



Save the Children Federation

Feed the Future Ethiopia Growth through Nutrition Activity

Semi-annual Progress Report

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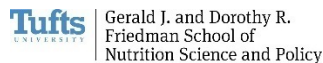


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Acronyms

AGP	Agriculture Growth Program
AO	Agreement Office
AOR	Agreement Officer's Representative
ATA	Agriculture Transformation Agency
BoFED	Bureau of Finance and Economic Development
CARE	Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere
CCP	Center for Communications Program
COP	Chief of Party
CRS	Catholic Relief Service
DA	Development Agents
DCOP	Deputy Chief of Party
DFSA	Development Food Security Activity
DHIS	District Health Information System 2
ECC	Enhanced Community Conversations
EED	Environmental Enteric Dysfunction
ENGINE	Empowering New Generation to Improve Nutrition and Economic Opportunities
EPHI	Ethiopian Public Health Institute
FMOANR	Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources
FMOE	Federal Ministry of Education
FMOH	Federal Ministry of Health
FMOI	Federal Ministry of Industry
FMOLF	Federal Ministry of Livestock and Fishery
FMOWIE	Federal Ministry Water, Irrigation, and Energy
FNP	Food and Nutrition Policy
GOE	Government of Ethiopia
HEW	Health Extension Worker
HMIS	Health Management Information System
IR	Intermediate Result
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
MIYCN	Maternal Infant Young Child Nutrition
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MVHH	Most Vulnerable Household
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NNCB	National Nutrition Coordination Body
NNP	National Nutrition Program
NNTC	National Nutrition Technical Committee
NSA	Nutrition Sensitive Agriculture
OS	Occupational Standards
OWNP	One WASH National Plan
PHCU	Primary Health Care Unit
PSE	Preservice Education

PSI	Population Service International
PSNP	Productive Safety Net Program
QI	Quality improvement
SBCC	Social Behavior Change Communication
SLT	Senior Leadership Team
SNNPR	Sothern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Region
SURE	Sustainable Undernutrition Reduction in Ethiopia
TIPS	Trials of Improved Practices
TOR	Terms of Reference
TOT	Training of Trainers
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNIS	Unified Nutrition Information System
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International development
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene
WV	World Vision

I. Executive Summary

Background

Feed the Future Ethiopia Growth through Nutrition activity (hereafter referred to as Growth through Nutrition or the project), United States Agency for International Development's (USAID's) flagship five-year, multi-sectoral nutrition and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) project is implemented in four regions (Amhara, Oromia, Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples (SNNP), and Tigray) of Ethiopia. The primary aim of this five-year (2016-2021) project is to prevent undernutrition during the first 1,000 days, from the start of pregnancy until the child's second birthday, through delivering nutrition sensitive livelihoods and agriculture interventions; social and behavioral change and communication (SBCC) on nutrition, WASH, and agriculture-related behaviors; utilization of quality nutrition services; increased access to safe water and utilization of WASH products and services; and multi-sector coordination and capacity to implement the National Nutrition Program (NNP) and One WASH National Program. In addition, the project will implement cross-cutting activities including a rigorous learning agenda, gender and women's empowerment, convergence and overlay of multi-sector activities, and a crisis modifier to respond to emerging threats to the development goals of the project.

Program Management

Save the Children manages the implementation of the project through partnership with sub-primes: Jhpiego, Tufts University, Land O'Lakes International Development, Population Services International (PSI), World Vision (WV), and The Manoff Group. Sub-grant agreements were signed with all international partners.

Growth through Nutrition submitted the Year I work plan to USAID on November 29th as required and received approval.

Save the Children and USAID introduced the project to five partner ministries, selected 100 project woredas with Government of Ethiopia (GoE) following lengthy negotiations which delayed the project start-up. Save the Children finally signed a federal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the National Nutrition Coordination Body (NNCB) chair and co-chair representing five partner ministries after consultation and feedback on the MOU was incorporated from the ministries and USAID.

Key Achievements by Result Area

IR1: Increased access to diverse, safe, and quality foods

Growth through Nutrition developed a Nutrition Sensitive Agriculture (NSA) training manual to complement GoE standard manuals; drafted an agro-ecology based NSA package for Most Vulnerable Households (MVHHs); and completed a gap assessment to inform the development of a voucher system to provide agricultural inputs and livestock to MVHHs.

IR2: Optimal nutrition, WASH, and agriculture behavior adopted

Major activities in this reporting period comprised of reviewing and prioritizing the Empowering New Generations to Improve Nutrition and Economic Opportunities (ENGINE) Maternal Infant Young Child Nutrition (MIYCN) SBCC materials, including those from the Enhanced Community Conversation (ECC) package for scale up by Growth through Nutrition; analyzing an adolescent nutrition qualitative research dataset from the ENGINE project and compiling a research report; and preparing for additional formative research (Trials of Improved Practices) on adolescent nutrition and improved maternal nutrition WASH practices.

IR3: Increased utilization of quality nutrition services

Following a request by the Federal Ministry of Health (FMOH), Growth through Nutrition drafted a Quality Improvement (QI) training facilitators' manual and submitted it to the Quality Steering Committee at FMOH for review.

IR4: Increased access to sustainable drinking water supply

The project, in consultation with GoE regional bureaus, selected 30 water hardware implementation woredas and 30 WASH marketing woredas, and Year I implementation woredas were identified. Subsequently, the project completed preparation of supply-side and demand-side market landscaping assessments for WASH products and services.

IR5: Strengthened multi-sector coordination and capacity

Growth through Nutrition provided technical support for the development of the Food and Nutrition Policy (FNP), the launch of the NNP II, capacity building of the new National Nutrition Technical Committee (NNTC) members from nine ministries, and supported the NNCB meeting and two NNTC meetings. The project also supported FMOH in the development of the Unified Nutrition Information System (UNIS) which was completed and is under trial.

The project selected 19 pre-service education institutions (12 new and seven existing) with the Federal Ministry of Education (FMOE) and Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) agency, and conducted baseline surveys in 12 institutions, not supported under ENGINE, to understand the institutions' capacity with regard to human and physical resources and to assess existing curricula used to teach Nutrition, Health, WASH and Agriculture students. The project supported the Ethiopia Water Technology Institute in developing and validating WASH Occupational Standards (OS) for three water cadres. The project also provided technical and financial support to the Academic Center of Excellence in Nutrition at Hawassa University for the 2nd National Nutrition Conference held in March.

Cross cutting

Monitoring and Evaluation

Growth through Nutrition in consultation with USAID developed a Terms of Reference (TOR) for project baseline survey. The contractor for baseline survey will be selected in May and data collection will begin in June. The project also started developing a database system on the District Health Information System 2 (DHIS2) platform to capture and store the data electronically for further analysis, reporting, and performance monitoring during the life of the project.

Rigorous Learning Agenda

During the reporting period, the project conducted a Research and Knowledge landscape assessment around Nutrition, WASH, and Agriculture in Ethiopia and its potential strengths, challenges, gaps, and opportunities. A consultative workshop was held to inform the learning agenda strategy which was drafted. The project prepared three research briefs to utilize learning from the ENGINE project. The briefs covered 1) maternal nutrition, 2) diet patterns, and 3) service provision, access, and utilization.

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Growth through Nutrition reviewed lessons from ENGINE and analyzed the Year I work plan of the project to identify areas where gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment activities could be strengthened. A two-day gender training for Save the Children country office project staff and partners was provided to develop knowledge and skills that enable staff to implement and deliver results for children, women, and men in a gender responsive manner.

Convergence and overlay of multi-sector interventions

Growth through Nutrition conducted mapping of geographic and technical overlap with USAID activities and key projects funded by other donors. The project hosted a Nutrition Layering and Convergence workshop on March 29, 2017 in collaboration with partners who are implementing Development Food Security Activities and Livelihood for Resilience Activities. The main objective of the workshop was to draft joint plans that guide layering and convergence efforts, and agree upon roles and responsibilities for further woreda-based detail joint action plans.

Major challenges/solutions in the reporting period

The selection of project woredas was a significant challenge causing a delay of all other start-up activities. It took five months (Sept 8, 2016 – Feb 12, 2017) to finalize the selection with significant delays in finalizing input from USAID as well as in selection with FMOH due to concern at the ministry on the number of woredas to be covered and the appropriate course to avoid overlap with the Sustainable Undernutrition Reduction in Ethiopia (SURE) project.

Completion of a federal MOU with five partner ministries was also challenging due to difficulty in receiving and incorporating feedback from the ministries and USAID, and resolving differences in language proposed by USAID. The delayed woreda selection and MOU, in turn, delayed submission of regional Bureau of Finance and Economic Development (BOFED) agreements, hiring of zonal based project personnel, and implementation of some planned assessments, as well as other initial programmatic activities.

Though the project was still complete start-up activities in the reporting period, the ongoing drought in the eastern and southern areas of the country was severely impacting some project woredas. The project analyzed the need for, and activated the crisis modifier for three woredas in South Omo and Bale Zones.

II. Background

Growth through Nutrition is USAID's flagship integrated nutrition program which aims to improve the nutritional status of Ethiopian women and children under-five. The primary objective of this five-year (2016-2021) program is to prevent undernutrition during the first 1,000 days, from conception until the child is two years old.

Save the Children leads the implementation of Growth through Nutrition through a strong multi-sectoral coordination platform, building on lessons learned from ENGINE that support existing government structures and synergistic partnerships with other USAID-funded projects. Growth through Nutrition will implement its integrated package in 100 woredas (80 Agriculture Growth Program (AGP) - food secure woredas, and 20 Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP) woredas in four regions). In Year I, the project will start implementation in 60 woredas.

III. Program Management

Engagement with the Government and USAID

The United States Agency for International Development and the project senior management held meetings with FMoE, Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources (FMoANR), Federal Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries (FMoLF), Federal Ministry of Water, Irrigation, and Energy (FMoWIE), and FMoH to introduce Growth through Nutrition and discuss how the project will contribute to, and align with, the priorities of the ministries.

Selection of the 100 project woredas was an unexpectedly long process, due to a request from FMoH to double the coverage. The process started, as per the work plan, with Save the Children completing analysis of woredas and proposing it to USAID on September 8, 2016. Following consultation, the woredas were agreed upon with USAID in December. Save the Children and USAID then discussed woreda selection with FMoH, who requested Save the Children to increase from 100 to 200 woredas after the award was made. The issue was eventually resolved with engagement from senior USAID, FMoH, and Save the Children staff, and it was agreed that the project would implement in 100 woredas (80 AGP and 20 PSNP, of which 10 are Seqota Initiative priority woredas) on January 12th, 2017. It was also agreed that the FMoH should sign an MOU as chair of NNCB on behalf of all partner ministries. Consequently, a meeting with FMoH Nutrition Case Team Lead was held on January 20th to review and agree on the list of 100 woredas. The primary concern of the FMoH was to avoid any overlap with SURE project woredas, which necessitated dropping some previous ENGINE woredas that Save the Children felt needed additional time. The list of 100 woredas was approved by FMoH and an approval letter provided to Save the Children on February 13, 2017. The list of woredas are shown in Annex I.

Save the Children prepared a federal MOU with five partner ministries. Feedback on federal level MOU was received and incorporated from partner ministries and USAID. However, delays in receiving feedback and negotiations on language proposed by USAID delayed the finalization; the MOU was signed in March by Save the Children and the Chair and co-Chair of the NNCB on behalf of the partner ministries. The FMoH agreed to send the signed MOU and notice of selected woredas to the partner federal ministries and to RHBs.

