



PROMISE AND POTENTIAL

DELIVERING INCLUSIVE, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
FOR SMALL-SCALE FOOD PRODUCERS THROUGH
THE FEED THE FUTURE INITIATIVE



OXFAM
America

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Feed the Future Investment in Ethiopia: Implications for Sustainable Food Security and Poverty Reduction

Dawit Alemu and Gina E. Castillo

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Feed the Future Investment in Haiti: Implications for Sustainable Food Security and Poverty Reduction

Danielle Fuller-Wimbush and Cardyn Fils-Aimé

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Sustainable and Inclusive Investments in Agriculture: Lessons on the Feed the Future Initiative in Tanzania

Emmanuel Tumusiime and Edmund Matotay

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The Influence of US Development Assistance on Local Adaptive Capacity to Climate Change: Insights from Senegal

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Sowing Seeds: Opportunities and Challenges Facing US Assistance for Food Security in Guatemala

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CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	2
INTRODUCTION	4
MAKING PUBLIC INVESTMENTS IN AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY WORK	7
METHODOLOGY AND DATA	10
INCLUSIVE PARTICIPATION	13
Targeting approach	13
Engaging poor farmers	14
Women’s participation	15
EMPOWERING PRODUCERS AND STRENGTHENING LOCAL INSTITUTIONS	17
Knowledge, skills, and economic participation	17
Enabling women producers	18
Institutional capacity development	18
PRINCIPLES OF AID EFFECTIVENESS	22
Consultation with stakeholders	22
Ownership, alignment, harmonization, and accountability	25
ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE	26
Sustainable production methods	26
Climate change adaptation	29
IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	32
NOTES	35
BIBLIOGRAPHY	38

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The launch of the Feed the Future initiative (FtF) in 2010 brought agriculture back to the center of the US development agenda. Nearly five years later, FtF has been credited with reaching millions of farmers, improving agricultural technologies, and providing crucial nutrition assistance to millions of infants and young children.

To better understand whether this effort will lead to lasting, positive impacts to right the wrong of hunger, Oxfam America examined FtF activities in six countries: Ethiopia, Ghana, Guatemala, Haiti, Senegal, and Tanzania. Given FtF's scope and scale, these case studies are not comprehensive; they are based on a purposeful analysis of key themes related to inclusiveness, empowerment, aid effectiveness, and sustainability. In Oxfam's experience, these issues are instrumental in determining **whether Feed the Future projects will achieve lasting development impacts.**

The case studies point to substantial, real, and important improvements in the way the US government, especially the US Agency for International Development (USAID), delivers assistance. FtF has made significant efforts to incorporate and adhere to principles of aid effectiveness. The initiative is also making real efforts to integrate key issues such as women's empowerment and natural resource management across FtF activities. These are positive and welcome developments.

At the same time, the ambitious agenda embraced by USAID remains a work in progress. Continued efforts are needed to refine and strengthen FtF to ensure current US investments contribute to long-term improvements in food security, especially for small-scale producers who are too often left behind.

The bulk of bilateral assistance provided through FtF is allocated to programs that emphasize increased production and productivity of crops and engagement of small-scale producers in formal value chains. In working through these channels, FtF seeks to increase income, stimulate local labor markets, and make more food available on local markets while lowering prices and stabilizing food access for rural households. This approach has important implications; small-scale producers are in the best position to take advantage of the resources and support offered through these projects. However, the case studies revealed that FtF projects tend to most benefit producers who already have the resources, capacity, and relationships to take advantage of new market opportunities and to experiment

with new production techniques and technologies. In practical terms, this means that the most resource-constrained, risk-averse, and marginalized producers face the highest barriers to taking advantage of the support FtF provides.

Several observations follow from this finding. These core agricultural development programs should be carefully calibrated to reach as many resource-constrained and poor, small-scale producers as possible. In some instances this step requires linking farmers to appropriate services, including financial institutions that make it possible for them to make smart on-farm investments. Too often, lack of access to credit was cited as a key constraint to participating in or adopting agricultural practices promoted through FtF programs. In addition, better linkages are needed between agricultural productivity projects and social protection programs that can effectively support very poor and marginalized producers.

Projects also need to more systematically focus on providing women with appropriate support, for example, by focusing on the specific crops they grow and working with the formal and informal organizations to which they belong. Indeed, women's empowerment is identified as a cross-cutting issue for FtF activities, and a number of tools and resources have been developed to assist with this goal. These tools are important and necessary; however, gaps still remain in ensuring that women are full and equal participants in FtF activities and that they receive the tailored support they need. In addition, analysis developed to measure women's empowerment needs to be effectively used to shape FtF project-level activities.

Increasing productivity (a major emphasis of FtF projects) is only one link in a longer chain that must be addressed to improve livelihoods. Additional actions are needed that empower small-scale producers to overcome barriers to market access, improve their bargaining power, and strengthen their access to and control over land and water resources. Failing to address this broader set of constraints has consequences in terms of what FtF project beneficiaries invest in and what they earn for their time and labor.

Addressing many of these challenges requires government leadership and commitment. In Oxfam's experience, sustainable development requires a combination of effective states that are able to deliver basic services and active citizens who have the capacity to claim their rights and hold those in power

accountable. Although FtF has emphasized building technical capacity and skills, less emphasis appears to be focused on developing necessary soft skills, especially among small-scale producers, to demand more responsive governments at the local and national levels. Creating stronger mechanisms for social accountability can contribute to creating stronger, more durable relationships between states and citizens, opening up opportunities for long-term development. This is an unrealized opportunity for FtF.

FtF has demonstrated a concerted effort to support country ownership and related principles intended to make US official development assistance more effective. A strong emphasis on consultation, coordination, and harmonization at the national level means that there is alignment between FtF and national strategies as well as mechanisms of accountability in place between the US, recipient governments, and other donors. Although the US continues to use a project approach to deliver most of its aid, it is taking steps to build the capacity of institutions, including relevant line ministries. In doing so, the US is contributing to stronger state institutions that are better able to meet local needs and deliver improved services.

This generally positive approach falls short, however, when moving from the national to the local level, which is a key concern for promoting long-term sustainability. Engaging with local governments, civil society groups, and farmer organizations is important, but too often gets lost in the process of design and implementation of FtF activities. In several instances, local government officials expressed concerns that although they were informed about activities, little or no consultation took place to improve coordination at the local level and to promote adoption of US-funded efforts by these institutions. This shortcoming undermines a key pathway to ensure that US aid is locally relevant and thus likely to be sustained once the project cycle ends.

Finally, the focus on productivity also goes to the heart of the issue of the environmental sustainability of FtF projects. In most if not all of the countries where FtF works, environmental degradation is a key challenge. Oxfam found a wide range of strategies promoted by FtF to help farmers maintain and/or improve their natural resource base, including the use of practices such as the System of Rice Intensification, which is based on low-input agroecological principles. Still, the bulk of FtF assistance for agricultural productivity emphasizes input-intensive approaches that increase the use of synthetic pesticides and mineral fertilizers. Given the credit and other constraints farmers face, agroecological approaches may be more practicable for very poor farming households and deserve greater attention by FtF.

Case studies also point to a number of examples where climate adaptation activities are being integrated within projects that are primarily focused on increasing productivity and improving food security. This additional focus is a welcome and needed orientation, given that impacts from climate change will make agricultural production increasingly challenging and risky. However, a more systematic integration of climate change adaptation is needed across FtF projects. Too often the primary focus on demonstrating rapid yield increases overshadows longer-term needs to help manage farms for environmental sustainability now and in the future.

The journey toward lasting improvements in the lives and livelihoods of small-scale producers is still in the early stages. From Oxfam's experience and analysis, sustainable improvements in food security cannot be achieved in just one season or one year. The long-term prospects for households and communities to permanently escape hunger requires sustained commitment by governments (recipient and donor alike), along with strategies that build the capacity of institutions and empower individuals to take control of decisions that affect their lives. FtF holds the promise and potential to make this happen. Time, sustained dedication of resources, and unwavering focus are needed to turn that promise into reality.

INTRODUCTION

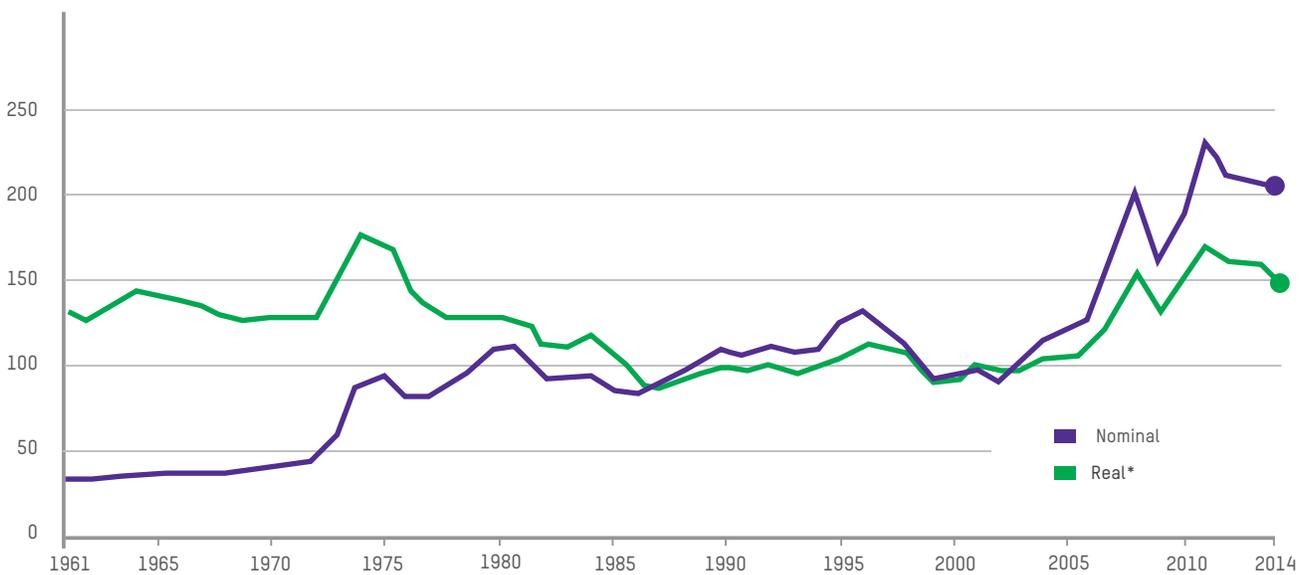
The global food system is in disrepair. It has been weakened by decades of inattention, ineffective rules, and incoherent policies. Most of all, it suffers from systematic underinvestment, specifically in the support small-scale food producers need most to escape hunger and poverty. Food price spikes in 2008 and 2011 (Figure 1) served as a wake-up call for the world. By one estimate, the sudden rise in prices in 2011 forced 44 million people into poverty.¹ The civil unrest that followed the rapid run-up in prices—particularly in urban centers in developing countries—brought the problem to the forefront.

