextual variations inform the management style and the speed needed to make decisions, either to adapt to evolving risks or to consolidate results. In both cases, evaluation and evaluative monitoring require adequate methods to inform the programme manager.

For the reasons outlined above, strong evaluations entail the choice of suitable and feasible outcomes at the design stage. Since outcomes and impacts represent long-term changes – reduction of children's mortality, building resilience to climate change, reducing chronic food insecurity, etc. – the ability to forecast and attribute these types of behavioural or social transformation can be complicated without iterative learning about the context and solutions to the issue under consideration. Linear thinking does not always apply to long-term changes – for example, intra-household dynamics need to be considered when addressing access to food as much as supply chains. To tackle this complexity, it is advisable to consider rigorous use of mixed methods to inform quick responses to changes in contextual forces or assumptions on how long-term changes can be achieved. A culture of proving how long-term change happens needs significant organisational shifts to prioritise skills' development in generating and

analysing evaluative evidence, particularly evidence of structural changes and their scale in intervention areas.

Considering all these complexities, a transition to an evaluation approach that is less reactive and more forward-looking entails greater risks. In fact, it remains hard to predict and forecast long-term changes even though political representatives and the public are requesting greater scale – in depth and breadth – of results. There is greater agreement in situations requiring immediate response, such as natural disasters, but less for solutions needed on issues such as chronic undernutrition or even less tangible ones, like empowerment and policy implementation. However, in figuring out what works, there is scope and space to negotiate with evaluation evidence at hand, since donors themselves recognise the need for constant learning in volatile and unpredictable contexts. Donors are more open to resource ways to access adequate evaluation evidence in order to inform all their stakeholders.

The transition to a forward-looking approach will be finally successful when evaluation is recognised as internal learning priority rather than a compliance requirement, and when impact and outcome results from programmes are used to model costs and predict targets. The continuum of change will then become a space for evaluation to measure and validate from multiple facts occurring during implementation.

EVALUATION MODELS: INTERNAL VS. EXTERNAL AND HYBRID EVALUATIONS

With the understanding of how critical adaptive management, regionalisation and learning from evaluations is for future funding, Action Against Hunger is expanding its evaluation approach beyond OECD/DAC criteria. A traditional approach favouring the externalisation of evaluation as a reporting requirement is not advisable anymore. Large INGOs are clearly addressing the need to own their evaluations by 1) contextualising evaluation questions to the realities of project's stakeholders and 2) focusing on internal learning that can help improving current and future projects while remaining accountable to programme stakeholders.

Therefore, since 2017 Action Against Hunger started introducing new evaluation approaches leveraging on a mix of internal and external expertise and on the use of different types of media to convey evidence of results. Given the average low value of evaluation budgets, there seems to be a great opportunity to internalise some of these studies, which also requires early negotiation with the donor to establish the learning objective. The Evaluation, Learning and Accountability (ELA) team based in the UK appreciates the increase of internal evaluations as a more cost-effective and learning focused approach to measure long-term changes, as a reflection of evaluation trends among peer organisations. The following examples showcase alternative approaches in conducting evaluations in 2017.

EXAMPLE 1: HYBRID EVALUATION FOR NIGERIA FFP PROJECT

The overall objective of the assignment was to provide Evaluation and Learning direct support in-country to the external independent evaluation of the Nigeria B3C project 'Protecting and promoting the food and nutrition security in the Yobe State, Phase II, North Eastern Nigeria', funded by USAID/Food for Peace and implemented by Action Against Hunger in the USA and Nigeria. This support involved the accompaniment and assistance of an independent consultant by a UK staff for carrying out a final evaluation. A team of one independent consultant and one Action Against Hunger staff conducted the evaluation adopting a mixed-methods approach for quantitative (Household surveys) and qualitative (interviews and Focus Group Discussions) data, including the training of enumerators and the use of ODK forms.

The evaluation was not just structured according to the OECD/DAC criteria but was also focused on the broader programmatic learning for cash interventions incorporating nutrition and nutrition education elements. The preliminary findings workshop, which engaged programme staff, local government authority representatives, vendors and beneficiaries, along with the final report benefited from the internal learning about what worked well and what should be improved in beneficiary selection, cash and voucher distribution, monitoring, beneficiary feedback mechanisms and risk and fraud elimination. The external evaluator alongside the internal evaluator from the ELA team provided strategic and practical recommendations and highlighted good practices (i.e. the use of innovative technologies for the disbursement of cash: smart cards & biometric data) that can be applied in other Action Against Hunger projects. The final report is available on No Hunger Forum and on the ALNAP website:

https://www.alnap.org/system/files/
content/resource/files/main/201708-
nigeriab3c-final-evaluation-report.pdf

