STAPLES VALUE CHAIN NAFAKA ACTIVITY

TASK ORDER NO. AID-621-TO-11-05000

M&E SHORT TERM TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO NAFAKA

[redacted] NAFAKA Monitoring and Evaluation Consultant

DATE: 14th April 2014

This publication was produced for review by the United States Agency for International Development. It was prepared by ACDI/VOCA in compliance with the terms and conditions of Task Order No. AID-621-TO-11-05000.

STAPLES VALUE CHAIN NAFAKA ACTIVITY

TASK ORDER NO. AID-621-TO-11-05000

CONSULTANT REPORT – Short-term M&E Technical Assistance to NAFAKA

NAFAKA Monitoring and Evaluation Consultant

DISCLAIMER

The author's views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

List of Acronyms

AOS – Annual Outcome Survey
BCC - Behavior Change Communication
FTFMS: Feed the Future Monitoring System
M&E - Monitoring and Evaluation
MIS - Management Information System
PPR - Project Performance Report
PLMP - Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Learning Plan
SoW - Scope of Work
STTA - Short Term Technical Assistance

Specific Activities of the Consultancy

NAFAKA requested short-term technical assistance from the ACDI/VOCA Regional Office in Nairobi to provide training, mentoring and support to the M&E team. This assignment took 10 working days (24th March – 4th April 2014). The consultancy involved two main tasks: (1) conduct follow-on training to enhance the team's capacity to analyze and process data for learning purposes as opposed to only aggregating data for periodic reports; and (2) enhance the team's capacity to analyze and process data given the challenges experienced in processing of data for the annual Project Performance Report (PPR).

This STTA assignment was a follow-up to the work done in the consultant's previous assignment in December 2013, which advanced the NAFAKA M&E effort to using M&E as a tool for learning, knowledge management and decision-making as opposed to simply collecting and reporting data completely and adequately. In December 2013, the M&E team was trained on managing statistics and basic data analysis using SPSS. During the current consultancy, we managed to undertake further training on SPSS and statistics in keeping with NAFAKA learning agenda and learning questions. The objective is to have a team that can question and analyze routine and non-routine data beyond the requirements of regular reports. Specific tasks performed included but were not limited to the following:

1. Review computation formulas for key performance indicators.
2. Review planned surveys (1st and 2nd phase market survey, 1st and 2nd outcome survey, BCC survey).
3. Review NAFAKA data management system and data captured in MS Access data base.
4. Explore how learning and knowledge management can be supported and sustained.
5. Build the capacity of project staff on routine data management & analysis.

1. Review of outcome level indicator computation

In the last one year, USAID has reviewed the indicator definitions and other levels of details given the experiences from the field in terms of data collection and what the data is supposed to measure. It emerged that implementing partners were interpreting and computing the indicators differently. The most recent review was done in October 2013 through a series of USAID/W webinars and consultations with the IPs. NAFAKA actively participated in the review and shared the outcome survey methodology and tools with Anne Swindale and Suzanne Nelson, the USAID/W team spearheading the review.

It was therefore critical to ensure that NAFAKA uses the definitions nd computation procedures meeting the new requirements. Together with the NAFAKA M&E team, the consultant reviewed definitions and computation procedures for the following critical indicators:

- Gross margin
- Hectares under improved technology
- Number of households reached

Gross Margin: Based on the FtF September 2013 additional guidelines on calculation of gross margin, we reviewed the definition, the five data points - particularly what NAFAKA includes as input costs in the computation - and how hectares cultivated are recorded. Based on this review we came to a conclusion that the data collected by the NAFAKA Annual Outcome Survey are sufficient to meet gross margin data needs as per the additional guidelines. We therefore concluded that the gross margin tool being used by NAFAKA is exhaustive as per FtF guidelines and recommendations.