Governments have responded, returning significant attention to the problem of hunger. As a result, agricultural development re-emerged forcefully to the global development agenda.

Developing countries' own investments in agriculture, which have already been rising since the mid-2000s, are being reinforced by increased funding from international donors.

The rationale for this is simple: The vast majority of people living in poverty—75 percent—are small-scale producers; they rely on agriculture, fishing, and pastoralism for their livelihoods.³ The latest data show that the number of hungry people in the world is declining. But with more than 805 million people suffering from food insecurity, there is still much work to be done.⁴

FIGURE 1: FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION (FAO) GLOBAL FOOD PRICE INDEX IN NOMINAL AND REAL TERMS, 1961 TO 2014²



*The real price index is the nominal price index deflated by the World Bank Manufactures Unit Value Index (MUV).



Rebecca James is a farmer in the Maputo Province of southern Mozambique.
Photo: Caroline Hooper-Box / Oxfam

// As soon as the price of petrol went up, [the price of] food, medicines, clothes—everything went up. Either you have money to buy goods at the shop or you starve. We fear to take the little savings that we have to buy seeds and plant. I used to cultivate 10 hectares and sell potato, tomato, beans, and cabbage. Now I just keep a small plot to grow some things to eat. //

REBECCA JAMES, MOZAMBIQUE

There is ample evidence that directly investing in these small-scale producers can have real, dramatic impacts in improving lives and livelihoods. Many studies have demonstrated the strong linkages between growth in small-scale agriculture and poverty reduction effects in countries with significant small-scale farming populations.⁵ This correlation is especially seen in regions where progress has lagged in achieving the first Millennium Development Goal of halving the proportion of people living in hunger and poverty by 2015. Globally, the majority of people suffering from hunger live in Africa and Asia. In sub-Saharan Africa, where 70 percent of the workforce is said to be employed in agriculture⁶ and nearly 80 percent of farms are two hectares or less,⁷ growth in small-scale agriculture directly benefits a major segment of the population. Additionally, increasing small-farmer income can have knock-on effects in the broader economy, stimulating consumption that induces employment and increases wages in the rural nonfarm sector and in urban areas.

It is not surprising, then, that governments in developing countries and donors are once again turning their attention to agriculture. In recent years, they have made new pledges and undertaken new initiatives to promote agricultural development. As a donor of foreign assistance, the US government has committed to support efforts of national governments and has created the Feed the Future initiative (FtF), a program tasked with accelerating agriculture sector growth and improving nutritional status in 19 focus countries.⁸ FtF's overall goal is to reduce poverty rates by 20 percent, curbing the prevalence of stunting in children under the age of 5.⁹

In the years since FtF was launched, in 2010, the US government has issued two reports pointing to its achievements. These reports provide an important window into how FtF is working globally while also giving examples of success at the country level. The data indicate positive early results. For example, in the 2013 fiscal year, the US Agency for International Development (USAID) reported that new technologies and management practices reached seven million producers. For the same period, US-funded programs provided nutrition assistance to 12.7 million children.¹⁰

While these immediate results are important, a key question is whether these early achievements will lead to lasting change. To gain insight into this critical issue, Oxfam America undertook case studies in six FtF-focus countries: Ethiopia, Ghana, Guatemala, Haiti, Senegal, and Tanzania. The objective of the case studies was to examine FtF's implementation approach, targets, and the implications for sustainable food security and inclusive growth. **This report draws on these individual case studies and points to lessons from the experience of FtF in each country as guided by one overarching question:**

Will Feed the Future achieve sustainable, inclusive, and wider development impacts?

Given the breadth of FtF activities at the community, country, and global levels, a comprehensive analysis of all FtF activities in each country was not feasible. Oxfam undertook a purposeful examination of activities to gain insight about the prospects of FtF contributing to sustainable and inclusive impact. The projects reviewed tend to focus on agricultural productivity and market linkages. Nutrition-focused programs, though a stated component of FtF, were not examined in depth.

MAKING PUBLIC INVESTMENTS IN AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY WORK

Based on Oxfam’s experience, multiple actions are needed to realize the poverty-fighting power of agricultural development. Citizens must be empowered to hold their governments accountable for providing basic infrastructure, agricultural extension, and other public goods; trade and biofuel policies must be scrutinized and reformed to ensure they do not undermine the right to food; companies must rethink their sourcing practices and supply chains to ensure sustainability for people and the planet; and developed country governments must reinvest aid programs to support the farming households that form the backbone of rural food systems.

In all of these efforts, national governments in countries most affected by hunger and poverty must take the lead. Across much of the developing world, from Africa to Asia to Latin America, governments are responding to the challenge of hunger and poverty. In 2014, the African Union celebrated the Year of Agriculture and Food Security in Africa and made new commitments to end hunger by 2025.¹¹ More than 20 countries, including Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Kenya, Mexico, and South Africa, have adopted constitutional provisions guaranteeing the right to food.¹² In World Trade Organization negotiations, India is taking a leading role in pressing member governments to include an exception to trade rules for food distribution programs aimed at alleviating hunger.¹³

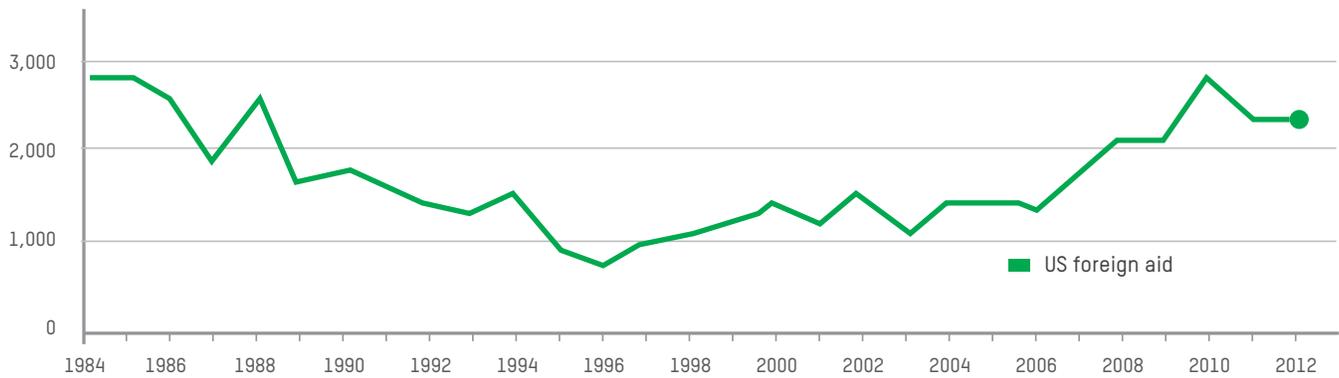
Developing country governments are also taking increasing responsibility for setting investment priorities, developing strategies, and implementing policies to support agricultural development. These investments in public goods, such as research and development, basic infrastructure, and technology transfer, among other areas, contribute to an enabling environment in which small-scale producers and other related private sector actors can flourish.¹⁴

To show their support for these efforts, leaders at the G8 Summit in L’Aquila, Italy, in 2009 pledged \$22 billion for agricultural development and food security programs in developing countries.¹⁵ To fulfill the US commitment, President Obama launched Feed the Future in 2010. This new strategic approach has resulted in new ways of working with government offices with the capacity or a mandate to work on food security and nutrition. It also builds on significantly increased funding provided by the US beginning in 2006 and accelerating in response to the food price spike. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development’s (OECD’s) Development Assistance Committee, between 2008 and 2012, the US provided \$11.5 billion to developing country agriculture.¹⁶ In fiscal year 2014, Congressionally appropriated funding for “food security and agriculture activities” (generally referring to bilaterally funded agricultural development activities) was \$1 billion.¹⁸ Additional funding for FtF comes from other departments and agencies across the US government.

AFRICAN GOVERNMENTS STEPPING UP TO THEIR COMMITMENTS

The Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) was launched in 2003 to close the gap between actual expenditures on agriculture and target allocations identified as necessary to spur agricultural growth and poverty reduction. Governments that developed CAADP plans have committed to allocating 10 percent of their national budgets to agriculture. So far, 24 countries have developed agricultural investment strategies under the CAADP. However, just four of the 19 countries reviewed in one study are meeting the budget allocation target, demonstrating that much work remains to be done.¹⁷ In 2014, African governments came together to mark the 10-year anniversary of the CAADP and to reaffirm their commitment to achieving broad, inclusive, and sustainable agricultural growth.

FIGURE 2: US DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE FOR AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY¹⁹ (in millions of USD)



Note: Amounts refer to committed resources for agriculture (including forestry and fisheries) as well as development food aid.

Since its launch, FtF has refined its approach, strengthened working relationships between FtF-responsible agencies, and launched complementary initiatives. In recent years, USAID has developed a multisector nutrition strategy, a global climate and development strategy, and policy program guidance on building resilience to recurrent crises. USAID also helped to launch the FtF’s New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition.

The United States and other major donors have generally sought to attract private investment in the agriculture sector in developing countries to leverage official development assistance. The use of public-private partnerships appears to be on the rise. Launched in 2011 and boasting nearly 200 company investment commitments and an even larger number of promised policy reforms by the 10 participating African countries, the New Alliance has been touted as a complement to the L’Aquila Food Security Initiative.²⁰

Private investment in agriculture and related industries can contribute to improved food security and nutrition. But in a review of the New Alliance in three countries and in other research on public-private partnerships, Oxfam has raised concerns about the ability of large-scale private investment to benefit small-scale producers.²¹ Based on this review, Oxfam made a number of recommendations on the reforms needed to ensure that public-private partnerships contribute to, and do not undermine, the right to food.