Growth through Nutrition submitted all documents required for the regional project agreement to the four regional BoFED (Amhara, Oromia, SNNP, and Tigray Regions) for review and approval. All the agreements will be signed in April and May as regions require federal MOUs before processing regional agreements. The regional project launches planned for quarter II could not be conducted because the BoFED agreements were still pending, and will be conducted in quarter III following completion of regional agreements.

Work Plan

The development of the Growth through Nutrition Year I work plan took place between September and November. A full draft of planned activities of the project was presented to GOE partners (attended by FMOH, FMO LF, FMO ANR) and the USAID team on Oct 31, 2016. A separate consultation was held with key project partners (Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE) – Development Food Security Activity (DFSA) and Livelihood for Resilience Activity; Johns Hopkins University Center for Communication Program (CCP) – Communication for Health; Pathfinder – Transform Primary Health Care Unit; United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) – Nutrition and WASH departments, Catholic Relief Service (CRS) – Livelihood for Resilience and DFSA). The project also held consultation meetings in each region with regional bureaus of health, agriculture, and natural resources; livestock and fisheries; and water, irrigation, and energy to discuss the project and project woreda selection. Save the Children incorporated feedback from these consultation meetings into the Growth through Nutrition work plan in October and November, 2016.

The Year I work plan with all required deliverables (Work Plan narrative; Activity Plan and Budget; Monitoring and Evaluation Plan; Environmental Monitoring and Mitigation Plan; Water Quality Assurance Plan; and Branding and Marking Plan), with the exception of the Annual Construction Quality Control Plan, were submitted to USAID on November 29th. The project addressed the feedback provided by USAID and resubmitted a revised work plan on December 29, 2016 which was approved by USAID on February 20, 2017.

Sub-prime Management

Save the Children signed sub-grant agreements with sub-primes of Growth through Nutrition PSI, WV, Tufts, Land O’ Lakes, Jhpiego, and The Manoff Group) on Dec 2016. Agreements with local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) will be signed in quarter IV.

Project Operations

During the reporting period, Save the Children and partners recruited nearly all positions. Two of the key personnel named in the proposal were not able to take up the positions. Save the Children successfully completed the recruitment of a new Nutrition Advisor and requested Agreement Office (AO) approval on December 29th, received approval on February 22nd, and the advisor took up his position on March 27th. World Vision encountered difficulties in identifying the appropriate candidate for a WASH Advisor position due to the need for experience both in WASH software, private sector, One WASH National Plan (OWNP), and hardware technical areas. An appropriate candidate was identified in March and will be submitted to AO for approval early April.

Save the Children co-located most full-time project staff from partner organizations at Save the Children offices to ensure full integration and smooth implementation of the project. At the regional level, Growth through Nutrition operates in five regions/sub-regions through Save the Children offices in Adama and Ambo for Oromia, Bahir Dar for Amhara, Hawassa for SNNP, and Mekelle for Tigray. During the reporting period, the project recruited regional level program staff. The recruitment of zonal level staff (nutrition and livelihood) was also completed; staff will take up their positions late April and early May.

Save the Children also procured 18 project vehicles to support project implementation at national and regional levels. These project vehicles will be on duty by the end of April 2017.

Management Coordination

The Chief of Party (COP) leads delivery of the project with support of a Senior Leadership Team (SLT) comprised of the COP, Deputy Chief of Party (DCOP) Programs, DCOP Operations, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEAL) Advisor, and Finance and Compliance Manager. During the reporting period, the SLT continued to have a weekly meeting to facilitate timely project start up and address major management and programmatic challenges and bottlenecks, as described above. In addition, the Extended Senior Leadership Team, comprised of the SLT, advisors, and leads for each partner organization, met every month to review the status of project implementation and management, challenges and solutions, and set action-oriented goals.

During the meeting on woreda selection, FMoH agreed to establish a Project Steering Committee including FMoH and other key ministries to provide ongoing strategic direction for the project. This needs to be discussed with other ministries before it is formalized later in Year I.

Growth through Nutrition continued to inform the Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR) about the status of the project and any challenges through monthly bulleted updates. The management and AOR held regular bi-weekly meetings which have enabled taking timely actions, resolving issues collaboratively, and responding to emerging needs such as the current drought.

IV. Activity Progress by Intermediate Result (IR)

This semi-annual report is prepared for the activities performed under each IR during the period of October 1st, 2016 to March 31st, 2017 of Year I implementation and is organized by intermediate and sub-intermediate results.

IRI: Increased Access to Diverse, Safe, and Quality Foods

Enhancing the nutritional status of children and women by improving dietary diversity of women and ensuring a minimum acceptable diet for children at household level are the main objectives of this intermediate result. It places emphasis on the production, consumption, and promotion of nutrient dense vegetables, fruits, animal source foods, and improved agricultural practices.

Through its agriculture/livelihood interventions, the project planned to cover 1,851 kebeles in 80 AGP woredas and 558 kebeles in 20 PSNP woredas. Of these, 291 kebeles in 27 AGP woredas, and 127 kebeles in nine PSNP woredas will receive agriculture / livelihood project support in Year I.

Key activities conducted during the reporting period include: NSA training manual developed; agro-ecology NSA package for MVHHs drafted; gap assessment of agricultural inputs conducted; and guidelines to establish the voucher system developed.

Save the Children led the activities accomplished under this IR and Land O'Lakes provided technical assistance and guidance on each activity.

IR 1.1: Sustainable approaches for production of diverse crops and livestock adopted

Developed agro-ecology NSA package for MVHHs

Building on ENGINE's livelihood and agriculture efforts, Growth through Nutrition analyzed ENGINE's data to identify gaps in household adoption of improved practices and preferences on homestead vegetables and animal source food production and matched them with agro-ecological realities to inform area-specific "resource packages" for the MVHH approach of the project. Based on the ENGINE data analysis, desk review and follow-on field work, an agro-ecology specific resource package was drafted and will be finalized in quarter III.

The project woredas fall under four major traditional agro-ecological zones. Accordingly, crop and livestock commodities are proposed for each agro-ecology as shown in Annex 2. The full agro-ecology specific NSA package guideline being developed by the livelihood team will be finalized in quarter III.

Standardized training manual for nutrition sensitive packages

During the reporting period, the project developed a draft NSA training manual. The team reviewed relevant NSA documents developed by various agencies. Following discussions, the team agreed on the overall approach and scope of the manual, determining to utilize the existing FMoH and FMoANR endorsed SURE training manual for Development Agents (DAs) and Health Extension Workers (HEWs) as a foundation, and to develop additional modules focused on NSA and livelihood approaches relevant to Growth through Nutrition.

The module was developed with additional content on producing and harvesting fruits and vegetables; animal raising; post-harvest handling and food safety; marketing, saving, credit cooperation development and management. The manual will be used during an initial round of Training of Trainers (TOT; planned for May) to test and receive feedback on the manual from FMoANR and FMoLF counterparts.

Subsequent to these additional revisions, the manual will be used to train Development Agents (DAs), and once finalized will be adapted for use with model farmers.

As described in IR 1.4, development of a standard NSA training manual by FMoANR is also underway, and Growth through Nutrition remains engaged with FMoANR, FMoLF, and FMoH in coordinating and standardizing MIYCN and NSA training for DAs and Health Extension Workers (HEWs).

Conduct gap assessment of agricultural input and other service providers

During the reporting period, the project team conducted field visits in six intervention woredas in Oromia and SNNP Regions to: a) assess and identify available platforms to implement a voucher scheme in livestock and vegetable seed provision; b) identify challenges faced by private agricultural input suppliers to plan for Business Development Services training; c) learn from previous committee purchases of livestock; and d) understand the overall impression of the woreda sector line experts with the planned voucher scheme. The team met with woreda livestock experts, FMoANR extension staff, and private suppliers, cooperatives, and cooperative unions. The team also held a group discussion with the office of agriculture head, ENGINE focal person, and extension process owner. One private vegetable seed and veterinary drug supplier was also interviewed.

The findings of the field visit informed the team to develop an alternative implementation plan and consider the challenges and opportunities during the development of the agro-ecology specific resource package (vegetables, fruits, legumes and animal source foods), modality of provision of inputs for MVHHs, and design of the MVHHs approach expected to be completed in the third quarter.

Key findings

- Livestock traders were not available in the woredas visited to implement the planned voucher scheme.
- The farm service centers and private input suppliers have gaps in overall business management skills (entrepreneurship, marketing, record keeping, effective selling, etc.)
- All agricultural inputs were stocked and sold in a single room (livestock drugs, agrochemicals, and vegetable seeds). These supplies must be properly stored to avoid cross contamination.
- There was a shortage of agricultural inputs, including a lack of vegetable seeds, provided on a timely and regular basis from importers to agricultural input suppliers.
- Agricultural inputs were packed in larger sizes than smallholder farmers' need or financial capacity to purchase the package. As a result, it was difficult to sell inputs at the individual household level.

IR 1.2: Innovative technologies adopted for preparation, processing, preservation, and storage of safe, nutrient dense foods

The project is preparing a scope of work for an expert Short-term Technical Assistance to identify appropriate technologies (traditional and improved) that can be piloted and scaled. The consultant will also undertake a landscape analysis and develop a policy brief on food safety.

IR 1.3: Increased participation of MVHHs, especially by women, in economic strengthening activities

As described in IR 1.1 , the Growth through Nutrition team conducted a field visit to learn from partner experiences of market based agricultural input distribution systems. Growth through Nutrition utilized

the learning from the visit as well as experiences from ENGINE in Somali Region and developed a draft guideline to implement a voucher system to provide agricultural inputs (vegetable seeds, hand tools, and breeding animals) to MVHs.

The livelihood team proposed two modalities to procure small livestock for MVHs. The first of these is a voucher system which improves local market expansion and minimizes logistical requirements as well as save project staff time. This modality may pose a challenge, however, as suppliers may not be available in most project woredas. The second is a committee purchase for local markets which includes project staff, woreda livestock officials, DAs and beneficiaries and can be implemented in all project woredas. The project senior management will decide on the modality in quarter III.

IR 1.4: Strengthened government systems and private sector linkages

Provided technical support to FMoANR and FMoLF to implement the NSA Strategy plan and the role out of a standardized training manual on NSA

During the reporting period, Growth through Nutrition provided technical and logistic support to FMoANR to finalize and roll out the NSA Strategy Plan. The consultation and familiarization sessions within the regional, zonal, and woreda agricultural sectors are in progress.

As a core member of the technical working group on NSA training manual development, Growth through Nutrition participated in consultative workshops and meetings, and provided feedback during the development of the training manual. The project will continue to contribute until the manual is finalized.

The leadership of FMoANR and FMoLF to develop a standardized NSA manual is critical. It is expected that the AGP will adopt the standard manual when complete and replace the AGP manual developed, and has started rolling out. There is still confusion on when the SURE manual, which was endorsed by FMoANR for use with DAs as well as by FMoH for use with HEWs, should be used and when the new standard NSA manual should be used. Growth through Nutrition has engaged in discussions with FMoH, FMoANR, AGP and USAID to raise this issue in several forums to encourage the ministries to discuss and give guidance.

Collaborated with Agriculture Transformation Agency (ATA) to mainstream NSA within the agriculture sector

The Growth through Nutrition team continued discussion with ATA on the initiative started under ENGINE to mainstream NSA within the agriculture sectors. The plan for this partnership is still under review by ATA management; the project will continue its follow-up and support until the document is finalized and shared with the agriculture sector for implementation.

