TECHNICAL BRIEF:

The Potential of Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture in Post-2018 LIFT Programming

Livelihoods and Food Security Fund

UKaid

European Union

Australian Aid

Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ADS	Agricultural Development Strategy
ASF	Animal Sourced Food
CU2	Children Under Two
DD	Dietary Diversity
EHFP	Enhanced Homestead Food Production
ELQ	Evaluation and Learning Questions
HAZ	Height for Age Z-Score (Stunting)
HH	Household
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
IP	Implementing Partner
LIFT Fund	Livelihoods and Food Security Fund
MoALI	Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation
MoHS	Ministry of Health and Sports
MS-NPAN	Multi-Stakeholder National Plan of Action for Nutrition
NSA	Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture
PLW	Pregnant and lactating women
SBCC	Social and Behaviour Change Communication
SPRING	Strengthening Partnerships, Results and Innovations in Nutrition Globally Project
WaSH	Water Sanitation and Hygiene
WEAI	Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index
WHZ	Weight for Height Z-Score (Wasting)

GLOBAL 'NUTRITION-SENSITIVE AGRICULTURE' - DEFINITION AND IMPACT PATHWAYS

Nutrition-sensitive agriculture, or agriculture investments that address the underlying causes of undernutrition, are necessary and powerful contributors to improving nutrition outcomes in vulnerable rural communities. Growing evidence has disproven the previously held assumption that agriculture interventions will by default improve nutrition outcomes through increased production of food or income from food sales. A more accurate way of framing agriculture investments is that they have great potential to improve (or undermine) nutrition outcomes and that these investments reach their fullest potential when deliberately designed and planned with the intention of having a positive impact on nutrition. (USAID 2014; Ruel 2017)

> Nutrition-sensitive agriculture aims to maximise the impact of nutrition outcomes for the poor, while minimising the unintended negative nutrition consequences of agricultural interventions and policies on the poor, especially women and young children. It is agriculture with a nutrition lens, and should not detract from the sector's own goals. [Agriculture] projects may also affect water quality, disease occurrence, food safety and women's time use (which, in turn, affects child care practices) – each of which are important for nutrition.

The development community has long recognised that nutrition-specific interventions are not enough to address the problem of malnutrition. In 2013, the Lancet released a paper that quantified the problem of undernutrition, revealing that only 20 per cent of stunting can be addressed through nutrition-specific interventions, which address the immediate causes of undernutrition. This leaves an 80 per cent gap to be addressed through nutrition-sensitive interventions, which tackle the underlying and basic causes of undernutrition. (Ruel 2013)

In order to explain the most common causal linkages between agriculture and nutrition in nutrition-sensitive agriculture (NSA), three main pathways have emerged. These illustrate how agriculture interventions lead to good nutrition and can therefore serve as useful frameworks for NSA programme design and theories of change. Table 1 presents these three primary pathways, which can be further divided into seven sub-pathways[1] (Herforth 2014; Du 2014):

Table 1: Main pathways between agriculture and nutrition

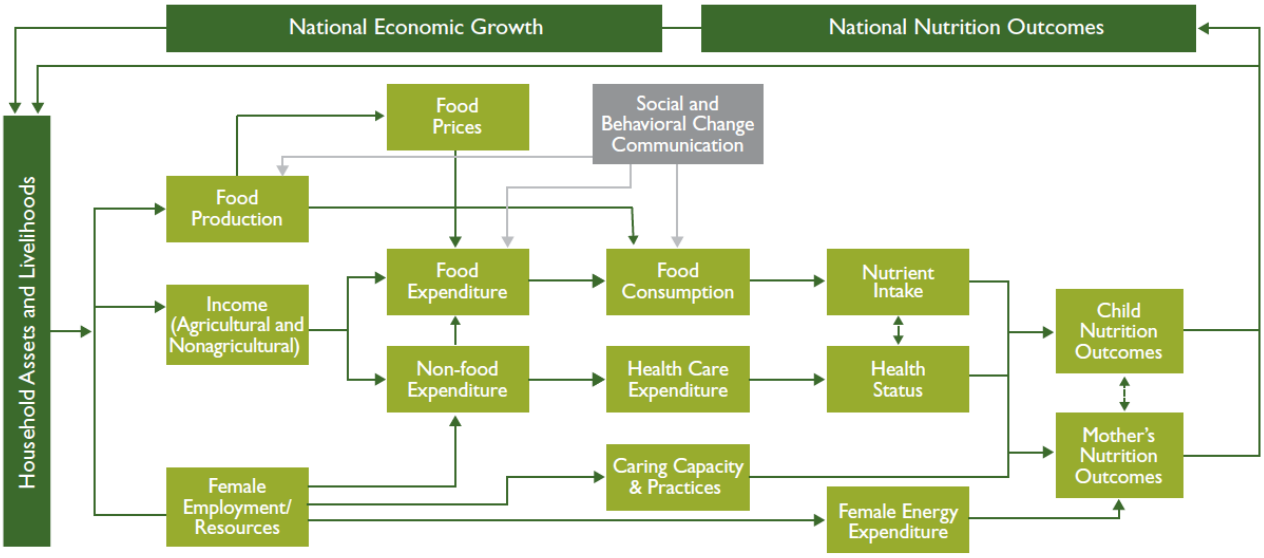
FOOD PRODUCTION	1	**Own production→ food consumption** → nutrient intake → child nutrition outcomes
	2	**Income → food purchase** → food consumption→ nutrient intake→ child nutrition outcomes
	3	**Food prices→ food purchase**→ food consumption→ nutrient intake→ child nutrition outcomes
AGRICULTURAL INCOME	4	**Income→ healthcare purchase**→ health status→ child nutrition outcomes
WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT	5	**Women's time use** *(female employment in agriculture)* → **care capacity**→ child nutrition outcomes