The L’Aquila Food Security Initiative was important not just for the renewed emphasis it put on how much assistance goes to the agriculture sector. The initiative focused on how aid is delivered as well. In its official strategy documents, FtF embraces principles of aid effectiveness, which were drawn from the

THE ROME PRINCIPLES FOR SUSTAINABLE FOOD SECURITY²³

- Invest in **country-owned plans**, aimed at channeling resources to well-designed and results-based programs and partnerships.
- Foster **strategic coordination** at the national, regional, and global level to improve governance, promote better allocation of resources, avoid duplication of efforts, and identify response gaps.
- Strive for a comprehensive **twin-track approach to food security** that consists of (1) direct action to **immediately tackle hunger** for the most vulnerable, and (2) medium- and long-term sustainable agricultural, food security, nutrition, and rural development programs to **eliminate the root causes of hunger and poverty**, including through the progressive realization of the right to adequate food.
- Ensure **a strong role for the multilateral system** by sustained improvements in efficiency, responsiveness, coordination, and effectiveness of multilateral institutions.
- Ensure **sustained and substantial commitment by all partners** to investment in agriculture and food security and nutrition, with provision of necessary resources in a timely and reliable fashion, aimed at multiyear plans and programs.



Pierre-Louis Elusmé is a farmer in the Artibonite River Valley in central Haiti. Photo: Brett Eloff / Oxfam America

// Twenty-five years ago you could grow and sell enough to take care of your family, and buy animals like cows and goats when we had extra money. Now we get no benefit [from growing rice]. Since there is a lack of water here, it makes it really hard. The situation now is bad ... we can't afford to pay for schools, and I can't afford to feed everyone every day. As hard as I work, I never know if it will help me feed the family. //

PIERRE-LOUIS ELUSMÉ, HAITI

Second High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Paris and subsequently supported by leaders at the 2009 World Summit on Food Security in Rome.²² The extent to which these principles in FtF's official guidance and strategy documents translate into country-level planning and implementation processes is a critical factor in determining whether US assistance will lead to lasting, positive results for food security and nutrition.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA

The methodology used in the case studies combined literature reviews, field observations, semistructured key informant interviews, and focus group discussions with male and female farmers. Key stakeholders included farmers benefiting from the FtF projects, project implementers, relevant USAID staff at missions, local government staff, academics, and informed stakeholders, mainly from the nongovernmental organization (NGO) community. For each of the case studies, Oxfam conducted field interviews guided by a semistructured questionnaire to obtain qualitative information about what categories of farmers are targeted; the real and perceptible impacts of interventions on livelihoods, adaptability, and sustainability of innovations; the involvement of local institutions; and the use of country systems. Details of sampling procedures and research sites are contained in the case study reports. Table 1 provides an overview of each case study focus.

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This paper is based on the framework agreed upon by civil society organizations (CSOs) in the Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness, a global civil society alliance seeking to improve development policies and practices. This framework is particularly useful to gauge the effectiveness of aid programs, because it reflects both international (institutional) aid effectiveness principles (i.e., the Paris Principles and Accra Agenda for Action) and the rights-based approach (RBA) to development.²⁴ The framework was developed to improve the implementation of international aid to increase its development impact and make it more sustainable and broad based. Sustainability and inclusivity are consistently identified in development literature as essential to consider when examining the effectiveness of aid programs that address poverty and food insecurity in developing countries.

TABLE 1: OVERVIEW OF CASE STUDIES

COUNTRY	PRIMARY DATA COLLECTION PERIOD	FOCUS OF FTf INTERVENTION(S) STUDIED	FOCUS OF THE CASE STUDY
Ethiopia	September 2013–January 2014	Performance of value chains of key crops, notably wheat and teff, and livestock products	Aid effectiveness, sustainability of results
Ghana	June/July–September 2014	Competitiveness of key value chain crops, notably rice and horticulture crops	Aid effectiveness, sustainability and scalability
Guatemala	October–December 2011	Responsiveness of FtF to structural causes of food insecurity	Aid effectiveness
Haiti	March, June, and July 2013	Natural resource management; productivity of domestic food and export crops	Aid effectiveness, sustainability of results, inclusivity
Senegal	April/May and July 2012	Natural resource management	Aid effectiveness, climate change integration
Tanzania	February/March and May–early July 2013	Productivity and profitability of rice, maize, and horticulture crops	Aid effectiveness, sustainability of results, inclusivity

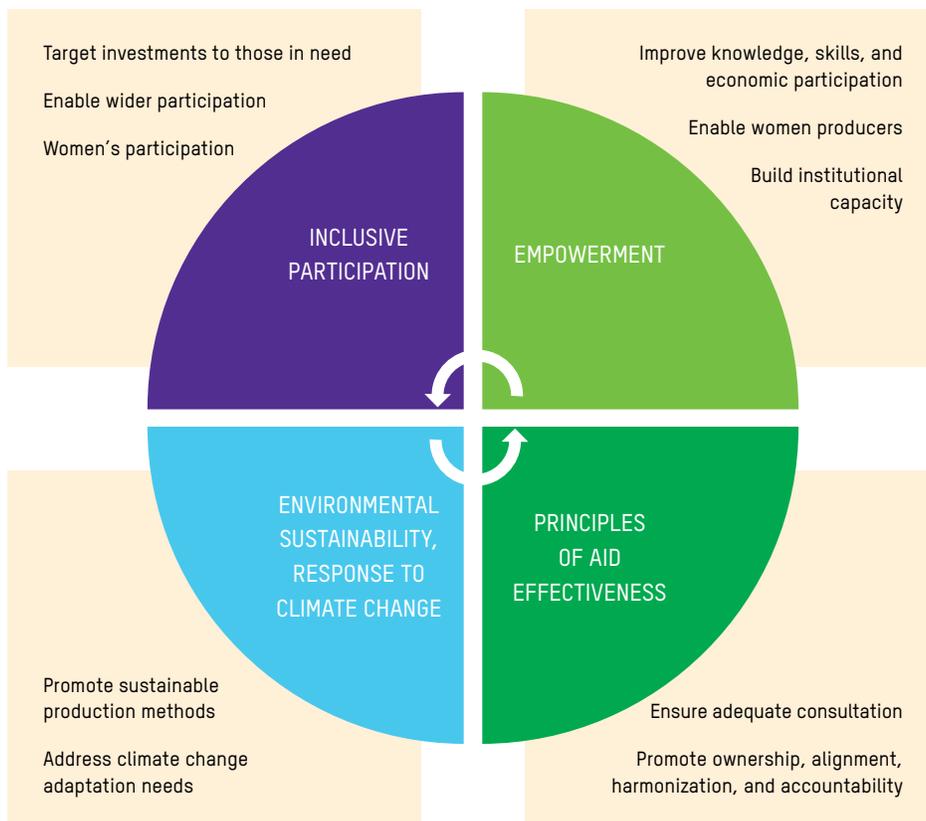
The framework describes ways to make international aid more sustainable and inclusive in order to improve development outcomes. Specifically, the Paris Principles on Aid Effectiveness include the following elements: ownership, alignment, harmonization, and accountability. The rights-based approach to development, on the other hand, challenges stakeholders to take responsibility to address issues of inequality and marginalization as part of development programs and processes. The RBA incorporates a number of elements, the most pertinent for programming in food security and agricultural development initiatives being broad and inclusive participation, in particular of vulnerable populations; empowering beneficiaries; and promotion of environmental sustainability.²⁵ Generally speaking, the right to food and the demand for fair distribution of productive resources among different socioeconomic classes of people are implicit in the aims of the RBA.

Environmental sustainability, including the urgency to mitigate and adapt to impacts of climate change, is a well-known element of sustainable development frameworks. It is also now

recognized by the RBA as an essential component to development. This is not a radical shift in thinking. Degradation of ecosystem resources, notably soil, water, and biodiversity, can undermine individuals' and communities' rights to health, clean water, and food. Agricultural production is a key contributor to ecosystem degradation. Poor, vulnerable, and indigenous communities are likely to suffer most when biodiversity and ecosystems are destroyed because they often depend on these resources directly for their livelihoods. In this context, the RBA argues for implementation practices that promote sustainable and equitable management of natural resources and ecosystems.²⁶

A list of indicators for the elements of the framework is presented in the conceptual model in Figure 3. The indicators are discussed in the following sections, together with empirical observations captured in the case studies.

FIGURE 3: CONCEPTUAL MODEL FOR ANALYZING EFFECTIVENESS OF DEVELOPMENT AID IN THE AGRICULTURE SECTOR





Miguel Angel Bámaca is a farmer in San Miguel Ixtahuacan in the western San Marcos department of Guatemala.
Photo: Anna Fawcus / Oxfam America

// People are afraid to eat anything that comes from the earth, [to] eat vegetables and drink water that is already contaminated. There are studies that show there are heavy metals in the Quivichil and Tzalá rivers. The Cuilco River has heavy metals too. This is our concern. On the 14th of July [2010], I could have lost my life. That night at five minutes to 10 o'clock, I was shot at. We want this company to close down; we want them to leave. We don't want them to continue to pile poison upon us. We want to live in peace and tranquility. [But] our lives are in danger. //

MIGUEL ANGEL BÁMACA, FARMER, ANTI-MINING ACTIVIST, GUATEMALA

INCLUSIVE PARTICIPATION

To successfully spur broad-based agriculture sector growth, donor investments must be inclusive. This means enabling wider participation of the majority of farmers, particularly women and other economically and socially marginalized groups, who are at the greatest risk of food insecurity. These groups stand to benefit the most from agriculture sector growth. Yet enabling such participation also requires identifying a broad range of small-scale producers, recognizing their diversity, and targeting interventions according to their specific needs.