Created linkage with PSNP IV and AGP II to harmonize implementation of nutrition interventions

Growth through Nutrition is designed to layer its interventions with flagship programs under FMoANR, namely AGP II and PSNP IV. The project held an initial meeting with the AGP Coordination Unit and agreed to work in collaboration on the area of promotion of nutrition interventions. As a result, the

project accessed the annual work plan of AGP II and the NSA training manual developed by the agri-team Canada (a capacity building support facility intended for AGP II) that will be used as a reference to identify areas of collaboration in due course. Both have agreed to hold subsequent meetings to discuss the details of harmonization of operations to ensure complementarity, particularly around capacity building of DAs and FTCs.

The project also established a relationship with the Food Security Directorate under the Food Security and Rural Job Creation Sector of FMoANR to create a linkage with PSNP IV. Accordingly, SBCC materials developed by ENGINE were shared for the development of a nutrition and gender mainstreaming training manual by PSNP IV. The manual will be used as a reference to chart the way forward for possible collaboration and joint training of DAs in PSNP IV woredas where Growth through Nutrition overlaps. Growth through Nutrition also participated in meeting with the PSNP IV Donor Coordination Team to review and provide input on the implementation of the PSNP IV nutrition component and its link to NNP.

The Growth through Nutrition team also participated in the National Poultry Advisory Working Group and Aquaculture and Fishery Technical Working Group meetings organized by FMoLF during the reporting period. The project team also participated in other forums such as Micro-Poultry Working Group and Home-garden Platform organized by the Agriculture Knowledge, Learning, Documentation, and Policy project, as well as the Nutrition Sensitive Platform organized by Agri-Pro Focus and European Union. ENGINE experiences were shared on these platforms. The meetings were helpful in gathering information on the government's direction, particularly in areas relevant to the Growth through Nutrition project.

IR2: Optimal Nutrition, WASH, and Agriculture Behavior Adopted

Improving maternal, adolescent and child nutrition by increasing the adoption of optimal nutrition, WASH and agriculture behaviors is the primary objective of this intermediate result. Key achievements in this reporting period under IR 2 are related to start-up technical work that helped lay the foundation of the Growth through Nutrition project's SBCC approach, including prioritizing ENGINE MIYCN SBCC materials for scale up under Growth through Nutrition; analyzing an adolescent nutrition qualitative research dataset from the ENGINE project and compiling a research report; and drafting a concept note and TOR for additional formative research on adolescent nutrition and improved maternal nutrition practices. Save the Children, with strategic technical leadership from The Manoff Group, accomplished the activities under this IR.

IR 2.1: Evidence-based SBCC approaches to improve nutrition, WASH, and agriculture-related behaviors

Establish and update an online "SBCC Resource Bank"

A number of documents, and knowledge, were generated during ENGINE's evidence-based SBCC implementation. Growth through Nutrition will share these resources through an online platform ("SBCC Resource Bank") designed to facilitate searches by project staff, partners, and stakeholders. To

establish the “SBCC Resource Bank”, the project team reviewed options and decided to use the Save the Children external website and project knowledge management platform, managed by Tufts, as the main platform for the resource bank. The Manoff Group developed a template for annotated descriptions of SBCC materials for the resource bank, and the bank will be finalized in quarter III.

Update, reproduce, and disseminate a prioritized set of ENGINE SBCC resources

USAID projects and partners have generated a number of evidence-based SBCC resources to support MIYCN and WASH interventions in this reporting period. The project reviewed SBCC resources, including materials from ENGINE, FMOH’s SURE project, Alive & Thrive, and UNICEF to quickly identify priority SBCC resources that are either ready-to-go or in need of only minor adaptation prior to being reproduced and implemented in Growth through Nutrition project activities. The review identified that UNICEF’s materials developed for adolescents are suitable for Growth through Nutrition’s adolescent nutrition intervention and can be supplemented later with materials that will be developed. The illustrations that are used for SURE (job aid for Health Development Agent/Agriculture Development Agent) need be contextualized for intervention regions to reflect local context (i.e. the messages need some revisions). Some ENGINE materials, such as the ECC flipchart and agriculture nutrition materials, also require revision on the messages as well as the pictures. SCI will update, and reproduce, selected resources and disseminate to health facilities and communities, and upload to the resource bank in the 4th quarter.

The SBCC team identified a popular Ethiopian cooking show, Giordana’s Kitchen, and its host, as a potential resource for adolescent nutrition SBCC. Prospective activities with the television show celebrity include transferring her television shows to DVDs to play in health facilities and in secondary schools, and developing 60 to 90-second cell phone videos of Ms. Giordana offering nutrition tips for adolescent girls.

Design, implement and analyze trials of improved practices (TIPs) research for maternal nutrition and WASH/Environmental Enteric Dysfunction (EED)

During the reporting period, a TOR for TIPS research was drafted to help identify improved maternal nutrition practices that are feasible for pregnant or breastfeeding women in Growth through Nutrition intervention areas. The research will be conducted in the third quarter.

Areas of inquiry in the TIPS include: a) feasible practices to manage nausea and maintain a healthy and diversified diet during early pregnancy; b) specific ways to improve food quantity and diversity throughout pregnancy and during lactation; and c) ways to improve women’s adherence to Iron and Folic Acid supplements for 90 consecutive days. The TIPS research will also lightly touch on feasible practices for husbands/partners to help their pregnant or lactating wives/partners improve their dietary diversity and increase their food intake.

Promoting Small Doable Actions at the community level is one of the communication approaches to address the impacts of EED on child undernutrition. A TOR was drafted to test specific hygiene and sanitation behaviors through a TIPS approach at field level intended to identify feasible WASH practices that could be integrated into the project nutrition and WASH SBCC, and ultimately improve household hygiene and sanitation practices. The field level TIPS research will be conducted in quarter III.

Design additional behavioral research to guide SBCC programming to improve adolescent girls' nutrition

Although the ENGINE project and other programs and organizations in Ethiopia have generated a preliminary evidence-base on adolescent and maternal nutrition practices, significant gaps remain in understanding the socio-cultural context of adolescent and maternal nutrition behaviors, as well as their barriers and motivators.

The scope of work for additional formative research on nutrition-related behaviors among adolescent girls between the ages of 10 and 19 years of age was drafted. The formative research will be conducted in quarter III and focus on closing knowledge gaps in the daily activities of adolescent girls, including a close look at girls' agency in planning and preparing meals for the family, eating meals or snacks with friends, purchasing food for themselves or their families, and establishing or maintaining home gardens.

Save the Children will contract data collection of the maternal and WASH TIPS researches and adolescent nutrition formative research. The contractor will be selected in May and data collection will begin in June.

Develop the evidence base for adolescent nutrition SBCC programming

During the reporting period, Growth through Nutrition worked with a qualitative dataset from the ENGINE project that had not been previously analyzed, in order to gain insight on adolescent nutrition practices and to identify priority areas for additional formative research.

The Manoff Group analyzed the data for adolescent girls between the ages of 15 and 18 years old across four regions (Amhara, Oromia, SNNP, and Tigray) and prepared a report. The analysis provided preliminary information on: a) the foods adolescent girls consumed daily; b) adolescent girls' perceptions of foods and ideal diets; c) adolescent girls' comparisons of their diets to other members of their family; d) adolescent girls' desired changes in their diet and self-efficacy; and e) barriers, facilitators, and motivators to nutrition-related behavioral change among the adolescent girls. The research report also offered preliminary recommendations for SBCC programming to improve nutrition outcomes among adolescent girls in the aforementioned age group, as well as recommendations for further formative research which will be addressed by the TIPS adolescent formative research described above.

In addition, the Growth through Nutrition team met with UNICEF/Ethiopia to discuss adolescent nutrition research and programming in Ethiopia. Growth through Nutrition and UNICEF shared their respective nutrition SBCC materials that are relevant to promoting improved adolescent nutrition practices, and will continue the dialogue to ensure that collaboration and synergies around the use of these materials lead to cost-effective implementation and, where possible, greater reach and outcomes.

Design, implement, and analyze formative research on consumer demand for WASH products and services

In order to improve WASH-related behaviors of the target population in the implementation areas through evidence-based SBCC approaches, the project planned to conduct a demand-side market landscaping assessment for WASH products and services to identify consumer demand for specific

products and services and gain insight into consumer purchasing patterns. This will inform the social marketing approach to be developed for WASH products of the project. During the reporting period, PSI developed research protocols and data collection tools and identified a research company to conduct the study. Both the demand and supply side (IR 4.2) market landscaping for WASH products and services are underway.

Review and strengthen ECC content and approach

The ENGINE project had developed a package of maternal, infant, and young child nutrition ECC materials for use in communities and households. During the reporting period, the SBCC team critically reviewed these materials, as well as the report, documenting the behavior change outcomes of these materials during ENGINE implementation of ECC in Amhara, Oromia, Tigray, and SNNP Regions. The team identified SBCC materials that did not appear to be as cost-effective as other materials, and that could be removed from the menu of SBCC materials without detriment to positive outcomes for nutrition-related behaviors. To remove or streamline creative concepts, which will improve audience comprehension and reduce the costs of printing and reproducing materials, some of the ENGINE ECC concepts were identified for community testing, which will be conducted during the third quarter. The content of ENGINE's ECC sessions were reviewed and contents that needed improvement, or were to be omitted, were identified in quarter II.

Testing the usability of mobile phones for Village Facilitators' audio materials is underway and review of the contents of the print materials for ECCs was completed.

IR3: Increased utilization of Quality Nutrition Services

Increasing demand for nutrition and health services by improving the quality of nutrition and health services complemented by effective SBCC strategies and approaches is the main objective of this intermediate result. During the reporting period, Growth through Nutrition planned to provide technical assistance to FMoH in the areas of QI for nutrition services in Primary Health Care Units (PHCUs), forecasting needs for nutrition supplies and ensuring nutrition is addressed in the revised Health Management Information System (HMIS). Save the Children led the activities accomplished under this intermediate result.

IR 3.1: Improved delivery of quality nutrition services for pregnant and lactating women and children

The project team attended three National Healthcare Quality Steering Committee meetings and supported the Ministry of Health Quality Directorate team in developing a standard QI training manual for PHCUs. Following a request that was initiated by the FMoH Quality Directorate, Save the Children took the initiative to draft the document. The draft QI training facilitators' manual was submitted to the Quality Steering Committee at FMoH and the manual is currently under review. Despite the request to develop the manual coming from the FMoH, some of the committee members preferred having standardized training materials for all facilities (hospitals and PHCUs) instead of having separate training manuals for PHCUs. The final endorsement or direction is pending further review and discussion among the relevant FMoH directorates.

FMoH requested technical support to provide TOT on standardized MIYCN for health workers. Growth through Nutrition technically supported skill based training for 54 regional, zonal, and woreda staff from Oromia Region during the reporting period.

Growth through Nutrition in consultation with the woreda health office and PHCUs has started selection of PHCUs (1 PHCU/Woreda) to implement QI activities and use these sites as a model platform for other PHCUs.

IR 3.2: Sustained supply of commodities for delivering quality nutrition services

Growth through Nutrition did not accomplish activities planned under this IR during the reporting period as technical support was focused on FMoH priorities, including NNP launch, finalization of the FNP, and revision of HMIS. Growth through Nutrition contacted the commodity lead from USAID to discuss the strategy for the project to ensure it complements other USAID supply chain projects and the GOE processes, but did not succeed in setting a meeting. In quarter III, the project will reengage with the relevant staff and AOR to clarify the approach Growth through Nutrition will follow.