Hectares under improved technology: Collection and computation of values for this indicator has been a challenge. It was one of the indicators that was reviewed afresh by USAID along with gross margin. Previously, this indicator allowed double counting if more than one technology has been applied in the same area. However, the recent additional guidelines added the words "one or more technologies" meaning that double counting is not allowed. Given this clarification, we developed a formula to be used in computing area under improved technology. We concluded that the result of the change will be minimal - plus or minus a few hectares - but the margin of error will be minimal and therefore precision of the measurement will not be affected. Below is the suggested formula:

Hectares under Improved Technology

Method: For hectares under one or more improved technologies, pick the maximum number hectares and sum them as follows:

1. Average Ha of sampled farmers who reported having applied a maximum number of technologies during the survey period without double counting. Maximum is equal to or greater than one.
    a. Average Ha that a farmer applied improved technologies and management practices is calculated as follows: total maximum hectares under one or more technology divided by the number of beneficiaries who applied them.
    b. Weight = proportion of people who applied these technologies from the sample: i.e. total number of people who applied/sample size
    c. Total acreage under one or more technology = weight times universe (total beneficiaries reached in the reporting year times average hectares under improved technology)

Number of households reached: Estimating the number of households reached is a challenge, particularly in situations where a large number of farmers attends an event. It is not easy to know by looking at names of farmers how many belong to a particular household. Using coding methodology, NAFAKA attaches a unique household code to people from the same household. In order to aggregate these numbers, we designed a method that counts households reached without double counting. The following is a sample of the same data from NAFAKA MS Access database.

Query: Total Households by Cluster & Type					
Cluster Name	**FNM**	**MNF**	**CNA**	**M&F**	**Total**
Mvomero	528	2,074	1	3,665	6,268

North Ifakara	200	59	3	2,889	3,151
Kilombero Plantation Ltd	234	259	3	5,905	6,401
Kongwa	28	106	0	4,734	4,868
Kiteto	105	123	10	5,109	5,347
Kilombero Valley Teak Company	0	0	0	157	157
Mang'ula	154	575	1	1,639	2,369
Mlimba	138	1,178	0	2,298	3,614
Uwawakuda	92	77	0	723	892
Kaskazini "B"	0	0	0	200	200
Magharibi	0	0	0	491	491
Total	**1,479**	**4,451**	**18**	**27,810**	**33,758**

Note: This table is based on data as of 25th March 2014 and therefore does not reflect actual status. It is meant for illustrative purposes only.

FNM: Female-only households
MNF: Male-only households
CNA: Children-only households
M&F: Households comprised of both males and females

2. Building capacity of field staff to manage and analyse data

Given the large amount of data received and processed in Morogoro, NAFAKA is decentralizing the data management and processing to cluster points led by cluster M&E leads and supported by component leads. In order to achieve this, the consultant engaged in the following:

- ✓ Trained all component leads on data quality and how to carry out routine audits as well as their roles and responsibilities in assuring data quality.
- ✓ Trained all subcontractor staff on routine data quality audit (verifications and validation).
- ✓ Roles and responsibilities in data quality management.
- ✓ Understanding computation of indicator values.

a. Timing and streamlining annual outcome surveys

From the DQA recommendations, NAFAKA will split the Annual Outcome Survey into three phases based on the cropping cycle, as follows:

- ✓ Production phase
- ✓ Harvest phase
- ✓ Marketing phase

This approach was viewed as the best way to collect information while still fresh in the farmer's memory to avoid recall bias. However, upon critical reflection by the M&E team looking at time constraints as well as farmer research fatigue, the team felt that a two-phased approach was more appropriate and consistent with FtF guidelines on how to collect gross margin data. The following therefore were recommended as survey phases:

- Immediately after harvesting (August), collect data on production/input costs, yield and some minimal market given that sales are slow at that point.
- Undertake the market (sales) survey around January/February, with a follow-up survey thereafter when markets have stabilized.

To validate data from annual surveys given recall bias, the team recommended randomly selecting thirty farmers per cluster, train them on record keeping, and make systematic follow up and to ensure consistent record keeping. This will enable us to control for recall bias.

Streamlining of surveys: There has been a general feeling within the NAFAKA M&E team that numerous surveys are being undertaken which might lead to survey fatigue by farmers given the heavy demand for M&E data collection. The consultant was tasked to lead a discussion within the NAFAKA team on the possibility of integrating the behavior change communication (BCC) survey and the annual outcome survey. The first discussion occurred online and involved our BCC subcontractor. A follow-on discussion with the M&E team and BCC field staff in Morogoro also took place.