The variety of factors affecting small-scale producers where FtF operates can be characterized by differences in:

- Climatic and agroecological conditions
- Market access and infrastructure
- Legal and policy frameworks governing access to and control over resources
- Social and cultural norms that influence household food security and nutrition

Such characteristics impact the livelihoods of individual producers differently. The complex makeup of rural producers confronts governments and development practitioners alike. USAID and the organizations implementing FtF projects must find appropriate and inclusive tools and methods for working with small-scale producers.

Typologies cannot easily capture this heterogeneity, but they can help to illustrate important characteristics that need to be taken into account in developing inclusive approaches to agricultural development. One such typology splits rural communities into three “rural worlds” (see box), each with its own capacities and opportunities to engage in market-driven agricultural development activities. The extent to which FtF interventions are inclusive of a broad range of smallholders determines how effectively they are able to reach small-scale producers in the typology’s Rural Worlds 2 and 3.

TARGETING APPROACH

The approach taken by FtF to select specific geographical areas, crops, and producers is articulated in the USAID Forward policy framework as well as the *Feed the Future Guide*.²⁷ There are two key criteria used: (1) a focus on areas and regions that

THREE RURAL “WORLDS”: A TYPOLOGY OF SMALL-SCALE FARMING²⁸

Rural World 1 (RW1): These are the 2–10 percent of producers with access to capital, organization, information, and infrastructure, who can more easily “step up” to formal and coordinated markets (i.e., those most capable of responding to new opportunities).

Rural World 2 (RW2): These are the majority of smallholders, who are “getting by” and are generally more reluctant than those in RW1 to invest in the agricultural part of their livelihoods. They are also less likely to be formally organized in the market, are likely to trade in the informal sector, and may derive part of their incomes from waged work. State institutions and modern agri-food businesses are usually inaccessible for them.

Rural World 3 (RW3): These small-scale farm households are approaching landlessness; surveys in sub-Saharan Africa have shown at least 25 percent of households to be in this position, controlling less than 0.11 hectare per capita. They are more likely to be female-headed households and to depend on off-farm labor opportunities. In addition, tenant farmers and wage laborers are often the most marginalized rural citizens. In fact, nearly half of the 450 million agricultural workers globally cannot cover their basic needs. Policies and business initiatives that support smallholder production may not cater to the needs of these farmers.

hold potential for large-scale impact (what USAID calls “zones of influence” within FtF focus countries), and (2) a market-driven orientation, meaning USAID will focus on crops and enterprises where there is market demand. Linking small-scale producers with the private sector, including through public-private partnerships, is built into this strategy.

This approach is based on the assumption that rising agricultural productivity will result in higher incomes of participating households and create demand for labor in rural areas, thus raising wages; lowering food prices for the poor, and contributing to other areas of the local economy. FtF’s approach to food security holds the potential to increase aggregate food production at the national level. However, evidence also exists that it may fail to address food insecurity problems among the hungry, who often reside in less productive areas and/or have limited purchasing power.

The case studies show that USAID is effectively following its strategy for targeting investments to high-productivity areas and more market-ready crops. Research found an emphasis in FtF programs on (1) geographical regions of high agricultural potential (in terms of accessibility, water resources, soil fertility, and climatic conditions), and (2) crops with strong local or export market potential.

In Ethiopia, approximately 65 percent of the FtF portfolio has been allocated to the area referred to as “Productive Ethiopia,” a region that is more food secure, while “Hungry and Pastoral Ethiopia” is expected to receive only 25 percent of the total FtF portfolio for the country.²⁹ Similar investment patterns are visible in Tanzania, where up to 80 percent of the FtF portfolio is earmarked for the Southern Agriculture Growth Corridor, a region considered to have a higher potential for agricultural development.

Alone, this strategy to promote greater agricultural productivity and growth has the capacity to improve the lives and livelihoods of small-scale producers, particularly those in Rural World 2 who have some exposure and capacity to engage in formal markets. However, not all small-scale producers have the resources to benefit from activities related to the FtF value chain, raising the possibility that such an approach marginalizes very poor producers.³⁰ For those households, assistance in the form of social protection, including productive safety nets, is critical to enable them to build resilience and gain the assets they need to participate in markets.

It is encouraging that some FtF projects focused on agricultural production are, at least in certain cases, being linked to safety net interventions, either in the same or in other geographic areas with high rates of hunger and malnutrition. This model has been employed in Ethiopia, where investments to promote agricultural development have been coordinated with the country’s Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP). Oxfam’s

case study in Ethiopia found that FtF projects such as the Graduation with Resilience to Achieve Sustainable Development (GRAD) and Pastoralists Resiliency Improvement and Market Expansion (PRIME) projects are supporting or reinforcing the activities of the PSNP. However, the research did not explore how well coordinated these interventions are or how successful the food aid programs targeted at Rural World 3 are in helping the vulnerable to acquire the skills, capacity, and resources necessary to participate in FtF interventions.

ENGAGING POOR FARMERS

Effectively addressing the priority needs of all three “rural worlds” is crucial to improve food security and reduce poverty. However, USAID’s strategy of focusing on high-impact zones of influence, coupled with a market-led investment strategy, implicitly if not explicitly favors small-scale producers who can

REACHING THE VULNERABLE IN ETHIOPIA³¹

Two FtF projects in Ethiopia, Graduation with Resilience to Achieve Sustainable Development (GRAD) and Pastoralists Resiliency Improvement and Market Expansion (PRIME), are enabling some selected vulnerable households to access finances and build assets through activities such as cash for work. Households graduate from receiving support from the government’s Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP) once they’ve built up sufficient assets or economic ability and are deemed able to become self-sustainable. Such a programming approach holds potential to deliver more-inclusive development outcomes.

The Oxfam case study reveals that the two FtF projects have already achieved considerable success in graduating households from the Productive Safety Net Program, Ethiopia’s established social protection initiative to meet the needs of rural households particularly vulnerable to chronic hunger. However, our case study also found that FtF project implementers are under pressure to graduate households, potentially prematurely, in order to meet a quota set by USAID. The analysis in the case study suggests that the drive for quick results sometimes undercuts the standards for graduating households to be economically sustainable.

This finding underscores the need for ongoing support that will sustain results over time and ensure that target groups are not graduated solely to meet a quota.

quickly step up to commercial value chains. Essentially, these are farmers in Rural Worlds 1 and 2. The poorest and most marginalized small-scale producers are likely to remain untouched by these types of FtF investments. In extreme cases, this approach can lead to increased intra- and interregional inequalities, as the historical evidence from the Green Revolution suggests.³²

Because Oxfam's research did not collect detailed socio-economic data, it is not possible to generalize the categories of farmers receiving direct support from FtF interventions. Our research did illustrate this challenge, however. Not all small-scale farmers are positioned to take advantage of these programs. For instance in Tanzania and Haiti, only producers with advantageous endowments of land and access to water, as well as those with access to capital and some level of organization, are participating.

In addition, many FtF projects target farmers in organized groups. Indeed, strong farmer organizations are necessary entities for information sharing, collective bargaining with input providers and buyers, and empowering farmers to claim their rights, all of which are important for socioeconomic empowerment.³³ At the same time, it's important to recognize that only a small proportion of farmers in developing countries belong to such organizations, with the poorest and most socially marginalized groups such as women being among the least organized. Additionally, project design in FtF programs may favor certain types of producer organizations, resulting in limited or selective reach. In Guatemala for example, some small-scale producers risk being marginalized from participating in the initiative, because the plan is to work with legally registered producer organizations with at least 50 members.

Limited access to capital (on fair, transparent terms tailored to local production calendars), coupled with an aversion to taking on debt for farming technologies deemed to be too expensive, is preventing some small-scale producers from adopting new practices or engaging in marketing activities promoted by FtF. In some cases, small-scale producers are assuming more risk by entering into contract relationships with commercial farms or processors.

In Tanzania and Haiti, the case studies note that a significant number of participants in farmers' groups are passive members because they cannot afford to actually put into practice what they have learned from FtF trainings. For farmers who typically apply very few inputs on their fields or who sow recycled seed, farming technology requiring even modest usage of purchased inputs is considered costly or even cost prohibitive. Such issues of affordability underscore the need to ensure access to fair and flexible credit along with interventions to ensure broad-based participation.

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION

Gender equality features prominently in the USAID Forward policy framework³⁴ and the *Feed the Future Guide*, both of which anchor FtF implementation. The policy framework commits to ensuring that women are involved in consultations, project design, implementation, and evaluations. The *Feed the Future Guide* identifies gender as a cross-cutting priority, recognizing that women's contributions in agriculture often go unrecognized, their rights to control and access resources are limited, and their needs as food producers often go unmet. For these reasons, FtF has committed to addressing inequalities that limit women's participation.

The FtF commitment to a gendered approach is evident in the project strategy documents examined for Oxfam's research, but it is somewhat weak in practice.³⁵ For instance, there were no indications that the projects have activities that target women specifically or address problems specific to female farmers. Despite the emphasis placed on gendered programming, projects work in much the same way with mixed male and female groups as they do with all-women groups. For instance, men and women receive the same training.

While the scope and timing of the case studies did not permit the collection of reliable data from which to draw firm conclusions about the overall level of women's participation, Oxfam did gain insights from the characteristics of groups sampled, project reports, and other assessments, such as the annual FtF

WORKING WITH WOMEN FARMERS IN GHANA³⁶

In Ghana, a review of FtF, including the Agriculture Development and Value Chain Enhancement (ADVANCE) project, underscores the need for more systematic integration of gender into project planning and implementation.

The research found no clear plan to ensure women's participation in ADVANCE project activities, though equal opportunity for both men and women was a guiding principle of the project. Some efforts were made to ensure that women benefited in instances where they were too disadvantaged to compete with the men. For example, 99 percent of the participants in the numeracy training were women. This outcome is a direct result of the recognition that most women in this region lack the basic numeracy skills necessary for business activities. Without these skills, they may have a harder time keeping accurate accounting records, a challenge in instances where the application process for credit or loans requires this information.



Ndeye Gaye is a farmer in Ross Bethio in the northern Saint-Louis region of Senegal. Photo: Rebecca Blackwell / Oxfam America

Progress Reports. We found that there are significant numbers of women in beneficiary groups and that some groups are exclusively composed of women. Yet at the implementation level, participation in the projects examined is skewed toward men, which is consistent with comprehensive data reported in the 2013 and 2014 FtF annual progress reports.