IR 3.3: Increased use of information for decision-making and program management

Provide technical assistance to FMoH to ensure nutrition addressed in the revised HMIS

The FMoH process to update indicators in HMIS has been underway since November 2016. Growth through Nutrition provided technical support to the nutrition team of FMoH by developing a set of nutrition indicators for inclusion in the updated national HMIS. Eight nutrition indicators were accepted by HMIS managers, including six pre-existing indicators, and another two indicators are currently under discussion. The HMIS revision process will continue into the next reporting period, and Growth through Nutrition will continue to work with the Nutrition Case Team and HMIS managers to include more nutrition indicators in HMIS.

IR4: Improved Access to WASH Products and Services

This intermediate result aimed at bettering the nutritional status of target beneficiaries by improving access to a sustainable drinking water supply, and increasing supply of WASH products and services. The most significant achievements attained under IR 4 in this period are selection of the 30 WASH implementation woredas from Growth through Nutrition, selection of 10 woredas out of 30 Woredas for Year I implementation, and initiation of supply-side market landscaping for WASH products & services. World Vision led activities performed to increase community access to sustainable drinking water and PSI led activities performed to increase household access to sanitation and hygiene products.

IR 4.1: Increased access to sustainable drinking water supply

Identified operational woredas for WASH activities

Growth through Nutrition and USAID determined that it was not feasible and has no budget to cover all project woredas with WASH hardware activities as the impact on access to safe drinking water

would be negligible in each woreda. It was agreed upon that focusing WASH hardware activities on 30 woredas to increase the impact, reduce operational costs, and minimize overlap with other WASH projects would be the best approach.

Following the selection of 100 project woredas by FMOH, Growth through Nutrition received direction from GoE to avoid overlap with woredas where the OWNP consolidated WASH Account, Co-WASH and UNICEF WASH project were being implemented. The project discussed with the Regional Health Bureau Water and Irrigation Development Bureau and identified the woredas in each region to prioritize. Growth through Nutrition and regional governments selected 30 WASH woredas (Annex I) that minimize overlap with other projects. Out of thirty, ten woredas were selected for implementation in Year I considering the existing operational footprint of WV in the areas as well as the need of drought affected woredas for the intervention.

Study and design of water supply projects

In quarter I, Growth through Nutrition met with the USAID construction manager, project AOR and the Engineering Services and Construction Oversight activity implemented by TetraTech and received guidance on the format for preparation of the Construction Quality Control Plan. The actual water point site assessments did not start in the reporting period due to delays in completing federal MOU and regional BOFED agreement. World Vision will complete staffing of regional engineers and initiate site assessments early in quarter III which will allow completion of the Construction Quality Control Plan. Furthermore, in quarter III, the project will hold additional meetings with TetraTech and ensure there is clear written guidance on the role TetraTech will play in monitoring and supporting Growth through Nutrition construction activities.

IR 4.2: Increased access to sanitation and hygiene products: this activity is led by PSI.

Selection of woreda for WASH businesses

Growth through Nutrition will establish WASH business partial franchisees in 30 project woredas. These operators will initially focus on one woreda, but will expand coverage of products and services to neighboring woredas over the life of the project to cover all project implementation woredas. Following the selection of the 100 project woredas, PSI gathered information and selected the woredas based on the following three criteria: 1) woredas with the highest number of open defecation free kebeles or with large number of unimproved latrines; 2) woredas where WASH hardware activities will be implemented; and 3) proximity of the woreda to other Growth though Nutrition intervention woredas. The woredas may or may not overlap with the targeted woredas for WASH hardware because different selection criteria were applied for each intervention. The list of woredas selected for WASH intervention (wash hardware and business woredas) is presented in Annex I.

Conduct supply-side market landscaping for WASH products & services

Growth through Nutrition planned to conduct market landscaping of suppliers of WASH products and services to map the existing market actors and identify barriers, gaps, abilities, and motivators of the suppliers. The assessment will inform the design of the private sector WASH business model. As described under IR2.1, both the demand and the supply side market landscaping for WASH products and services is underway. The approach and tools for the data collection were developed and a

consulting firm was selected to conduct supply side market landscaping. The supply-side assessment was delayed by requests from regional health bureaus for a signed MOU before the study could commence. The project has now negotiated with all regional health bureaus and secured permission letters; the research is underway.

IR5: Strengthened Multi-Sector Coordination and Capacity to Implement Effective Nutrition and WASH Programs

The primary objective of this intermediate result is to improve the institutional capacity of multi-sector coordination and build individual and institutional capacity of key sectors to implement NNP and OWNPN. The major achievements under this IR include: provided technical support for NNCB and NNTC, provided technical support to FMOH during the revision of the FNP, conducted baseline assessment in all 12 newly added pre-service education institutions; supported the Ethiopia Water Technology Institute in developing and validating WASH OS; and conducted a nutrition human resource needs assessment of the GoE. Save the Children led the activities executed under multi-sector coordination and capacity building and Jhpiego led the activities undertaken to strengthen nutrition technical expertise across sectors.

IR 5.1: Multi-sector coordination at national, regional, and local level strategies and activities

In this reporting period, Growth through Nutrition provided technical support for one NNCB meeting held on December 8, 2016 and two NNTC meetings (December 5, 2016 and March 29, 2017). The project Senior Research and Policy Advisor, seconded to FMOH, provided technical support on agenda preparation, drafting of meeting minutes, and amendment of recommendations from the meeting. The NNCB discussed and approved NNP II and endorsed the FNP for finalization. The Food and Nutrition Policy was developed after it was recommended by the members of the delegation who participated in an experience exchange visit (supported by USAID/ENGINE and other partners) in Brazil on nutrition and multi-sector coordination. The NNCB also recommended the completion of preparatory phase activities for the Food Fortification and Implementation Manual. Senior policy and research advisor seconded to FMOH is engaged in a preparation of five year implementation manual.

The project could not identify or establish the planned two model woreda multi-sector coordination bodies because of delays in woreda selection which depends on government schedule and signing of MOU and regional agreements.

In this report period, Growth through Nutrition, with partners, also technically supported FMOH in the development of the Unified Nutrition Information system which will strengthen nutrition sensitive implementation through scorecards and monitoring tools from federal to kebele level. UNIS development was completed and under trial for nutrition specific and nutrition sensitive indicators at FMOH. Nutrition indicators from some of the sectors are not included in UNIS as the sectors do not yet include nutrition initiatives in their strategic plan. This challenge is expected to be presented in the upcoming NNTC and NNCB meeting for decision and guidance.

IR 5.2: Increased GoE capacity to implement NNP and OWP

Growth through Nutrition provided technical support for FMOH in facilitating a two-day (March 28-29, 2017) capacity building and planning workshop for new members of the NNTC. The workshop oriented 21 participants from nine sectors (FMO LF, FMO ANR, Ministry of Finance and Economic Cooperation, Federal Ministry of Women's, Children, and Youth Affairs, FMO WIE, Federal Ministry of Trade, Federal Ministry of Industry (FMol), Federal Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, FMOH) and three agencies (Ethiopian Food, Medicine & Health Care Administration and Control Authority; EPHI; and Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research) on the basics of food and nutrition, the nutrition situation in Ethiopia, the national policy and programmatic landscape, and multi-sectoral approach for achieving the NNP goals. Participants were then supported to develop sector-specific plans aligned with the national plan which will be shared after being reviewed within respective sectors.

IR 5.3: Increased policies and strategies across sectors (WASH, health, agriculture, education) with explicit nutrition objectives and outcomes

FNP Development

Growth through Nutrition provided technical support for the revision of the FNP. During the reporting period, the Amharic version of the policy was distributed for comments to the policy technical working group. Growth through Nutrition technical advisors in nutrition, livelihood, WASH, and country office MEAL provided written feedback on the English version of the policy document. The project will support a consultation and awareness creation workshop on the FNP and NNP2 for parliamentarians in April or May. The final policy document will be presented at the next NNCB meeting. Once revised by NNCB, the Amharic version will be sent to parliament for approval.

Growth through Nutrition also participated in a number of other technical support roles with FMOH during the reporting period including:

- The National Nutrition Technical Working Group meeting (Oct 4, 2016) where implementation of the Seqota Declaration and the SURE program were officially launched.
- One Thousand Days Plus [1000 days +] Model Woredas Creation Program National Launching Workshop organized by FMOH. This program will be implemented in four project woredas in Amhara, Oromia, Southern Nations, Nationalities, and People, and Tigray Regions in the initial phase, with plans to scale up best practices.

Growth through Nutrition supported the development of the school health intervention service package (which includes HIV/AIDS, nutrition (nutrition assessment, counselling, and support), deworming, vitamin A supplementation, first aid for injuries, and WASH). The FMOH commented on the document, and costing of all activities under the program is being conducted. Growth through Nutrition and the Clinton Health Access Initiative are assisting the costing on nutrition services.

Growth through Nutrition as a member of the food fortification technical working group, technically supported the FMol to develop a five-year Food Fortification plan of action. The plan was presented to the food fortification Steering Committee chaired by State Minister of FMol for review and feedback. It

will be approved by the NNCB during the next meeting. The finalization of the fortification standard is still awaiting the recommendation of Research Advisory Council on whether to include iron or not.

IR 5.4: Strengthened nutrition technical expertise across sectors

The objectives and strategies proposed for the list of institutions and criteria for selection of the pre-service education (PSE) component were introduced to two State Ministers (State Minister of higher education and TVET and the FMoE). Accordingly, 19 institutions (Annex 3) were selected for project support in consultation with FMoE.

Conduct baseline assessment in all 12 newly added institutions

In order to understand institutional background and the status of each with regard to key intervention strategies, a baseline assessment was conducted in 12 newly encompassed institutions (4 water TVET, 3 health TVET, 3 Agriculture TVET colleges and two universities (health and agriculture colleges) for the project support (Annex 3). Key informant interview, document review, and physical observation methods were used for assessment. The report will be compiled by next quarter and findings used to orient partner institutions and to further refine the nutrition PSE activity plan.

Curriculum Strengthening

Strengthening nutrition and WASH curricula were identified as one of the key strategies for implementing the PSE component. The project will support government efforts to design new, and revise existing, curricula for nutrition, health, agriculture, and water cadres to strengthen competency based education. During the reporting period, the project supported the Ethiopia Water Technology Institute in developing and validating WASH OS for three water cadres: Water Supply and Sanitation (at level 1 and 3), Electromechanical (at level 1), and Irrigation and Drainage Construction (at level 1).

Staff Capacity Building

The project identified institutional staff capacity building in pedagogic skills, and nutrition and WASH technical areas as another strategy to achieve its objective. As part of the preparation to provide pedagogic skills training for agriculture, and nutrition and water cadre instructors, a package for Effective Teaching Skills (power points, facilitator notes, session plans, and job aids) were customized from health to more generic contents to support instructors in all technical areas to acquire the intended competencies. The training of instructors will begin in quarter III.

Creating an enabling environment for nutrition and WASH education

Growth through Nutrition will provide selected material and technical support to institutions to create an enabling environment for competency based nutrition and WASH education. The project will provide support to the Academic Center of Excellence for Nutrition at Hawassa University to ensure it functions to its fullest capacity and serves as a benchmark for new institutions. During the reporting period, the project provided technical and financial support to the center to organize the 2nd National Nutrition Conference. Securing jobs by nutrition graduates and ways to advocate for career structure for nutrition professionals were the main challenges discussed during the conference. A task force was formed to follow the deployment issue of nutrition professionals with the Ministry of Civil Service. The

Center demonstrated its capacity to leverage huge internal and external resources for similar tasks with limited support from Growth through Nutrition.



Figure 1: Participants of the 2nd National Nutrition Conference; Hawassa University, SNNP Region. Photo by: Mesfin Goji.