During our second discussion, we looked more closely at individual surveys in terms of information needs, purpose, and methodology. The team reached the following conclusions: (1) BCC, emphasizing the qualitative over quantitative, should be more focused on answering the why questions and help NAFAKA explain quantitative observations made in the annual outcome survey. For instance, if there is a drop in the proportion of farmers who used technology, the BCC survey should help establish the reasons why; and (2) The team recommended that the BCC questionnaire be reviewed, as well as the methodology given the concerns raised by USAID in the BCC report. In addition, have BCC related questions integrated in annual outcome survey especially on technology adoption, gender, etc. We also concluded that, given the methodological differences and focus of BCC survey, it might be a challenge to integrate the two surveys. The team recommended that some BCC questions be integrated into the annual outcome survey but continue to undertake a more in-depth BCC survey. As part of the methodology, involve local universities in these surveys.

b. Promoting learning and knowledge management

Given that NAFAKA has significantly improved collection of routine and non-routine data, the team is advancing to the next level of sophistication and using these data to inform decision-making and implementation. The team has already developed learning questions that can be answered by available data or data to be collected in future. The consultant was tasked to help the team operationalize learning and knowledge management. We started by asking ourselves key questions around learning as follows;

How do we intend to promote/operationalize learning in NAFAKA?

- ❑ Having a knowledge working group - include champions from every sector.
- ❑ Put mechanisms in place for knowledge creation and value addition.
- ❑ Identifying platforms for knowledge sharing.
- ❑ Improved knowledge access (packaging) and storage.
- ❑ Implementation of action points.

What are the opportunities for learning?

- ❑ Documentation of learning/observations and going beyond the "what" and asking the "why" questions.
- ❑ Taking opportunity of our field presence/interaction with farmers to learn and document what is working, why it is working and why it is not.
- ❑ Having standardized templates for documenting learning.

How do we intend to share knowledge as NAFAKA?

- ❑ Publications.
- ❑ Conference and workshops.
- ❑ Community of practice (Webinars).
- ❑ Stakeholder newsletters at the district level.
- ❑ Stakeholder meetings at the cluster level.
- ❑ Learning working groups on a monthly basis.
- ❑ Lunch and learning meetings (brown bags) - sharing workshop and conference proceedings.

Way Forward:

- ❑ Use bi-weekly meetings to share learnings fresh from the field.
- ❑ Meet once a month and share emerging lessons (learning working group).
- ❑ Identify learning champions in each sector. Have one person from each sector to champion learning and rally the team to promote and share learning.
- ❑ Share learning questions with the entire team for the purposes of internalizing and using the learnings as implementation progresses.
- ❑ Undertake further analysis of years 1 & 2 annual outcome and market surveys to further tease out knowledge.

Observations and Recommendations for Follow-up Consultancies

- ❑ Given the size of the M&E and the learning team, there is need to put in place better strategies to allocate tasks, manage deliverables and provide structured mentoring and support to the field teams.
- ❑ Verification and validation of data should happen at the cluster level.
- ❑ Have the M&E Officer spend more time in the field and have clear deliverables, with a clearly defined role in the implementation of project activities.
- ❑ Disseminate information: The M&E team to write thematic briefs based on AOS survey.
- ❑ Update the Indicator Reference Sheets with detailed processes on how indicator values are computed using agreed-upon algorithms.
- ❑ Share the algorithms and processes for computing data with all staff.

- Finalize the PLMP and share with all the staff (presentation) during the quarterly review meeting.
- Undertake a comprehensive internal data audit in May-June, 2014.

Further comments/recommendations from debrief with USAID on 4th April 2014

- We need to ensure consistency in reported/presented data at different forums.
- Given that the majority of the M&E staff is new, on-boarding should include paring of new M&E staff with old M&E staff.
- In the next reporting period disaggregate farmers reached by youth, i.e., use the Ministry of Agriculture definition of youth as 35 years of age and below.
- Do more with outcome survey data besides annual report and FTFMS.
- Develop regular briefings based on outcome and routine data. Update the indicator reference sheets clearly showing the process of calculating values for each of the indicators. This will be the responsibility of NAFAKA M&E Manager.
- Carry out an internal data audit (May-June 2014). The ACDI/VOVA Regional M&E Specialist will lead the process, supported by NAFAKA M&E team

U.S. Agency for International Development
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20523
Tel: (202) 712-0000
Fax: (202) 216-3524
www.usaid.gov