Reasons for the disproportionately lower level of participation by women vary, but they are mostly social and economic in nature, and in some cases, they reflect an absence of clear strategies to specifically target women. In Haiti, for instance, the implementation of the FtF Watershed Initiative for National Natural Environmental Resources (WINNER) project to increase farmers' incomes was without a clear gender strategy at the inception of the project. The lack of active participation of some members, including women, was noted in the Tanzania case study. In Ethiopia, farmers' groups are also units of political mobilization, and women are more likely to be at the margins in such circumstances. On the whole, there still remain considerable challenges at the project implementation level to adequately operationalize gender equity aspects emphasized in the USAID Forward policy framework and *Feed the Future Guide*.

// We've learned to select quality seed, to grow quality rice. How to use the right fertilizer, how much and when. How to track our expenses, how much you need to sell to make a profit. How to get credit and use it the right way, so you can make proper financial plans and avoid bad debt. //

NDEYE GAYE, SENEGAL

EMPOWERING PRODUCERS AND STRENGTHENING LOCAL INSTITUTIONS

Hunger and, more fundamentally, poverty are tied to a lack of power, resources, and skills needed to thrive. Poor performance of small-scale agriculture is due in part to the weak performance capacity of institutions and organizations that carry out specific functions of agricultural development.³⁷ Consequently, lasting change cannot be achieved unless efforts are made to empower vulnerable small-scale producers and enhance the operational capacities of local institutions to support them.

For initiatives like FtF, empowering small-scale producers means working with them not simply as passive recipients of aid but as active citizens. It implies working with people to develop their capacities to initiate and undertake actions, on their own or with others, to control and influence decisions that affect their economic, social, and cultural lives. In theory, empowerment of small-scale producers requires action across three domains: (1) helping them to gain appropriate skills and knowledge, (2) increasing their economic participation, and (3) enabling them to claim their rights.³⁸ Correlations of varying degrees are expected to exist among these three domains of empowerment. For instance, knowledge and skills affect economic participation, and thus entitlements.

Building skills and knowledge and increasing economic participation are two key aspects of empowerment that are explicitly stated components of FtF. Effective skills and knowledge building requires understanding local contexts. For new technologies to be useful and put into practice, they must be adapted to local situations, particularly to the conditions and needs of small-scale farming. Furthermore, deep participation, if not ownership, by farmers is needed at some or all stages of the innovation process.³⁹ Integrating local and traditional knowledge can help reinforce the contribution of agriculture and food production to rural communities, increasing the likelihood that technologies are adopted and that they are economically sustainable.

A focus on rights is equally important, especially for socially marginalized groups, particularly women and indigenous communities, who often face systemic discrimination in their efforts to own, control, or manage productive resources. As the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) 2011 *State of Food and Agriculture* report succinctly notes, “Women are less likely than men to own land or livestock, adopt new technologies, use

credit or other financial services, or receive education or extension advice.”⁴⁰ Sometimes this gap results from discriminatory laws and policies, other times from social customs, and often from both. The impact on food security and nutrition is enormous.

Taking empowerment seriously highlights the need for interventions that deepen the capacity of citizens to claim their rights and hold those in power accountable. Equally important, it requires building effective state institutions capable of meeting their obligations to citizens. Ultimately, in Oxfam’s experience, it is this combination of active citizens and effective states that can drive development, and consequently help overcome food insecurity and poverty. Our case studies explore the extent to which these aspects of empowerment are being addressed in FtF projects.

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

FtF interventions reviewed in the case studies demonstrated some level of success in transferring farming technologies, particularly new, improved seeds—generally a feature of FtF production-oriented projects—and better management (husbandry) techniques. Knowledge of improved farming techniques has been gained through demonstration plots, field day visits, and visits by project technical staff with farmers. The evidence from the case studies, including self-reported data from farmers, shows that the new techniques are resulting in increased yields.

These achievements are important and meaningful, but must be kept in context; improved yields are one link in a longer chain leading to increased economic participation and empowerment. Alongside increased yields, small-scale producers need support in nonproduction aspects such as improved infrastructure, increased bargaining power (organization), market information, access to finance and decision-making tools, and an enabling policy environment.

Horticulture farmers interviewed in Tanzania, for example, revealed that they sell their produce on the local market, which is readily accessible, but that prices are low. Rice farmers also voiced concerns about low and fluctuating prices. Improved infrastructure, including storage facilities

and better price information among other support, could help address this problem. For some farmers, unfair prices are the result of credit constraints.

For instance, according to farmers interviewed in Dakawa, Tanzania, marketing sometimes occurs on the farm to pay for the loan obtained from traders during the growing season to cover production costs. Typically, farmers take “soft” loans from traders and promise to repay at harvest time with part of the harvest rather than in cash, usually at much discounted prices. For instance, in the season just before field interviews took place, some farmers took credit based on 30,000 Tanzania shillings for a sack of unmilled rice. At harvest, the trader received a sack of rice, which, according to a farmer, “was immediately sold [by the trader] for between 70,000 and 80,000 Tanzania shillings.”⁴¹

FtF projects reviewed in the case studies are addressing such constraints, though gaps remain and economic empowerment is still largely seen as tied principally to increasing yields.

ENABLING WOMEN PRODUCERS

Women’s empowerment is a prominent part of FtF, at least in theory. One important aspect of this is USAID’s investment in developing the Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI), a tool that can be used to measure the extent to which female farmers are being empowered through agricultural development interventions. The WEAI identifies five domains that are central to women’s empowerment: (1) decisions about production, (2) access to and control over productive resources, (3) control over use of income, (4) leadership in the community, and (5) time use. Development of the WEAI demonstrates USAID’s commitment to raising the profile of women in agriculture.⁴²

The extent to which the participation of women in FtF projects contributes to improvements captured in the index is of significant importance in understanding whether FtF is contributing to women’s empowerment. But because of the timing and scope of the case studies, researchers could not verify that women’s empowerment was occurring from the data they collected. There is a long lead time before investment in these domains can translate into material terms or development outcomes.

At the time of the case studies, most beneficiaries had been participating in FtF projects for only one or two years in Ethiopia, for example, and three years in Ghana, Tanzania, and Haiti. In countries where issues of women’s empowerment were explored, women interviewees did not identify noticeable achievements in some of these domains covered in the WEAI. For instance, a common observation was that control over land and access to credit still remain for the most part with men. Additionally, no suggestion was made to the effect that workloads for women have been reduced.

Importantly too, the research didn’t find robust information from project reports or from interviews with project implementers that data for WEAI was being collected for purposes of gauging the impact of FtF interventions. Similarly, researchers did not find that the WEAI is at this stage being used to inform project-level activities.

For the moment, it seems WEAI is viewed as a diagnostic tool for future policy action and programming. In the past, such tools have been used mostly for academic purposes rather than for guiding programming and implementation plans. For example, USAID has sponsored gender analyses in the past in Haiti,⁴³ but Oxfam’s study showed that the FtF Watershed Initiative for National Natural Environmental Resources (WINNER) project did not utilize this information to inform project design. The gender strategy developed to guide WINNER activities was not produced until late in the project cycle.

Although FtF may not redress existing gender inequalities in the short term, it is well positioned to catalyze the process of change to bridge the gender parity gap. Addressing constraints faced by women food producers, including increasing their access to resources and strengthening their roles as leaders in their communities, has the potential to reduce hunger by as much as 17 percent and contribute to other development outcomes, including improved child nutrition, which is a key FtF objective.⁴⁴ Moreover, addressing these constraints can help to build the capacity of local communities to claim their rights and demand states deliver basic services. Oxfam’s case studies reveal that there is more work to be done in overcoming inequities for women producers. WEAI is an important tool that should be used to inform FtF interventions going forward.

INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

Operational capacities of government agencies in developing countries to carry out necessary functions to promote agricultural development are weak. Core institutions important for agricultural development include universities, national agricultural research systems (NARS), agricultural extension services, and cooperatives. These institutions often have capacity limitations in terms of human resources and skills, as well as infrastructure.

Oxfam research identified some FtF project components focused on training and education that involved enhancing the capacity of existing institutions for better public service delivery and equipping the “next generation of agricultural specialists.” For the most part, these efforts are undertaken through collaborative efforts among local academic institutions, National Agriculture Research Centers, and US land-grant universities.⁴⁵



Emiliana Aligaesha is a farmer in the northwest Karagwe district in the Kagera region of Tanzania. Photo: Brett Eloff / Oxfam America

// Most [small farmers] are women, working hard, feeding their families, providing all their needs, fetching water, and paying school fees. These small farmers feed their families, feed all the urban people, and nearby countries. At the end of the day, they are the poorest in the area because they use much [human] energy and profit almost nothing. The great problem is that we have no sure markets where we can buy and sell. Whatever we produce, we sell under the [production] costs. This breaks the heart of farmers. But I believe in farming because it has supported my children’s education. I always have something to eat. Whenever any visitor knocks on my door, I know what to do. I am almost 70, but I never grow old because I have food. //

EMILIANA ALIGAESHA, TANZANIA



Saleha Begum is a farmer in Panjar Bhanga in the northern Rangpur district of Bangladesh. Photo: Rachel Corner / Oxfam

// Before we joined together in the group we were not confident to speak, but now we're confident and we're able to change our lives. Now that I'm selling milk I can make money and save money and be independent. I don't have any land of my own, but now I have money I can pay for a lease on land to grow rice and vegetables. Now we eat three meals a day, and we eat fish every day, and meat at least once a week. It's really good now, and my boy is much healthier. In the future, I want my son to carry on his studies and then to be well educated and have a good job so our life is better. //

SALEHA BEGUM, BANGLADESH

Although similar capacity-building efforts have a long history, empirical evidence and research show limited positive outcomes in terms of building sustainable country capacity.⁴⁶ This finding holds for the agricultural sector as well.⁴⁷ It is a systemic reality that incentives and incentive systems within public institutions in developing countries are weak, a factor that tends to discourage effective delivery of services to poor households. Reforming these systems is ultimately necessary. However, individual donors or programs often are not able to reform incentive systems of public institutions. Thus, innovative strategies are needed to overcome the poor incentives of service delivery in public institutions. FtF is making some efforts to increase the skills and capacity of governments through such innovative approaches, though it is not systematic in its approach.