Support to Government Counterparts

Growth through Nutrition has a plan to support a more systematic and robust nutrition human resource need assessment to inform human resource capacity gap for NNP and upcoming Food and Nutrition policy implementation and to address the challenges identified at the conference mentioned above. The project had a fruitful discussion with FMoH's Maternal, Child Health, and Nutrition Directorate on the need to conduct a Nutrition Human Resource Capacity Needs Assessment to determine the capacity and gaps in select NNP2 implementing ministries and chair of NNTC on whether the assessment is a priority for the government, what should be the scope of the work, and who should lead from the government. The director agreed that the NNTC should lead the execution of this activity. He also directed Growth through Nutrition to prepare a short concept note to define the task and scope and how it can support the assessment. The concept paper was drafted following the discussion which will be shared to the director for review and approval.

During the reporting period, technical support was provided to FMoH in customizing an instructional design skills training package to strengthen design and delivery of in-service trainings. In addition, the PSE team participated in a Technical Working Group formed by FMoANR to support the implementation of NSA strategies and oversee a NSA training package development for agriculture DAs.

6. Cross-cutting Elements

Growth through Nutrition incorporated cross-cutting elements in its implementation design to address Monitoring and Evaluation, a Learning Agenda, Gender, and Layering and Convergence components throughout its activities. Key achievements under this IR include: developed TOR for the Growth through Nutrition baseline survey, developed recording and reporting tools to capture the performance and achievements, conducted a research, learning, and knowledge management landscape assessment,

developed a draft learning agenda strategy, provided gender training for Save the Children country office project staff and partners, completed geographic mapping and conducted a Nutrition Layering and Convergence workshop. Tufts University led the activities under Learning agenda while Save the Children led the Monitoring and Evaluation, Gender, and Convergence and Layering activities. The Performance Monitoring Plan is not annexed in this report because there are no targets for this reporting period.

6.1 Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E)

Growth through Nutrition baseline survey

As per the project M&E plan, Growth through Nutrition will conduct a baseline survey for the project performance evaluation. During the reporting period, Growth through Nutrition in consultation with USAID's M&E contractor (Social Impact) developed a TOR for the baseline survey. Save the Children will contract the baseline survey and Social Impact will repeat the survey for mid-term and end-line evaluation as directed by USAID. The contractor will be selected in May and data collection will begin in June.

Project database development and development of monitoring tools

Growth through Nutrition developed recording and reporting tools to capture the performance and achievements on project indicators and activities. The MEAL team started developing a database system on the DHIS2 platform to capture and store the data electronically for further analysis, reporting, and performance monitoring during the life of the project. The project collected woreda profiles for all implementation woredas including information on key population indicators, list of kebeles and PHCUs, number of private and government facilities and training institutions, and on human resource capacity of government partners. This information will be stored in an electronic database and further analyzed in the coming reporting period so that it can be used as an input for the project baseline assessment, database development, and for further planning of project interventions.

6.2 Learning Agenda

During the reporting period, the Tufts University team assembled a research team and began conducting key activities to develop the learning agenda strategy.

Conduct research and knowledge management landscape assessment

During the second quarter, Growth through Nutrition conducted a research, learning, and knowledge management landscape assessment to better understand the local research and knowledge management landscape around nutrition, WASH, and agriculture in Ethiopia and its potential strengths, challenges, gaps and opportunities. The assessment involved in-depth interviews with 35 individuals from 26 institutions (research institutions, academia, government ministries, INGOs, donors, and professional associations). Tufts prepared a summary report that highlighted key findings on strengths, challenges, opportunities, and recommendations to improve research, learning, and knowledge management practices (Annex 4).

Some of the key findings of the assessment are indicated in box I below

Key findings

- A positive perception among all participants that the GoE and donors have placed greater emphasis on using evidence (research findings, learning, knowledge management) to inform programs and policies in nutrition, agriculture, and WASH.
 - At the same token, large gaps were identified in the actual practice of using research, learning, and knowledge management practices to inform program and policies.
- Despite increased availability of research and learning platforms, these are not managed and coordinated well enough to serve as effective forums for sharing key research findings and policy briefs, or to conduct dialogue to influence and inform programs and policies in nutrition, WASH, and agriculture.
- Some of the recommendations from the respondents include: Government to strengthen the coordination and streamlining of various research activities and platforms, and work to avoid duplication of efforts and resources. In addition, donors also need to focus more on supporting these efforts by helping build the government's capacity, as well as devising different strategies and requirements for projects so that implementing partners can work together in a complementary manner—i.e. sharing learning among different projects, putting in place knowledge management systems, etc.

Relevance to Growth through Nutrition

1. The findings were very useful for Tufts in designing and tailoring some of its activities in a way that address the identified gaps i.e. Tufts has included multi-sectoral coordination (identified gap) as one of its potential focus areas for conducting operational research for Year I. These operational researches could respond to questions such as why some coordination works better than others.
2. The findings were also very useful in identifying potential collaborating platforms and institutions to implement Tufts program in a complimentary and responsive manner. i.e EPHI National Information Platform on Nutrition (although it is at an initial phase) has been identified as one of the potential platforms to integrate the Growth through Nutrition Knowledge Management website into the government system to ensure complementarity and sustainability of the Growth through Nutrition knowledge management platform.
3. The findings also helped Tufts to tailor and prioritize some of its capacity building activities to fill some of the identified capacity gaps i.e. Tufts will develop modules that help to build capacity around presenting research findings to program managers and policy makers.

Develop a draft Learning Agenda Strategy in collaboration with program partners

In this reporting period, Growth through Nutrition developed a draft learning agenda strategy to: a) identify areas of learning to inform the delivery of nutrition, WASH, and agriculture services; b) prioritize and structure these areas of learning; c) set out high-level monitoring, research, and evaluation activities needed to improve the understanding of prioritized areas; d) develop strategies for identifying and responding to implementation challenges as they arise; and e) increase capacity development for nutrition specific and nutrition sensitive approaches to improving nutrition.

The following interlinked activities were conducted to inform the development of the draft learning agenda strategy document.

Desk review: A desk review of key policy documents was conducted to ensure that the learning strategy would be in line with the research priorities already identified at the national level, and provide a context for the national priorities to help order the research themes for the learning agenda strategy.

Learning Agenda Design Workshop: A consultative workshop with implementing partners, government ministries, research institutions, academia, and development partners was held on Feb. 20, 2017 to inform the project learning and research priorities be responsive, and tailored to the needs of the project within the broader research and learning space and to coordinate with other similar efforts. The workshop was attended by 40 participants (14 female and 26 male). The workshop also served as a learning event where findings from ENGINE, as well as preliminary findings from the Tufts Research and Learning Landscape Assessment, were presented and discussed among the workshop participants.

Implement Knowledge Management Plan

Initial input for the knowledge management plan was collected as part of the research and learning assessment. Findings from the assessment on knowledge management strengths, challenges, and gaps will help to develop the strategy for external knowledge management tools.

Publish policy briefs and submit research for publication

During the reporting period, Tufts submitted two studies (1. *Predictors of anemia in pregnant women residing in rural areas of the Oromia Region*; and 2. *Factors associated with low Mid Upper Arm Circumference in pregnant women in three woredas of Oromia Region*.) to journals for peer review/publication. Tufts developed three policy briefs (1. *The role of maternal nutrition in infant growth and subsequent linear growth pattern in Ethiopian infants*; 2. *Diet patterns*; and 3. *Achieving nutrition goals in Ethiopia using multi-sectoral approach: the role of policy service provision, access, and utilization*) and one manuscript with Save the Children which will be finalized and disseminated in quarter III.

Develop a project communication plan

During the reporting period, the Tufts project began drafting a communication plan for internal and external project communication and knowledge management around research and learning. The communication plan will develop strategies for collaborating with other research and learning platforms, to complement rather than repeat activities, and develop innovative ways to present research and learning in an engaging manner. Internally, the communication plan will outline strategies and tools for communication and close collaboration between project partners on the Learning Agenda. The draft communication plan was anticipated to be completed in the reporting period, however, due to the delay in recruitment of a qualified knowledge manager, the draft may be delayed until the end of May.

Develop Knowledge Management tools including the project website

Based on the results of the learning agenda strategy and communications plan, Tufts will develop and launch a project website and other knowledge management tools identified through the planning

process. The project is reviewing options to determine where to host the project knowledge management website. Tufts will launch the knowledge management website in the next reporting period.

6.3 Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

The Gender Specialist identified during the proposal process was not available to join Growth through Nutrition after the award was made, and a new candidate was identified and recruited January 2017. In February and March, activities in each IR were reviewed from a gender perspective and opportunities for integrating and strengthening gender sensitivity identified in each IR including: updating gender content in training manuals and the identification of and need for a MVHH approach appropriate for landless women. This is anticipated to be developed in Year I and piloted in Year II.

The opportunities identified will feed directly into the Gender Analysis and Gender Strategy which are being reviewed and updated to strengthen ENGINE approaches. Accordingly, a local consultant is being recruited to support the Gender Specialist while she is on maternity leave (from April to June, 2017).

A two-day gender training was provided for 23 (7 women and 16 men) Save the Children country office project staff and partners on March 30-31, 2017. The training developed knowledge and skills on gender that enable staff to implement and deliver results for children, women, and men in a gender responsive manner. It also reviewed Growth through Nutrition's gender equality and women's empowerment approach, and implementation processes designed to achieve the Growth through Nutrition project objectives. Training of regional staff will take place after the full strategy is developed in the next reporting period.

During the reporting period, the Growth through Nutrition Gender Specialist participated in a number of gender working groups and learning forums including the Ethiopian network for Gender Equality in Agriculture hosted by FMoANR and the Agricultural Transformation Agency; gender integration training organized by Johns Hopkins University CCP and FMoH, Women and Children Affairs Directorate; and a one day validation workshop on the evaluation report of the Female Food Heroes Initiative hosted by Oxfam.

6.4 Convergence and overlay of multi-sector interventions (including Geographic Information Systems)

Workshop with partners for planning convergence

Several USAID supported projects have nutrition sensitive and specific interventions focused on children and women, with all projects having a mandate to consider layering and convergence of complementary interventions to maximize project gains and avoid duplication. As a starting point, USAID organized a nutrition collaboration meeting to bring asset and livelihood transition partners (Growth through Nutrition, DFSAs, and Livelihood for Resilience Activities) together to initiate nutrition layering. As Growth through Nutrition is multi-sectoral in nature, it has the opportunity to complement a number of USAID supported projects.

Geographic mapping was completed during this quarter. Growth through Nutrition overlaps with 15 DFSA and Livelihood for Resilience Activity operational woredas (3 in Amhara, 5 in Oromia, 5 in SNNP and 2 in Tigray Region; DFSA implemented by CRS, Food for the Hungry, Relief Society of Tigray, and WV and LR implemented by CARE, and CRS).

In this reporting period, Growth through Nutrition conducted a Nutrition Layering and Convergence workshop on March 29, 2017 in collaboration with partners who are implementing DFSA and Livelihood for Resilience projects. Thirty-three participants from USAID, Growth through Nutrition, DFSA, and Livelihood for Resilience Activity projects attended. The workshop achieved its purpose by developing a joint plan to guide layering and convergence efforts and agree upon roles and responsibilities for further woreda-based detail joint action plans.

Growth through Nutrition additionally participated in program design workshops of USAID Transform WASH and the Livelihood for Resilience Activity implemented by CARE. Growth through Nutrition and Transform WASH have discussed areas for collaboration, which was facilitated by the presence of PSI as responsible organization for WASH marketing in Growth through Nutrition and the lead implementer of Transform WASH.