EXAMPLE 2: INTERNAL EVALUATION IN SYRIA FOR AN ECHO PROJECT

In September 2017, Action Against Hunger UK and Action Against Hunger Spain supported together the Syria country office with the internal evaluation of their one-year ECHO funded project: 'Emergency support to conflict affected population in Syria'. The main objective of this evaluation was to assess the quality of the project, focusing on the operational framework (processes and decisions) used throughout the project, assessing the processes leading to programmatic decisions in the following themes:

- **Identification of the needs:** Criteria, assessment tools and processes for selection of areas and beneficiaries;

- **Response Capacity:** Access mechanisms, modalities, coverage, quality of goods and services, timeliness;

- **Coordination:** Internal and external coordination, and information management;

- **Adaptation:** Monitoring and use of monitoring evidence to inform changing risks and intervention modalities accordingly.

This example demonstrates how Action Against Hunger promoted the use of internal evaluations as a tool to enhance operational performance, and to increase Action Against Hunger's accountability towards beneficiaries, partners, donors, and its own staff. Action Against Hunger UK assisted a Spanish HQ Desk Officer with developing a thorough methodology, data collection and the evaluation report. In addition, Action Against Hunger UK gained thorough understanding of the situation and helped the country office with a self-assessment on humanitarian principles following this study.

KEY RESOURCES AND LINKS

No Hunger Forum MEAL resources (login required)

ALNAP HELP Library (filter by Action Against Hunger) https://www.alnap.org/help-library

PUNC evaluation blog https://punceval.wordpress.com

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EXAMPLE 3: THE NUTRITION EMERGENCY POOL IN DRC

The evaluation for the nutrition emergency pool in DRC (PUNC), managed by the ELA team, was conducted by an external consultant who created a dedicated blog (https://punceval.wordpress.com) to share the process and the results of the study. The blog contains background materials, evidence and references that inform the final report. Field notes are also provided to give a sense of the conversations that took place, and to put evidence in context. Videos of programme stakeholders provide a real sense of the area of intervention and people's views, while also being instrumental in unveiling barriers and boosters that are specific to the local context.

The way evidence is organised on this digital platform allows a large audience to deepen understanding on how the evaluation process was undertaken and how evidence was collected. The digital approach enables users to access information collected from desk reviews, remote conversations, monitoring systems in place, workshops, work plans, meetings with primary stakeholders, debriefings and multimedia materials. The breadth of evidence accessible through the website is much larger than what we usually retrieve during external evaluations captured in text-focused reports. From this example, the UK team of Action Against Hunger will attempt to replicate this approach for both external and internal studies to best capitalise on a process-result learning continuum and, importantly, to showcase multi-media evidence more easily in the sector and relevant donors.

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LINKING WITH OTHER GLOBAL PRODUCTS

The Annual Learning Review is part of Action Against Hunger's Knowledge Project, aiming to increase learning, accountability and best practices across the Action Against Hunger network.

This product comes along with the following knowledge products:

KNOWLEDGE HUB

A repository of technical and strategic documents, guidance and tools from across the Action Against Hunger network.

RESEARCH REPORT 2017

This first report aims to provide an overview of the state of research at Action Against Hunger in 2017, while assessing and evaluating our progress in research across the organisation.

GLOBAL PROGRESS REPORT 2017

This year's report (previously the Annual Progress Report) aims to evidence our progress towards achieving the International Strategic Plan 2016-2020 targets.

INTERNATIONAL ANNUAL REPORT 2017

A yearly summary of all Action Against Hunger's operations in the countries where we work.

GLOBAL SERVICES MANUAL (INTERNAL ONLY)

A short document aiming to increase awareness amongst country offices of the services available to them within the Action Against Hunger network. It outlines the process and costs associated with securing these services and who to get in touch with for each of these.

NO HUNGER RADIO (INTERNAL ONLY)

A regular podcast sharing stories of Action Against Hunger's work around the world with a different theme each episode.

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FOR FOOD. AGAINST HUNGER AND MALNUTRITION.

FOR CLEAN WATER. AGAINST KILLER DISEASES.

FOR CHILDREN THAT GROW UP STRONG. AGAINST LIVES CUT SHORT.

FOR CROPS THIS YEAR, AND NEXT. AGAINST DROUGHT AND DISASTER.

FOR CHANGING MINDS. AGAINST IGNORANCE AND INDIFFERENCE.

FOR FREEDOM FROM HUNGER. FOR EVERYONE. FOR GOOD.

FOR ACTION. AGAINST HUNGER.

ACTION
AGAINST
HUNGER