An exclusive focus on building skills and knowledge and providing infrastructure for public institutions misses a key pathway to creating more responsive service delivery: supporting active citizenship. A power analysis of the drivers of change suggests that a continued focus by donors on the “supply” side alone (i.e., the government) will not actually lead to improved service delivery because the “demand” side (i.e., citizens) are not empowered to claim their rights to adequate services and demand more responsive, accountable governments at the local and national levels.⁴⁸

Efforts to address this gap can take many forms. For instance, donors can embed rights-based approaches in programming, awareness raising, and strengthening the organizational capacity of nonstate actors, particularly representative organizations of farmers and cooperatives. For example, in 2013 Oxfam America supported the Haitian NGO Plateforme Haïtienne de Plaidoyer pour un Développement Alternatif (PAPDA) in working with farmers’ groups in three communities in the Artibonite region to develop a report card, based on the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, that would assess the FtF WINNER Project in their area and provide feedback to local officials, USAID, and the implementing contractor. Groups like PAPDA can demand adequate delivery of services on behalf of poor people and gain greater transparency from state institutions about how resources are allocated. In summary, building active citizenship and capacity of institutions should be placed at the center of FtF programs. Unfortunately, none of the FtF projects reviewed in the case studies included this aspect of capacity building.

INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT IN HAITI⁴⁹

The direct support that US foreign assistance is providing to local institutions in Haiti is a major advance for strengthening their operational skills and reducing reliance on external forces. At the same time, equal attention is needed to build government capacity. Without a strong and effective government, advances cannot be maintained, and donors may continue to pour millions of dollars into Haiti with little to show for it once the projects end.

Many bilateral and multilateral agencies, such as the French development agency, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), and the World Bank, are working directly with the Haitian government by providing budget support or are working alongside the government to build capacities where they are weak. But in countries like Haiti, which has a history of government corruption, mismanagement, and weak capacity, and where the US Congress maintains restrictions on aid provision, the US has resisted providing direct budget support. The US Department of Agriculture is embedding advisers in Haiti’s Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Rural Development.

Given the crucial role of the Haitian government in overseeing and maintaining development within its borders, the US government needs to do more to ensure that Haitian ministries and government officials are better equipped to continue to maintain and grow the investments that have been and continue to be made.

PRINCIPLES OF AID EFFECTIVENESS

Foreign aid programs are effective and sustainable when driven by local needs, managed by local actors, and implemented through local, country-based systems. There is broad consensus that achieving such outcomes requires aid programs to be “owned” by aid recipient countries, aligned with country development plans and priorities, harmonized with interventions of other development actors in the country, results-driven, and accountable to all involved.

As a donor, the US has embraced these principles. They are reflected in strategic documents such as USAID Forward, the Rome Principles, which the US has agreed to alongside 180 other countries, and the *Feed the Future Guide*. Yet fully operationalizing these principles in programming and in practice on the ground is often a challenge.

Two pillars of country ownership—consultation and support for country systems (strategies, institutions, budgets)—are crucial for the success of Feed the Future and development projects in general. Effective consultation must be inclusive, involving a broad range of local stakeholders, including relevant state and nonstate actors, such as civil society organizations, particularly farmer-based groups at the national and subnational level, as well as representatives from the private sector.⁵⁰ All actors should be adequately involved in identifying needs as well as implementing, monitoring, and evaluating project activities.⁵¹ Strong consultative processes can ensure that aid is responsive to the needs of the people it aims to support.

Availability of a country’s agriculture sector development plan is essential for facilitating alignment and coordination of donor activities with the government’s own development priorities. Fortunately, many if not all developing countries have medium-term agricultural investment strategies in place. Each FtF focus country in sub-Saharan Africa has a Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) investment framework, while Haiti and Guatemala have National Agricultural Investment Plans.⁵² These national sector development plans are important for facilitating alignment and coordination of donor activities with the government. In general, the US has indicated that FtF can only operate in countries where such strategies exist. This requirement is in keeping with the commitments made under the Rome Principles to invest in country-owned plans. The US government has developed multiyear investment strategies (MYIS) to guide US investments and activities.

Finally, good aid practice encourages donors and host governments to conduct joint programs and joint review platforms. In practice, these mechanisms enable harmonization and mutual accountability.

CONSULTATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Evidence from the case studies suggests that a fair amount of consultation has taken place within FtF interventions, particularly at the national level. Feed the Future multiyear investment strategies, formulated by USAID technical staff or USAID consultants, are demand-driven in that they are written to be consistent with and supportive of the national agricultural investment strategy/plan. This process has led to generally strong alignment between FtF multiyear investment strategies and country-owned plans.

Additionally, consultation between USAID staff and line ministries generally takes place in the form of workshops to sensitize stakeholders. The evidence presented in the case studies reveals that such consultations bring together stakeholders at the national level to identify specific geographical areas where USAID should concentrate its efforts and enable FtF interventions to be coordinated with those of other donors or government programs. However, USAID staff interviewed in Oxfam case studies asserted that consultation processes have in some cases slowed implementation of certain projects (e.g., in Ethiopia and Ghana).

Ensuring FtF implementing organizations maintain the consultative approach with subnational institutions remains a challenge for FtF projects. Local government staff at the district and subdistrict level consistently observe that although they are informed about project activities prior to implementation, they have little to no role in designing, implementing, or monitoring individual FtF projects. This situation appeared to be the case in Tanzania and Ethiopia, where local government staff reported that they are not involved, or only marginally so, in the implementation of FtF projects. Yet local governments are the actors chiefly responsible for agricultural extension and development at the local level. Their limited involvement implementing and potentially also monitoring FtF activities raises significant concerns regarding the sustainability of results for the long-term success of FtF projects.



Bertukan Girma is a farmer in Kentary in the East Shewa zone of the Oromia region of Ethiopia. Photo: Eva-Lotta Jansson / Oxfam America

// The benefit we got [from growing onion seedlings to sell to big farms] is changing our lives. I'm able to make enough money at home without going away from the children, and that's great happiness for me. We used [our earnings] to construct our house, and we bought a cow. We want to be a model for other people and show them how we got to this stage from such a small thing. //

BERTUKAN GIRMA, ETHIOPIA



Irene Muzukira is a farmer in Chiawa, along the lower Zambezi in Zambia. Photo: Abbie Trayler-Smith / Oxfam

// I thought, if we put our efforts together, this [cooperative farm] would work. I was working on a commercial banana farm as a supervisor. I helped the laborers with technical skills, [but] I saw that working for myself would be better. The commercial farmer was making a lot of money and I was getting peanuts. There are opportunities to work here on commercial farms, but people are insulted, mistreated, and the pay is poor. Now I get the benefits from the work I put in. I can make more money at [our own] farm. I can send my children to school. //

IRENE MUZUKIRA, ZAMBIA

In the countries examined, beneficiaries and civil society organizations (notably, local NGOs) were involved in FtF activities primarily or exclusively at the implementation stage. Similarly, private sector actors were involved primarily as service providers and retail project implementers. Consultation with local project participants or institutions prior to implementation was limited.

Despite the lack of consultation prior to implementation, project activities were generally found to be appreciated in communities and aligned with one or more locally identified need. Perhaps this alignment is because national plans and USAID multi-year investment strategies are reflective of the needs of rural communities, at least in theory.

In addition, and perhaps more telling in countries like Haiti and Tanzania, weak or absent public services—particularly agricultural technology generation and extension services—mean that farmers appreciate any support that comes their way. Lack of capacity also has serious implications for consultation and feedback between government officials and citizens. This observation is particularly salient as a reminder of the systematic underinvestment in agriculture in these countries. Still, a more participatory process could yield more buy-in from local communities and greater potential for sustainability.

OWNERSHIP, ALIGNMENT, HARMONIZATION, AND ACCOUNTABILITY

US foreign assistance (and FtF in particular) is largely delivered through a project approach. At its worst, this approach can lead to fragmentation and ultimately undermine development effectiveness.⁵³ Donor assistance is more country-owned when provided as direct budget support or for broad programs. Oxfam case studies found that in some cases, FtF support is being given to line ministries, such as in Ghana, and for capacity building of public agriculture and health department staff, such as in Ethiopia and Tanzania. In addition, some FtF funding is going to local organizations.

This trend is very positive and such practices should be expanded as they provide local agents greater control over aid resources as well as more information about how aid is being delivered. This approach can also be a more efficient way to deliver aid. Combined with efforts to increase institutional capacity, it can also strengthen country **ownership**.

The analysis of the case studies shows that a project approach continues to challenge local governments' ownership and oversight of project activities. However, individual FtF projects

reviewed appear to be effectively **aligned** with national priorities and coordinated to overcome or minimize weaknesses from stand-alone interventions.

For example, in Ethiopia the FtF program includes three core components designed to complement each other in a "push-pull" model, each addressing different sets of agroecological and livelihood conditions. The FtF program is also tied directly to the country's Productive Safety Net Program. FtF interventions in Tanzania, Ghana, and Haiti, while more narrowly targeted geographically, have similarly been designed to integrate with national agricultural investment plans. This integration is also evidence that FtF implementation strategies represent an improvement over past US assistance practices.

Overall, Oxfam's case studies show that countries have processes and mechanisms in place that facilitate **coordination and harmonization** of FtF with the strategies and priorities of the host government as well as the activities of other donors. Joint Review and Accountability strategies have been set up in African countries. In Haiti, a similar process exists, although it is quite weak because donors, international NGOs, and private consulting firms have not been fully engaged. In Ethiopia the government has established a High Level Forum⁵⁴ with nine subsidiary sector working groups where donors participate. USAID co-chairs the Rural Economic Development and Food Security Working Group as the agriculture sector development partner lead. In Tanzania, the Annual Public Expenditure Review Process and the Joint Assistance Strategy help to align the interests of the US and other donors with the government. Similar strategies are found in Ghana, where an Agriculture Joint Sector Review Process has been set up and the Agriculture Sector Working Group provides a platform for policy dialogue among development actors as well as a space for intra- and intersectoral coordination.