6.5 Crisis Modifier

Due to the ongoing drought affecting the southern portion of the country, Growth through Nutrition reviewed the project woredas to determine if there was a need to support emergency response activities. In particular, South Omo and Bale zones were assessed for the impact of the drought using criteria described in our cooperative agreement and annual work plan which included the overall and thematic (nutrition, WASH, livelihoods) hotspot status, including woredas that worsened from the previous classification. We reviewed other partners operating in these woredas and confirmed the need for additional emergency response with regional and zonal governments in Ginir Woreda in Bale Zone, Oromia and in Bena Tsemay and Dehub Ari Woredas in South Omo Zone of SNNPR. It was identified that nutrition response was already being supported by other partners, but that livestock and WASH response was needed in Bale and South Omo Zones.

The project activated its crisis modifier in these three woredas in March with a budget of USD 225,000 focused on livestock feed support in Ginir and support for animal health campaigns and WASH (water point rehabilitation and non-food item distribution) in South Omo. Activities are being coordinated with the government and partners through Save the Children's humanitarian team at regional levels.

The project has prepared an added activity plan to scale up WASH response in all three woredas but requires additional obligation of funds before initiating this additional response.

v. Major constraints/challenges and follow on actions to overcome them

Major challenges encountered	Actions taken/resolved or unresolved	Proposed solutions to new or ongoing problems
The broader USAID funding environment is uncertain which makes project start-up and scale-up difficult to plan.	Frequent communication with AOR. Measured approach to scale-up.	Request meeting with USAID leadership to provide direction.
The prolonged woreda selection process (from Sept – Jan) delayed preparation of MOU with GoE and all subsequent activities.	<p>Frequent follow-up with USAID to receive input on proposed woredas.</p> <p>Joint follow-up with GoE by Growth through Nutrition and USAID to conclude discussion on number of woredas.</p>	
Criteria including political considerations by GoE and alignment of multiple projects required the project to drop woredas with greater nutrition issues and select new woredas. In particular GoE did not allow any overlap with SURE project woredas which required Growth through Nutrition to drop many previous ENGINE woredas where more work was needed.	<p>The project worked with GoE to select woredas based on priorities including Seqota Declaration woredas and to avoid SURE woredas.</p> <p>The project was flexible to accommodate requests from USAID to shift to align PSNP woredas with other activities.</p>	
Concluding MOU with five partner ministries and with input from USAID was challenging as it was difficult to receive written feedback from all ministries and USAID on time.	<p>Determined that federal MOU could be signed by the Chair and Co-Chair of the NNCB on behalf of all partner ministries.</p> <p>Frequent follow-up with all parties to receive feedback and process signatures.</p> <p>Regional BoFED agreements were drafted while federal MOU was in process to expedite their approval following federal MOU signature.</p>	
Two key personnel positions were vacant during much of the reporting period. The	Follow-up with AO and AOR regarding Nutrition Advisor until approved.	

<p>Nutrition Advisor position in particular was not approved by AO for more than two months.</p> <p>The project had difficult time finding a strong candidate for the WASH Advisor position given the diverse experience required.</p>	<p>Reviewed and revised salary for WASH Advisor and head-hunted for strong candidates. Candidate has been selected and will be submitted for USAID approval in April. <i>(Note: the advisor has been approved as of the time of report submission).</i></p> <p>The DCOP Programs and QI Specialist as well as WV WASH Director helped to fill the gaps created due to the absence of the key personnel.</p>	
<p>Change in staff of both USAID AOR and alternate AOR soon after the start of the project left a gap at USAID for providing direction and approving key requests including Year I work plan and changes in key personnel.</p> <p>Changes in leadership of many partner ministries after the project was launched and introduced to all ministries.</p>	<p>Moved forward with work plan implementation based on provisional approval from departing AOR.</p> <p>Follow-up with USAID regarding AOR delegation.</p> <p>The project requested meetings with new State Ministers and Directors in partner ministries to re-orient the ministries on the project and establish working relationship.</p>	
<p>Severe drought is affecting the eastern and southern parts of the country. After woreda selection was complete the project analyzed all project woredas and identified three severely affected woredas.</p>	<p>The project assessed need for response with partners and GoE and activated crisis modifier for response with available funds.</p>	<p>Request additional obligation to enable scale-up of emergency response activities</p>
<p>Due to delays in woreda selection, federal MOU, and regional BOFED agreements assessment of sites for water point construction and rehabilitation will not begin until quarter III. The Annual Construction Quality Control Plan cannot be completed and submitted to USAID until the site identification and assessments are done in quarter III.</p>	<p>The project is utilizing existing WV engineers to start assessments while completing recruitment of zonal level water engineers.</p>	
<p>Lack of clarify on utilization of SURE training manual and NSA standard training manual under development at FMOANR has</p>	<p>Mapped content of existing and forthcoming NSA manuals.</p> <p>Initiated discussions with FMOH and FMOANR and with</p>	<p>The project will utilize SURE training manual and complement specific NSA</p>

complicated planning of TOT trainings for DAs and HEWs.	Nutrition Donor Partner Forum.	content for DAs relevant to the project.
Based on request from FMoH, the project committed a lot of resources to draft QI training manual for Primary Health Care Units. However, when the completed draft was presented, there was not a consensus in the ministry on how to proceed (by finalizing and using PHCU manual, or using one manual for both hospitals and PHCUs).	The project is following up with FMoH for a decision on the PHCU QI training manual.	Utilize the draft manual for training in PHCUs to be supported in Year I while decision on final material is pending.
Market landscaping assessments for WASH products and services were delayed by request from regional governments for signed MOU. All WASH marketing activities will follow the assessments, and the delay in the research will cause a delay in WASH marketing activities planned for quarter III.	In the absence of the MOU, Save the Children discussed with regional health bureaus and obtained letters of permission to undertake the assessment. PSI utilized project staff to do a rapid assessment to start development of business model which will be finalized when the full research is available.	Activity plan schedule is under review to enable major activities to be completed during the project year.
Rapid assessment of viability of use of voucher system for livestock distribution to MVHs suggested that it may not be feasible in all woredas due to the lack of qualified livestock traders.	The project will utilize committee based purchase of livestock for MVHs to be supported in Year I while piloting the voucher system in select woredas to test viability and functionality prior to scale up.	Detailed assessment to be conducted in all implementing woredas to determine viability of voucher system for livestock.

Annex I

List of Growth through Nutrition Woredas and WASH Intervention Woredas, March 2017

Region	Zone	AGP	PSNP	WASH Hardware Implementation woredas (WVE)		WASH business locations (PSI)		
				LOP target woredas	Woredas selected for Year I	LOP target woredas	Woredas selected for Year I	
Amhara	North Wollo		Delanta			x		
			Kobo					
			Habru	x				
	East Gojam	Debre Elias						
		Dejene						
		Enmaye			x	x	x	x
		Enarj Enawga			x			
		Baso Liben						
	West Gojam	Semen (North) Achefer						
		Jabi Tihinan			x		x	x
	North Gonder	Alefa					x	
		Taqusa						
		Wegera			x	x		
		Dembia						
			Dabat				x	
			Debark					
			Merab Belesa					
			Misrak Belesa					
	South Gonder		Ebenat	x	x	x	x	

			Tach Gayint					
			Lay Gayint					
<i>North Showa</i>	Tarma Ber							
	Antsokia							
	Kewot			x				
	Baso Worana					x		
	MoretnaJiru			x				
<i>Awi</i>	Jawi			x				
	Guangua					x		
	Ankesha							
Total - Amhara	29	19	10	9	3	8	3	
SNNPR	<i>Guraghe</i>	Geta						
		Cheha				x		
		Gumer						
	<i>Dawro</i>	Esira						
		Tocha						
	<i>Gedeo</i>	Bule			x	x	x	x
		Gedeb			x	x		
				Wonago				
	<i>Keffa</i>	Bitu						
		Gewata					x	
		Gimbo			x			
	<i>Sidama</i>	Malga						
		Gorche						
		Wondo Genet			x		x	x
		Bursa						
	<i>Silte</i>	Merab Azernet						
		Misrak Azernet					x	
		Alichowuriro						
	<i>South Omo</i>	Debub Ari (south)					x	
Semen Ari (north)								

		Bena Tsemaye		x	x			
	<i>Special woreda</i>	Besketo						
	<i>Special woreda</i>	Konta				x		
	<i>Special woreda</i>	Yem				x		
	<i>Haidya</i>		Anlemu	x				
			Misha					
Total - SNNPR	26	23	3	6	3	8	2	
Tigray	<i>South</i>	Alamata		x	x			
		Enhamehoni				x	x	
	<i>Central</i>		Nader Adet					
	<i>Western</i>	Tsegede						
		Welkait					x	
	<i>North Western</i>	Tselemti						
		Tahtay Koraro			x			
		Medebay Zana					x	
Asegede Tsimbila								
Total - Tigray	9	8	1	2	1	3	1	
Oromia	<i>Arsi</i>	Shirka		x				
		Tiyo						
			Zeway Dugda					
	<i>West Arsi</i>		Arsi Negelle					
			Heban Arsi					
			Siraro					
			Shala		x	x	x	x
	<i>Bale</i>	Agarfa						
		Gasera			x		x	x
		Ginir			x	x		
		Sinana						
	<i>East Shewa</i>	Gimbicho			x			
Liben								
Dugda						x		

		Lume				x	
			Adami Tulu-JK				
<i>North Shewa</i>		Girar Jarso				x	
		Yaya Gulele					
		Were Jarso		x		x	x
<i>South West Shewa</i>		Becho (Tulu Bolo)				x	
		Wenchi		x	x		
		Kersa Malima					
<i>West Shewa</i>		Bako-Tibe			x		
<i>Horo Guduru</i>		Horo		x		x	x
		Jima Geneti		x			
		Jima Rare					
		JerdegaJarte					
<i>East Wellega</i>		Diga					
		Wayu Tuqa					
		Guto Gida				x	
		Gida Ayana		x			
		Boneya Boshe		x			
<i>West Wellega</i>		Genji		x			
		Haru				x	
		NoleKaba		x			
		Lalo Asabi					
Total - Oromia	36	30	6	13	3	11	4
Grand total	100	80	20	30	10	30	10