[1] Ruel and colleagues propose six pathways through which agricultural interventions can impact nutrition which vary slightly from SPRING's (above). They are: "(1) *food access* from own-production; (2) *income* from the sale of commodities produced; (3) *food prices* from changes in supply and demand; (4) *women's social status and empowerment* through increased access to and control over resources; (5) *women's time* through participation in agriculture, which can be either positive or negative for their own nutrition and that of their children; and (6) *women's health and nutrition* through engagement in agriculture" (Ruel 2017)

	6	**Women's workload → female energy expenditure** → maternal and child nutrition outcomes
	7	**Women's control of income** *(socioeconomic power)* → **resource allocation** *(household food/health expenditures)* → intrahousehold allocation → maternal and child nutrition outcomes

Figure 1 below is a visual mapping of the conceptual pathways presented in Table 1.

Figure 1: Conceptual pathways between agriculture and nutrition (Du 2014)



Adapted from: Stuart Gillespie, Jody Harris, and Suneetha Kadiyala, 2012
The Agriculture-Nutrition Disconnect in India, What Do We Know? IFPRI Discussion Paper 01187

FINDINGS FROM GLOBAL EVIDENCE

This paper highlights six key findings from global evidence to consider for future NSA programming in Myanmar drawing on the IFPRI review of evidence in 2017 (Ruel 2017) and resources from SPRING, FAO, USAID, DFAT, DFID.

Finding #1: NSA programmes have demonstrated a number of positive impacts on nutrition. A review of biofortification, enhanced homestead food production (EHFP)[2] and livestock and irrigation programmes, which were focused on promoting production diversity and increasing access to nutritious foods, showed that NSA interventions have the potential to positively impact nutrition outcomes for children and women (summarised in Table 2). While all categories of NSA programmes studied by IFPRI had a positive impact on diet diversity/intake of nutritious food either at the HH or individual level, only one intervention type (livestock) had an impact on stunting. EHFP had the widest range of positive child and maternal nutrition outcomes, and the potential reasons for this are discussed below in finding #3.

Finding #2: Although NSA programmes have a range of positive impacts on nutrition, few programmes have demonstrated a direct impact on stunting during the period of project assessment. The lack of demonstrable impact is attributed to methodological limitations, including poor evaluation designs,

[2] Developed by Helen Keller International (HKI), EHFP provides women during the First 1000 Days period with small productive assets (such as seeds, seedlings, saplings and small tools) in addition to training on optimal agriculture, health, hygiene and nutrition practices. It also seeks to raise incomes by creating an opportunity to sell surplus produce and small animals. In March 2016, HKI Cambodia won a Grand Challenges grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to further test the impact of the EHFP model.

inadequate sample sizes, short project duration and the wrong age group targeted and analysed. How long a programme must operate in order to show impact on stunting is undefined, as it depends on a number of factors including how comprehensive the intervention is, whether it is addressing the relevant causes of stunting, greater country trends, the scope of the intervention, its intensity and whether the assessment is statistically powered to demonstrate change. However, it is generally difficult for NSA interventions of less than five years to see stunting impact; nnutrition-sensitive interventions, by design, target the *underlying* causes of malnutrition, rather than *immediate* causes targeted by direct nutrition interventions (Herforth 2016). For this reason, NSA programmes are best placed to focus primarily on improving access to, and consumption of, high-quality diets. However, although a project may not see stunting impact during the life of the project, it does not mean that it does not contribute to longer term impact. Given the shortage of evidence on outcomes along the agriculture to nutrition pathways, there is a need for practitioners to design strong evaluation systems and document incremental results to build the evidence base for the causal pathways (Du 2014).