More generally, platforms and tools are in place for setting aid priorities in focus countries. Along with USAID's operational approach, these tools have enabled FtF implementation to conform well to the aid effectiveness agenda. Clear guidance exists regarding institutionally accepted processes and mechanisms of aid effectiveness to orient FtF implementation in focus countries. The case studies found that USAID is indeed participating in these processes and that this participation has been instrumental in achieving good practices in FtF programming and implementation.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Sustainable food production is closely related to better management or more efficient use of natural resources, notably land, water, forests, and biodiversity. In many areas where people are suffering from hunger and poverty, these productive resources are already degraded by poor farming methods and/or climate change impacts. Globally, approximately 24 percent of arable land has been affected by land degradation⁵⁵ caused by a host of factors, including unsustainable land management practices (deforestation, planting on sloping hillsides, and other poor farming practices) as well as factors such as poverty, increasing population, and shortsighted policies that discourage good stewardship of natural resources.⁵⁶ Problems like these tend to be more prevalent in developing countries, including countries in Africa and Asia. Degraded land has significantly lower productivity and does not provide the same benefits as healthy ecosystems.

Climate change poses an additional challenge for agriculture and those whose livelihoods depend on it. Higher average temperatures and less predictable and reliable rainfall are expected to negatively impact crop production by limiting productivity for much of sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Other environmental factors induced by climate change, for example an increase in the number or intensity of invasive pests and weeds, place further stress on crops as well as the women and men who grow them. Without serious efforts to adapt farming practices to climate change, yield declines of up to 8 percent are anticipated in Africa and Asia.⁵⁷ The impact on food security is already being felt and will be significant in the future.⁵⁸

Therefore, the long-term success of FtF projects and other related agricultural development initiatives significantly depends on the extent to which they support farmers in adopting practices that increase the sustainability of their farming systems. Doing so requires a major shift in thinking, moving from how to grow more food to how to grow food more efficiently and in ways adapted to climate change. It entails promoting practices to improve productivity while also using strategies that optimize sustainable use of natural resources.

Given the diversity of agroecological conditions and socio-economic contexts, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to achieve sustainable agriculture. The practical implication for FtF is that project implementers must seek collaborative partnerships with farmers, identify existing practices contributing

to environmental degradation and poor crop performance, and work to find practical solutions. Interventions that promote appropriate, sustainable practices, including those grounded in agroecological principles, can enable small-scale producers to maintain or enhance resilience of ecosystems over the longer term while also harvesting greater yields and earning higher incomes.

SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION METHODS

The need to better integrate natural resource management in project plans is evident in FtF multiyear investment strategies (MYIS) at the country level, suggesting there is awareness of the important relationship between the environment and agriculture, as well as of the current challenges of land degradation and climate change. Evidence from the case studies also shows that this awareness is reflected at the project level, where implementers are promoting farming practices that improve productivity without increasing agriculture's negative footprint on the environment.

FtF projects tend to emphasize high-external-input techniques, although the research found some promotion of agroecological approaches. USAID characterizes both sets of practices as "sustainable intensification." Conservation farming, agroforestry, and systems of crop intensification (involving rice in Tanzania and Haiti and teff in Ethiopia) are prominent examples of agroecological techniques using low levels of external inputs, such as synthetic pesticides and mineral fertilizers. These practices have the potential to improve soil health, increase efficiency in water usage, reduce reliance on external inputs, and obtain better yields.

At the same time, field data suggest that other technologies promoted by FtF (e.g., hybrid seeds) require increased use of external inputs to perform well. In fact, interviews with some beneficiaries suggest that their use of mineral fertilizer, as one important example, has gone up. Proper maintenance of soil nutrients is a primary factor contributing to agricultural sustainability. Nutrients in the soil often decrease on a seasonal basis as a result of being depleted by the crop during the growing season. They are also lost through runoff (leaching) and biological processes such as denitrification. Thus, nutrients must be replenished in order to improve or at least maintain the soil's productive ability.



Joaquin Pacheco is a farmer in Corquín in the western Copán department of Honduras.
Photo: Lucy Brinicombe / Oxfam

// I've been growing coffee all my life. My father and grandfather also grow coffee. I remember helping my father harvest coffee in the 1980s. I was around 10 years old. In those days we would harvest in September. The change in climate is affecting us because it is making rainfall unpredictable. We no longer know when we will be able to harvest. There are more plagues now. This means that we need to be more flexible. I have been using different seeds, which can adapt to the change in weather. I have cultivated trees to act as shade for the coffee because it is hotter. In my life I've seen it change a lot. ... I worry about how things will change now.//

JOAQUIN PACHECO, HONDURAS



Say Chhoun and his wife Yem Dieb are farmers in the southwestern Pursat province of Cambodia. Photo: Sokunthea Chor / Oxfam America

// When I planted that area using old rice growing techniques, I got about one [50kg] bag of rice. Now I'm getting two bags, which is quite a difference. The System of Rice Intensification techniques we've learned have helped us feed the family better and save money. I'm quite proud. I want others to grow three crops a year also. ... also we're all poor, but people look at me and follow what I did. That's what motivates me. //

SAY CHHOUN, CAMBODIA

Research pertaining to soil nutrient maintenance shows this replenishment can occur in two ways: organically (in the form of green manure, crop residues, composted manure, and other wastes) or from mineral fertilization (i.e., purchased fertilizer). Organic fertilization is often a better alternative to inorganic input because it can enhance the functional biodiversity of the soil rather than just return the lost nutrients.⁵⁹ An additional impetus for promoting the use of organic fertilization—and, more generally, agroecological farming approaches—is the unreliable or inadequate supply of mineral fertilizers in many rural areas owing to market inefficiencies and high costs.

However, organic or agroecological farming methods may not be attractive or feasible to some farmers. A number of farmers interviewed in Oxfam’s case studies noted that they are challenged in obtaining sufficient quantities of organic material to produce enough manure or nutrient inputs. Some farmers also noted that organic fertilization approaches require extra labor that is not readily available within the household. Consequently, these farmers prefer to use inorganic fertilizers. Yet, as noted previously, unreliable input supplies and lack of finances often limit farmers from applying sufficient amounts of fertilizer. In many cases, none is applied.

To address this challenge, FtF projects are supporting the development of input supply systems in rural areas. In Haiti, for instance, Oxfam’s case study shows that the initiative has provided grants to support the establishment of input stores in rural areas operated either by farmers’ associations or private traders. Similar experiences are found in Senegal, where FtF supported or established community-based service providers from whom farmers can access inputs. And in Ghana, nucleus farmers have been trained and linked with input suppliers to expand reach to a greater number of small-scale producers.

CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION

Small-scale producers in developing countries face risk from climate change, both because their livelihoods are highly sensitive to climate variability and because they lack resources to enable them to respond to observed or anticipated impacts of climate changes on their livelihoods. In interviews conducted with farmers, these impacts are already being felt.

Small-scale producers in Senegal reported irregular and variable rainfall that is typically poorly distributed, particularly during the growing season. Further climate disturbances include late onset of the rainy season, a shortened and shifted rainy season, and dry spells that have become more frequent and unpredictable. In addition to the irregular and variable rains, farmers noted the increased occurrence of extreme weather events, particularly rains with heavier and more

SYSTEM OF CROP INTENSIFICATION IN TANZANIA⁶⁰

FtF funding has helped Tanzanian farmers learn and apply new and improved farming techniques, which have not only improved productivity but also enhanced the productive capacity of the ecosystem. The new farming techniques have had a significant positive impact on yields among beneficiary farmers. For instance, farmers of rice and horticultural crops reported yield gains in the range of 100–200 percent compared with the season prior to implementation of FtF projects. These field results demonstrate that FtF has enabled farmers to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to close yield gaps.

The new farming techniques supported by FtF projects are founded on crop intensification principles. For example, horticulture farmers are trained to use drip irrigation and rely on integrated pest management techniques and effective cultural practices (e.g., removing diseased plants and keeping the area free of weeds). For maize, the standard technology package involves teaching farmers to plant in lines, follow proper spacing, use better seeds, apply fertilizer efficiently, and keep the area weed-free. For rice, the farming model is the System of Rice Intensification (SRI), which has been praised for substantially raising yields by simply changing how the crop is established and managed in the field. With SRI, farmers are taught practices such as ensuring good soil leveling, using fertilizer more efficiently, thinly sowing the seedling nursery, early transplanting to the field, sowing at low density, and keeping the soil moist—principles founded on the physiology and patterns of rice growth.

These practices have a particular appeal among farmers, as they increase yields while reducing the use of seeds and mineral fertilizers. Thus, these approaches help reduce costs and consequently raise incomes. SRI practices also hold great potential for increasing the soil’s organic matter (from green manuring and weed incorporation), as well as for minimizing water use requirements, thereby reducing the footprint of production on the environment.

frequent winds. Other threats that women farmers in particular noted are increased pests, mainly desert locusts and to some extent grain-eating birds, as well as weeds, especially striga.

In seeking to sustainably reduce food insecurity and poverty, FtF has a specific role to play by addressing these vulnerabilities to climate change through enhancing farmers' adaptive capacity.⁶¹ As a first step, implementation of actions geared toward local adaptation requires a sound strategy to inform project design and field-level activities and to set the goals and targets to measure progress. Adaptation is one of the three pillars of USAID's Global Climate Change and Development Strategy, which lays out priority actions to take in 2012–2016.⁶² The strategy identifies three broad categories of adaptation activities:

Improving access to science and analysis for adaptation decision making; establishing effective governance systems, which involve supporting engagement, coordination, and participation; and **identifying and piloting actions that increase climate resilience.**

The Global Climate Change and Development Strategy recommends that, in addition to stand-alone projects, adaptation activities should be integrated across USAID's development portfolio, including the FtF initiative. It identifies ways to measure progress toward building adaptation, specifically the number of hectares of agricultural lands showing improved biophysical conditions; the number of stakeholders, mainly producers, implementing risk-reducing practices to improve resilience to climate change; the number of stakeholders using climate information in their decision-making; and the number of water resources sustainability accessed.