Annex 2

Package of Livelihood Interventions based on agro-ecology by woreda

#	Woreda	Agro-Ecology	Proposed nutrition sensitive agr. Package
1	Tselemti, Asegde Tsimbla Tsegede, Welkait	Dry Kolla (1500 - 500masl & < 900mm)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homestead Vegetable & Fruit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Sweet potato (white flesh), Orange flesh sweet potato, ,Moringa, Pumpkin, Mung bean/Cow pea/Pigeon pea, Papaya/Banana/cooking banana /Mango (free from white fly) • Productive animal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Mix of chicken with goat or Sheep • Farm hand tool <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Hoe, spade, Pick axe
	Jawi, Alfa, Taqusa, Debub Ari, Semen Ari, Benatsemaye, Besketo, Esira, Tocha, Konta (14 Woredas)	Moist Kolla (1500 - 500masl & 900 -1400mm)	
2	Kobo, Habru, Tarma Ber, Antsokia, Kewot, Alamata, Tach Gaint, Zeway Dugda, Adami Tulu Jido Kombolcha, Arsi Negelle, Heban Arsi, Siraro, Shalla, Tahtay Koraro, Medabay Zana, Nader Adet, Ebenat, Merab Belesa, Misrak Belesa (19 Woredas)	Dry Weyna Dega (2300 - 1500masl & <900mm)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homestead Vegetable and fruits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Sweet potato (white flesh), Orange flesh sweet potato, Swiss chard, Carrot/Pumpkin, Haricot bean/Pigeon pea, Mango/Papaya • Productive Animal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Mix of chicken with Goat or Sheep • Farm hand tool <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Hoe, spade, Pick axe
3	Cheha, Bitu, Anlemu, Misha, Bule, Gedeb, Wonago, Gewata, Gimbo, Wondo Genet, Merab Azernet, Misrak Azernet, Alichowuriro, Moretnajiru, Ginir	Moist Weyna Dega (2300 – 1500masl & 900 – 1400mm)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homestead Vegetable and fruit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Irish potato (improved variety), Head cabbage/Swiss chard/Kale, Carrot/Pumpkin, Green bean/Pigeon pea, Avocado/Apple/ • Productive Animal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Mix of chicken with Heifer or Sheep • Farm hand tool <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Hoe, spade, Pick axe
	Horo, Jima Geneti, Jima Rare, Jerdegajarte, Diga, Wayu Tuqa, Guto Gida, Gida Ayana, Boneya Boshe, Genji, Haru, Nolekaba, Lalo Asabi, Yem Debre Elias, Dejen, Enarj Enawga, Baso Liben, Semen Achefer, Jabi Tihinan, Guangua, Wegera, Dembia, Ankasha, Gimbicho, Liben, Dugda, Lume, Girar Jarso, Yaya Gulele, Were Jarso, Becho, Wenchi, Kersa Malima, Bako Tibe (50 Woredas)	Wet Weyna Dega (2300 - 1500masl & > 1400mm)	
4	Shirka, Tiyo, Agarfa, Gasera, Sinana, Endamehoni, Enemaye, Baso Worana, Delanta, Lay Gaint, Geto,	Moist Dega (3200 – 1500masl & 900 -1400mm)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homestead Vegetable

#	Woreda	Agro-Ecology	Proposed nutrition sensitive agr. Package
	Gumer, Malga, Gorche, Bursa		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Irish potato, Head cabbage/Swiss chard/Kale, Carrot, faba bean (improved variety) Apple • Productive Animal ✓ Mix of chicken with Heifer or Sheep • Farm hand tool ✓ Hoe, spade, Pick axe
	Dabat, Debark (17 Woredas)	Wet Dega (3200 – 2300masl & >1400mm)	

Annex 3

List of Higher Education Institutions Under Growth through Nutrition Project Support

Institution Type	Regions				Federal
	Tigray	Amhara	Oromia	SNNPR	
Universities**	Mekele*	Gondar,* Bahirdar*, Debre Markos*	Jimma*, Wollega	Hawassa*, Wolaita Sodo	
Agriculture TVET	Maichew	Woreta	Holeta	–	Alage*
Health Science College TVET	Dr.Tewolde	–	Nekemt	Arbaminch	
Water Poly Technique TVET	Maichew	Bahir Dar	Woliso	Hawassa	

* Existing Institutions

** Health and Agriculture Colleges are under support at all universities and federally

Annex 4

TUFTS RESEARCH AND LEARNING LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT REPORT

I. Background

Feed the Future Ethiopia Growth through Nutrition Activity is USAID's flagship 5-year, multi-sectoral nutrition and WASH project, which aims to improve the nutritional status of women and young children in the four productive regions of Ethiopia. The project focuses on the first 1,000 days, from pregnancy through a child's second birthday, recognized as the critical window of opportunity for a child's growth and development. The project will achieve its objective by delivering nutrition sensitive livelihoods and agriculture activities; social and behavior change communication (SBCC) on nutrition, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) and agriculture-related behaviors; utilization of quality nutrition services; utilization of WASH products and services; and, multi-sector coordination and capacity to implement the National Nutrition Program and One WASH National Program. In addition, the project will implement cross-cutting activities, including gender and women's empowerment, a rigorous learning agenda, convergence and overlay of multi-sector activities, and a crisis modifier to respond to unforeseen threats to development goals of the project. Save the Children leads the implementation of the project and the project is implemented in collaboration with five ministries, six international partners and four local partners. On this project, Tufts University (sub grantee) leads the learning agenda of the project, including research on nutrition and WASH, implementation of strategic evaluations, and knowledge management and dissemination.

II. Purpose

As the preliminary assessment in the development of the learning agenda, Tufts University has conducted a three weeks research and learning landscape assessment in February 2017 to better understand the local research and knowledge management landscape around Nutrition, WASH, and Agriculture in Ethiopia and its potential strengths, challenges, gaps and opportunities. The assessment also allows Tufts to identify partnerships and opportunities for collaboration, prevent duplication of efforts, maximize efficiency and effective use of resources, and design a learning agenda and knowledge management strategy that is supportive and responsive to the needs and challenges of the local research community.

III. Methodology

To begin, Tufts conducted a desk and systematic literature review, gathering and reviewing all current, relevant policy and program documents on Nutrition, WASH and Agriculture in Ethiopia.

Based on findings from the initial desk review, a qualitative questionnaire was developed to understand the current research, learning and knowledge management activities and practices, as well as challenges, opportunities and recommendations to improve use of evidence (findings, learning, knowledge) to inform programs and policies on Nutrition, WASH and Agriculture.

A sample of twenty six institutions from government (ministries, research and academic institutions), INGOs including implementing partners, donors, and associations, were selected to participate in the assessment. The institutions were selected based on their high level of involvement in conducting,

financing or providing technical support to Nutrition, WASH, Agriculture research, learning and/or knowledge management activities in Ethiopia. Organizations were asked to appoint the appropriate representative to participate in the assessment on their behalf.

The assessment was conducted through hour-long, in-depth interviews (in person and by phone) using the questionnaire. Interviews were conducted either in English or Amharic depending on the language preference of participants. The interviewer captured participants' responses by taking notes and using audiotapes after obtaining permission from the participants. All recorded information was transcribed accurately by the end of each day. The interviewer also reviewed some of the project communication tools and materials, including organizational websites, to better understand the documentation and dissemination practices of some of the participating organizations.

Data Analysis: Qualitative data was analyzed by triangulating information from various sources (desk review, in depth interviews, observation of KM tools/materials) by observing any trends in the responses (convergent or divergent) and categorizing information based on the different types of institutions (government, INGOs, donors etc.).

IV. Summary of Findings

There was a positive perception among all participants that the GoE and donors have placed greater emphasis on using evidence (research findings, learning, knowledge management) to inform programs and policies in Nutrition, Agriculture and WASH. However, the findings show that there is a huge gap in the actual practice of using research findings to inform program and policies. Some of the reasons cited for the gap include inadequate capacity to conduct research, present findings, or make policy recommendations that are easy for policy makers to absorb and adopt. The increased availability of research and learning platforms offers a great opportunity, however, they are not managed and coordinated well enough to serve as effective forums for sharing key research findings and policy briefs, or to conduct dialogues to influence and inform programs and policies in Nutrition, WASH and Agriculture. The findings also identified additional gaps in learning and knowledge management practices. These include: limited understanding and capacity regarding learning and knowledge management, cultural barriers to the sharing and exchanging of information, and the lack of a strong organizational culture that encourages and reinforces quality learning and knowledge management among different projects internally and externally. These gaps have resulted in duplication of efforts and resources in all three areas, therefore minimizing their overall effectiveness. Despite their great potential for increased impact, the execution and evaluation of multisectoral programs require additional specific capacity building interventions to ensure successful implementation, especially at lower levels of the health and agriculture sector structure.

A. Strength of Research, Learning and Knowledge Management

The majority of participants (85%) perceived that there is an increasing emphasis from policy makers and donors toward generating quality evidence to inform program and policy decision-making at various levels. This perception is supported by the wide availability of rigorous research that informed current national policies and programs in Ethiopia around Nutrition, WASH and Agriculture. One frequently referenced evidence-based policy that was recognized for being instrumental in the formulation process was the National Nutrition Program (NNPII). The majority of participants also acknowledged using

lessons learned from some of the recent, large flagship projects to inform new programs. One participant noted that some of the research findings from the *Empowering New Generations to Improve Nutrition and Economic Opportunities* (ENGINE) project were very useful in designing their new project. Another participant indicated “there are strong public research institutions that conduct rigorous research to test new models/approaches that inform some of the existing policies, including macroeconomic policies...such as poverty reduction policies”.

Contrary to the perception of the majority of participants outside academia that academic institutions only conduct purely academic research, information gathered from academic institutions indicates a significant shift on the part of some to also conduct research that is better designed to inform program and policy improvement. An increasing trend by academic institutions to collaborate with INGOs on various development projects is also encouraging in terms of building their capacity and ensuring sustainability of research and learning in Nutrition, Agriculture and WASH sectors.

Many of the development partners and NGO respondents (75%) commented on the growing inclusion of learning and knowledge management components in their project workplans, further contributing to the theme of increased emphasis on learning and knowledge sharing practices. Information gathered through interviews and through review of some of the knowledge management tools and materials show that, although few, some of the institutions do have strong knowledge management systems in place. This is demonstrated through the availability of high quality communication materials; frequent dissemination of up-to-date information through websites, newsletters, and blogs; the dedicated assignment of knowledge managers; and innovative platforms for formal and informal sharing of new ideas, research findings, knowledge, and best practices. Very few institutions (15%), however, reported also having an accountability and reward mechanism for encouraging adherence to good knowledge management practices.

Almost all of the participating institutions (97%) indicated participation – despite wide variation in levels - in government and/or donor-led research and knowledge management platforms. The main use of these platforms are to present major research findings and policy briefs, and host policy dialogues to share knowledge and experience in Nutrition, Agriculture and WASH program, as well as inform national policies. Some of the most frequently mentioned platforms by participants include FMOH/RMNCH-N RAC, IFPRI, National development partners forum, and ag2nut (virtual).

B. Challenges & Gaps in Research, Learning and Knowledge Management

Although the improved focus on usefulness of research, knowledge and learning to inform program and policies is encouraging, our findings show that there is a critical gap in consistent and adequate use of research findings and learning to inform program and policies in all categories of participating institutions in the assessment. This gap is even more prevalent in the use of research findings and learning to refine ongoing projects. Most of the research activities, especially of INGOs, are limited to conducting baseline, mid and final evaluations, and these findings are usually used to inform the design of new programs. There are also many instances where research findings are only used to track project progress and set targets. The most frequent reasons given for inadequate use of research findings and learning include:

- Poor quality of research (including operation research)
- Lack of strong policy recommendations even when there are good research findings

- Research findings are presented with too much technical jargon, in a too lengthy format, and are not easily digestible for policy makers
- Inadequate use of platforms to bring together researchers and policy makers for dialogue around research findings and policy recommendations
- Delay in timely dissemination of research findings
- Limited attention given to operation research
- Much of research at academic institutions is still conducted for academic purposes (publication) and limited attention is given to implementation science
- In some cases, limited flexibility of donors to allow program adjustment/refinement of ongoing project based on research findings and learning
- Lack of systematic review of research being conducted

Despite some concerns about the quality and applicability of the research being conducted, the main concerns centered on how the information is being presented or shared to policy makers and others in the research community. Concerns about timeliness, length, use of jargon, and lack of clear policy recommendations in research findings were expressed by many participants (85%). One respondent explained “if you give a 60 page report (on research findings) then policy makers are not going to read it, it cannot be too academic. But I see a lot of enthusiasm for policy makers to use evidence ...most researchers publish and they think their job is done.... there is a systematic approach to presenting findings to policy makers.... policy recommendations are not concrete enough to be easily digested by policy makers....it is a capacity issue of researchers”.

The prevalence of large flagship programs offers a great opportunity to make a big impact on Nutrition, WASH, and Agriculture programs, however, most of the research focuses primarily on the four major regions, which limits the ability to capture geographic and cultural diversities, as well as address specific needs from areas outside these four regions.

While a positive finding indicated that there are many research platforms (government and development partners), the majority of the participants (91%) perceived that there is lack of systematic coordination and ownership of these platforms to serve as effective forums to share findings, learning, and knowledge to inform program and policies. As a result, most of these platforms operate on an ad hoc basis, usually to accomplish a specific task such as strategy development, and tend to lose focus on meeting national goals versus individual organizations' interests and agendas. Also, few respondents (20%) perceived that these platforms get dominated by one group, minimizing the voice and contribution of other non-state actors and impeding their influence on national program and policies.

Duplication of efforts and resources is a major shortcoming highlighted through the assessment. The lack of government capacity to guide, lead and coordinate research and learning is seen to have contributed to this huge duplication of efforts and resources. Another perceived contributing factor to this problem is the previously mentioned lack of effective use and coordination of research and knowledge platforms. The duplication of efforts and resources was expressed as a huge concern for both government and donors. It is becoming very difficult for development partners to attribute results to specific projects or interventions for prioritization of funding, as many implementing partners implement similar interventions in similar areas. As one participant explained, “there are a lot of things happening ...in our woreda... all our comparison woredas are contaminated.... so it is very difficult to

attribute or claim achievement that came about as a result of a specific intervention and project....this is making it difficult for donors to prioritize one project over the other and fund...”. Similar concerns were expressed by another participant - “there are many instances where different donors implement similar activities in similar areas. Projects sometimes do not make adequate efforts to assess what has already been done, identify who is doing what, and instead start conducting research from scratch. This results in a huge amount of resource wastage.”

Although there is an increasing trend toward using evidence and following a consultative process in formulating policies, some institutions still hold the perception that non-state actors have limited space in influencing the formulation of national policies. Specific examples are nutrition sensitive agriculture policies, which respondents claim lack adequate evidence and have not been fully consultative in the policy formation process.

Findings show that although there are few projects that are being implemented in partnership with multiple government (sectors) and NGOs, a majority of research projects have limited collaborations and partnerships with other institutions. This lack of partnership and collaboration further worsens the duplication of resources and efforts, and limits the opportunity for multisectoral collaboration and implementation of Nutrition, WASH and Agriculture programs.

Knowledge management was a new term for a majority of institutions (75%), and there were various levels of understanding of its meaning and use in influencing programs and policies. The majority of participants (87%) indicated significant underperformance around systematically identifying, capturing, and disseminating key research findings and sharing knowledge internally and externally of their organization. Some of the most frequently mentioned reasons for this include lack of capacity, cultural barriers, limited awareness and attention to knowledge management, and lack of organizational commitment and leadership to create good knowledge management practices. As one respondent said, “knowledge management is not all about having technologies, it is about creating a culture for collective, team and peer learning.”

There was a perception indicated among respondents that multisectoral approaches could bring a greater impact to Nutrition, WASH and Agriculture programs. However, most of the participants (78%) perceived some of the challenges to be varying levels of commitment by different ministries and a lack of coordination and capacity to implement multisectoral interventions, especially at lower levels of government structures.

C. Existing opportunities

The following are some of the most frequently mentioned existing opportunities to conduct research, learning and/or knowledge management activities in Ethiopia:

- Evidence-based policies, (mainly in Nutrition and WASH) which lay a good foundation for successful implementation
- The availability of many platforms coordinated by government, donors, academia, associations for sharing research findings and learning among different research communities and program managers and policy makers

- Increased emphasize from government and donors given to increase private sector engagement in development work. Increased evidence that private sectors contribution to development work. “Private sector participation is coming...a long time ago education was only for employment, but recently university graduates come together and register....to establish a private firm..... provide different kinds of private services trainings, advisory, researches etc.....”
- The availability of “professional associations for different fields in nutrition and agriculture...have the potential to advance research in the respective areas”
- Availability of various strong public research institutions with respective regional offices to conduct research specific to individual regions
- Increased funding for multi-sectorial implementation of Nutrition, WASH and Agriculture programs
- Increased emphasis from government, NGOs, and development partners on encouraging learning and use of quality evidence (research findings and learning) to inform program and policy formulation
- The availability of large flagship and national programs (Nutrition, WASH and Agriculture programs) that the research community and policy makers can learn from, and with the potential to make greater impact on Nutrition, WASH and Agriculture areas
- The large and increasing number of academic institutions/universities and army of researchers; EPHI’s new initiative to establish a Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Database is perceived to increase access and use of research for program and policy improvement purpose.

D. Key Recommendations

The respondents to the assessment had many insightful recommendations about how the perceived gaps, challenges and opportunities in the research and learning community could and should be addressed.

In regards to coordination, the recommendation was that the government has to strengthen the coordinating and streamlining the different research activities and platforms, to plan to avoid duplication of efforts and resources. Donors also should further support the government efforts in this role through building the capacity of government, as well as devising different strategies and requirements for projects so that implementing partners work together in a complementary manner - i.e. sharing learning among different projects, putting in place knowledge management systems, etc.

The upgrading of a nutrition coordination body, accountable to the Prime Minister, that can lead, guide and influence all sectors could greatly facilitate the execution of multisectoral interventions and address many of the challenges.

In order to fill the many gaps in capacity that were identified (research methodology, preparation of policy briefs, presenting findings, grant writing, etc.), government and donors need to make a concerted effort to ensure project implementing partners integrate capacity building activities into their workplans (i.e. strengthening M&E and research platform under national coordination body). Government, donors and implementing partners should work together to ensure there is a capacity for research, learning and knowledge management to inform the programs and policies of Nutrition, WASH and Agriculture

programs. The government also needs to take the lead in coordinating research, learning and knowledge management activities through coordinated platforms to ensure that implementing partners are working in a complementary manner to achieve the national goal of reducing stunting.

Respondents felt that donors can play a key role in ensuring that learning is incorporated into the work plans of implementing partners, through methods such as creating dedicated learning teams, linkages with promoting institutions, and developing a coherent institutional learning agenda. Donors also need to become flexible to encourage and allow refinements or adjustments to ongoing programs based on learning and program research findings.

Another key recommendation was the need for increased emphasis on a culture of data use at different levels of design and implementation, a need for creating awareness and building capacity for data collection and usage, and establishing systems that encourage and reward the use of research and learning to inform program and policy improvement at the project, organization and national level. In regards to knowledge management, there was a common recommendation to incorporate knowledge management into program design and activities, develop systematic approaches for identifying, documenting and disseminating research findings, developing best practices for communicating research findings, learning, and knowledge both internally and externally.

Many respondents (60%) recommended that the increasing number of academic institutions be leveraged by building their capacity and creating opportunities for academic institutions to partner and participate in development projects. One capacity building approach could be a type of clustering, where 1st line universities mentor and coach 2nd and 3rd generation universities with limited capacities. In addition, use a mechanism for evaluating the performance of universities and research institutions based not only on the number of publications but also on the influence of their research on implementation science and program and policy. One respondent explained CGIAR is one good example of an institution that evaluates project performance based on research findings contribution to policy and development work.

Despite the promise of multi-sectoral programs, the respondents wanted greater recognition that these programs have different capacity requirements for implementation in terms of designing, coordinating, evaluating and financing, compared to single sectoral programs. There is a need to build the necessary capacity for successful execution of multi-sectoral program implementation with a special focus on the lower levels of the government structure. Leveraging the various ministries (signatories of NNP) to identify new research areas in Nutrition, Agriculture and Wash areas could improve the successful implementation of the multisectoral approach. In addition, the effectiveness of multi-sectoral collaboration needs to be evaluated, including review of the integration of the various sectors, and developing an accountability system to better ensure each sector carries out its roles and responsibilities in an effective and impactful manner.

Some final recommendations included: leveraging some of the existing platforms and building their capacity to play a critical role in identifying priority research areas, collecting and presenting findings and learning in the form of policy briefs that policy makers can easily understand and put into action, and conducting evaluations on the successful translation of research findings for informing programs and policies for multisectoral approaches.

Building the capacity of Government to coordinate and guide research, learning and knowledge management activities to ensure complimentary and responsiveness of research and learning programs. Donors and NGOs also collaborate with government and devise strategies to avoid the existing duplication of efforts and resources. The existing Feed the Futures Ethiopia growth through Nutrition convergence and layering initiative is one good example with a potential to minimize duplication of efforts and increase the complementarity of the project with other similar projects.

VI. Relevance to Growth through Nutrition Activity

The findings of this assessment are extremely applicable to the design of the Learning Agenda Strategy for the Growth through Nutrition Activity. The emphasis on the importance of strong knowledge management systems, focus on timely, operational research, capacity building around translating research findings to policy recommendations, strong data collection, management and sharing, capacity building for academic institutions and for implementers of multi-sectoral projects, and leveraging of existing research platforms, informs and supports the planned approach for the Learning Agenda Strategy and Knowledge Management Plan.

Through the assessment Tufts has identified potential collaborating platforms and institutions to implement our program in a complementary and responsive manner. Some of this platforms include the EPHI's National Information Platform on Nutrition (NIPN).

Identifying the capacity, gaps and opportunities will help prevent duplication of efforts and more effectively leverage existing resources. There will be a very strong emphasis on the strategy design on collaboration around research priority areas that could fill some of the identified gaps (i.e. multisectorial collaboration) and knowledge management structures, including plans for internal and external project communication and knowledge management. For external communications, the plan will draw heavily on the recommendations of the research community needs assessment in identifying target audiences, developing appropriate communication tools, and channels for dissemination. The plan will develop strategies for collaborating with other research and learning platforms, and on innovative ways to present research and learning in an engaging way. Its goal will be to make research easily available and comprehensible in order to apply to policy and programming decision making. The strategy will also seek to highlight members of the community integrating research and learning into their activities in new ways. The findings of this assessment will also help Tufts to tailor capacity building activities around identified areas relating to research design, knowledge management, creating and presenting research findings, and coordination of research platforms.

Lastly, assessment findings set the groundwork for creating an accountable system for identifying, prioritizing, and conducting research and learning activities by seeking input and participation from key partners and stakeholders, and beginning conversations around collaboration and strengthening of the research and learning sector in Ethiopia.

Limitations

One focus of the Growth through Nutrition Activity is increasing private sector engagement in the implementation of the project, including private sector involvement in the research and Learning Agenda activities. We acknowledge, however, the absence of private institution participation in the assessment

due to the inability of the few private institutions identified to participate in the assessment, thus limiting our first-hand information on private institution research, learning and knowledge management practices, and our understanding of their challenges, opportunities and contribution towards informing programs and policies in Nutrition, WASH and Agriculture. Despite this fact, the project is cognizant of the important role that private sectors can play in informing program and policy in the three areas. Growth through Nutrition continues to devise various mechanisms to identify private sector actors that could contribute to the achievement of the project through their participation in the development and role out of the Learning Agenda Strategy and activities.

Dissemination of Findings:

Preliminary findings from the assessment were shared and discussed with workshop participants during a Tufts University one-day Learning Agenda Workshop that was conducted on Feb 20, 2017, at Capital Hotel in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The majority of the workshop participants were also participants in the assessment.

This final report will be disseminated to participating institutions and workshop participants via e-mail. The report also will be included as resource material on the Growth through Nutrition Knowledge Management website (under construction as of this report) in order to be accessible to the research and knowledge management community.