Without specifically assessing the extent to which climate adaptation indicators were being met through FtF interventions, Oxfam's case study in Senegal explored the actions taken to enhance the capacities of local people and communities to adapt to climate change impacts and variability. It employed the local adaptive capacity framework, a widely used tool to gauge the extent to which development interventions enable communities to adapt to climate change. The framework emphasizes taking steps to help:

- Build livelihoods assets (financial, physical, human, social, and natural);
- Generate information and raise awareness to enable individuals to make decisions about how best to respond to present and future impacts of climate change;
- Strengthen the performance of local institutions in the context of climate change adaptation; and

- Promote innovative action, such as improved seeds and farming methods that increase resilience to climate change impacts.

Although this framework was only employed in Oxfam's case study in Senegal, it provides a broader context to infer from other countries the level of awareness and integration of climate change adaptation actions in FtF interventions. The evidence from Senegal shows that FtF activities are contributing to the participating farmers' capacity to adapt to the impacts of climate change. These interventions helped to strengthen livelihood assets and improve natural resource management. The project activities in Senegal were also generally consistent with promoting innovation and supporting the government's National Adaptation Plan of Action, demonstrating a commitment to alignment and country ownership.

At the same time, the contribution of project activities to generating relevant information and creating community awareness about climate change was rather weak in the programs reviewed. In interviews, farmers and agricultural technical staff in Senegal, repeatedly indicated that the major constraint to planning agricultural production activities is the lack of access to information, namely agroclimate and weather information. Yet, this expressed need has not been treated as a priority by local government and development partners. In fact, Senegalese farmers indicated there is no weather forecast information provided through the FtF programs reviewed.

This raises concern, particularly given that it ignores one of the indicators of climate change adaptation identified in the FtF Climate Change Results Strategy as well as the result outcomes in the Global Climate Change and Development Strategy. Analysis from other case studies, though not specifically focused on climate change adaptation, suggests similar outcomes as in Senegal.

It should be noted though that FtF interventions in the countries sampled are primarily driven by considerations for increasing food security and household income, even though enhancing climate change adaptation and natural resource management is a stated objective of FtF. Clearly, mainstreaming of climate adaptation remains a challenge. As previous Oxfam research found, integration of adaptation in agriculture and food security activities "remains piecemeal."⁶³



Miswar Alguatar is a farmer in Kermachoué in the eastern Gao region of Mali.
Photo: Caroline Gluck / Oxfam

// All the community uses this land, and the community organizes itself to make the water channels. When we irrigate, we use tubes. Waters come in from the river. We take the pump to the edge of the river; the water comes inside and pumps the water to all the fields. The government's technical services proposed the idea. It put an end to all of our problems. This little engine is our whole life; it has saved our lives. It has allowed us to stay in the village, work and irrigate our land, harvest enough food to eat. //

MISWAR ALGUATAR, MALI

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

FtF presents an opportunity to build on the momentum of national efforts to fight hunger and malnutrition. But the promise and potential of this program will only be realized if project interventions are structured and implemented in a way that recognizes the needs, priorities, and resource endowments of small-scale producers themselves.

This report has focused attention on how the FtF initiative is being implemented on the ground, and has drawn lessons from six case studies: Ethiopia, Ghana, Guatemala, Haiti, Senegal, and Tanzania. **The analysis makes it clear that how interventions are structured and implemented is no less important than how much money is invested.**

In general, there is a recognized need for information to indicate whether aid interventions are on the right track to reach ambitious development goals, in particular the ability to achieve broader, inclusive, and sustainable outcomes. The need for such information goes beyond tracking results for accountability to obtaining feedback from communities. It must move beyond the current fashion of complex impact evaluations and obligatory project reviews to inform ongoing programming efforts, policy dialogue, and future funding priorities.

The evidence from the case studies suggests that significant results in terms of sustainable production can be found at the individual and project level. In particular, farmers trained in improved farming practices and optimal use of inputs can achieve greater yields and farm income per unit area. The challenge for stakeholders is to spread the technologies to many more small-scale producers and to target the poor more precisely.

Integration of principles of aid effectiveness, including ownership, alignment, harmonization, and accountability, into FtF programs is an important step toward making US aid programs in the agriculture sector more sustainable and more country owned. It is encouraging that prominence has been given in FtF guidance and country-level strategies to supporting national investment plans for agricultural development in FtF focus countries. More emphasis on consultation at the community level and on empowerment, particularly among women, are important areas of further work for FtF.

With regard to the current debate about agricultural sustainability, food security, and inclusive growth, these results suggest that a market-led agricultural investment strategy

offers important opportunities for rapidly increasing food production at the national level and raising incomes for producers with the right asset configuration to participate in commercial value chains. Yet in order to appreciably reduce the numbers of the hungry and poor, a more interventionist approach focusing on the poorest and most marginalized groups, as well as those in less productive areas, is necessary. This implies that other programs, such as productive safety nets, need to be aligned with projects intended to boost agricultural production.

Although there is concern that FtF's market-led approach may not appropriately support the participation of the very poor and socially marginalized groups, Oxfam case studies found some evidence to the contrary. For example, FtF is playing an important role in raising the profile of women farmers (as a marginalized group in agriculture) through initiatives such as WEAI and the stipulation for targeting a minimum number of women in interventions.

Similarly, FtF has implemented a limited number of projects in countries such as Ethiopia in less productive areas with high numbers of food-insecure people. Yet such programming approaches are still not comprehensively integrated across all FtF focus countries or are not being fully taken advantage of.

POLICY AND PROGRAMMING RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the foregoing discussion and evidence from the case studies, Oxfam is making the following recommendations, organized along the lines of the themes from the analytic framework used in this report. These recommendations highlight how more inclusive and sustainable agricultural growth outcomes could be realized through an enhanced and sustained FtF initiative.

INCLUSIVE PARTICIPATION

The analysis has highlighted the danger of overreliance on a market-led investment approach as uniformly appropriate for addressing rural poverty and food insecurity. It has also demonstrated that investments for agricultural production should

be prioritized, but must take better account of significant variations in agricultural resources and potential between and within farming communities. This calls for the need to:

- Coordinate agricultural production activities with other programs for rural income generation and safety nets;
- Ensure that access to fair and flexible credit is a complementary activity in interventions;
- Develop standard mechanisms for beneficiary input and feedback throughout the project life span; and
- Implement strategies that can increase women’s participation in interventions, including in particular trainings and technologies that are responsive to gender roles.

EMPOWERMENT

The analysis shows that two key aspects of empowerment—building skills and knowledge for increased economic participation of small-scale producers, and strengthening the capacity of institutional actors—are the main focus of FtF. However, there is a strong need for investing in capacity-building initiatives that raise awareness about the rights of local citizenry to demand their entitlements. This undertaking requires:

- Strengthening the capacity of project-based groups so they are not merely being used as systems or units through which services are delivered but are empowered as active citizens.
 - In the short term, emphasize trainings on rights, leadership, and economic diversification; and
 - In the medium term, focus on building strong farmer organizations (as distinct from ad hoc project-led groups) to stimulate a demand-led approach to technology generation and information provision.
- Employing metrics and tools such as the Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index to advance scientific understanding about empowerment in agriculture. These tools should be used to generate evidence that informs programmatic actions as well as necessary policy measures. It is not clear that these metrics and tools are being used in current projects.

RESPONSIVE AND EFFECTIVE AID

The core challenge is the limited engagement in design and implementation of interventions by local stakeholders, particularly those at the subnational level (e.g., at the district and ward or subcounty level). A further challenge is akin to the “project approach” aid delivery mechanism, through which most FtF interventions are implemented. There is a need to:

- Deepen consultation and coordination with local leaders, especially with the district and ward extension officers;
- Promote joint work and information sharing between FtF implementing NGOs and local extension personnel;
- Include representative organizations of small-scale producers and civil society organizations in consultation processes about investments that affect them; and
- Provide a larger part of aid in the form of direct budget support to local institutions and development agents.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY, ADAPTING TO CLIMATE CHANGE

FtF’s approach for environmental sustainability relies heavily on efficient use of resources, including agrochemical inputs. Core elements of this approach include increasing the reliability of supply of synthetic inputs to rural areas through developing capacities of private sector dealers and farmer associations, and teaching participating farmers about optimal use of inputs. This approach is legitimate, but it does not include organic options in its provisioning, missing a chance to provide or teach farmers important alternatives. FtF should:

- Continue to promote sustainable production practices; and
- Increase the focus on the use of low-external-input approaches, conservation agriculture, agroecology, and the use of organic inputs as a viable means of promoting environmentally sustainable agricultural productivity growth.

Notably, production systems promoted by FtF interventions have shown significant potential for enabling beneficiaries to adapt to climate change impacts. However analysis and evidence from the case studies suggest there also needs to be greater emphasis on or investment in:

- Providing farmers with seasonal weather forecasts to enable them to make better decisions about production activities; and
- Generating and sharing information about long-term weather trends induced by climate change as a way to foster a forward-looking perspective.

These recommendations, if adopted, can build upon FtF’s early progress and contribute to efforts to refine implementation strategies for this critical program. **To ensure these efforts contribute to lasting improvements in hunger and poverty, they must be matched by sustained Congressional support, including predictable funding.** Ultimately, Feed the Future represents a positive step forward in US efforts to fight global poverty. These efforts must be sustained.



Harriet Nakabaale is a farmer in Kampala, the capital city of Uganda. Photo: Ami Vitale / Oxfam America

//My mother was a farmer, and everywhere at our home was very green. That shaped my life, and made me love green. I've learned that wherever you put soil, you could grow a crop there. In Africa, we get hungry because we don't know what to do with the soil we have, the land we have. If you are lucky to get a small plot of land in Uganda, you should use it. ... Whenever I travel and get some seeds, I don't sleep until I've planted them. I would turn all of Kampala green.//

HARRIET NAKABAALÉ, UGANDA

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Cover photo: Emiliana Aliagaesha has made the move from daily agricultural subsistence to providing a better life for her family. Aliagaesha formed a farmer's cooperative, Kaderes Peasant Development Ltd., in the Karagwe District of north-west Tanzania in 2007. After getting support from USAID, her cooperative won a contract to supply beans to the World Food Programme, which provides food to hungry people in the region. *Brett Eloff / Oxfam America*

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