Finding #3: Enhanced Homestead Food Production is among the most impactful NSA interventions.
The success of EHFP is largely attributed to the integrated and comprehensive nature of the intervention package, which is both nutrition-sensitive and -specific, and addresses a number of its underlying determinants. These include improving food (micronutrient-rich plant and animal-sourced) access from own production throughout the seasons, increased income from the sale of commodities produced, strengthened women's social status and empowerment through control of resources, and improved women's own health and nutrition through linkages to health care and WaSH. A quality EHFP intervention should also include behaviour change communication approaches—far more impactful than health education alone—to promote key behaviours through small, doable actions. Although there is no evidence of stunting reduction through the EHFP, several precursors which are necessary to reduce stunting are shown to have been achieved, and it may simply be that more rigorous research over a longer timeframe is needed to show results on stunting (Haselow 2016). HKI has successfully packaged, studied and marketed the EHFP model, though other agencies are implementing similar variants.

Finding #4: While crop production diversity is generally a positive driver of dietary diversity, the greatest improvements are seen when households have increased access to markets. Several studies have demonstrated that, access to markets and market infrastructure are strong effect modifiers; in many cases positive nutrition results are too largely dependent upon market access and participation. This is particularly true for households that rely on the sale of products for income to purchase foods and where markets are functional. On the other hand, market access has less of an effect on child nutrition in households in more isolated locations that subsist on their own production or in areas where market infrastructure is weak. In these households, diverse food production has a greater impact on nutrition outcomes. This holds true with livestock, as well. An additional point is that while projects that promote production diversity, micronutrient-rich crops (including biofortified) and small livestock or dairy have the potential to increase dietary diversity at the household and at the child or maternal level, evidence of impact on stunting is weak. In one study in Ethiopia there is evidence of reduced stunting and wasting among children in households living closer to markets, however more research is needed to draw broader conclusions. Results for commercialisation of crop production (in contrast to market access) are weak, with little evidence demonstrating a positive link between households selling crops commercially and nutrition outcomes (IFPRI 2017). In fact, in a three-country analysis in Africa, female market participation had a negative impact on child nutrition, likely due to increased workload and reduced time allocated to childcare and domestic responsibilities (Carletto 2017). This example illustrates gender's potential to serve

as an important effect modifier in NSA programming, highlighting the need to consider gender in programme design. A gender analysis assists in determining how to leverage the positive effects of gender and counteract the negative.

Finding #5: The inclusion of a strong SBCC intervention to promote optimal diets and child feeding practices, and a focus on improving women's status and empowerment through agriculture are consistently reported as key to enhancing the potential impacts of agriculture on diets and other nutrition outcomes. In particular, SBCC approaches to promote optimal dietary practices, especially for children, was found to be effective. This points to the critical importance of going beyond health education and delivering effective, evidence-based social and behaviour change communication programming.

Evidence to date shows the agriculture to nutrition outcomes pathways are modified to varying degrees by a number of contextual, cultural, economic and food environment factors. Of these factors, markets (Finding #4) and women's empowerment emerged as having among the most significant impact on nutrition. How women use their time, their workload and their control of financial resources are factors that significantly positively (or negatively) impact family nutrition, making them key considerations in nutrition-sensitive programmes. Accumulating global evidence on the topic, as well as the development of standardised indicators, such as the validated Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI)[3], give practitioners tools to understand and measure multiple dimensions of women's empowerment. While working to support women's empowerment, control of resources and project participation, it is important for agriculture programmes to be cautious of significant increases in women's workload given the negative effect that has been shown to have on child nutrition outcomes in some cases.

Finding #6: The role of livestock– both as a source of income as well as a rich source of key nutrients —is highly relevant to NSA approaches and reinforces a number of the lessons mentioned above. In many contexts women are responsible for rearing small livestock, which means that livestock interventions have the potential to support women's empowerment through increased control over resources. As stated above, the role of women's empowerment is central to improving nutritional outcomes. An analysis of over 100,000 children aged 6-23 months from 46 countries revealed strong associations between consumption of animal sourced foods (ASF) and child growth (Headey 2016). To ensure that low-income communities have access to nutrient-dense ASFs, Hoddinott emphasises the importance of agricultural production, marketing, and trade policies to increase the accessibility and affordability of ASFs; this is consistent with Finding #4. Where markets are functional, often families choose to sell what is produced due to the relatively high value of ASF products, and it may be more appropriate to investing in increasing the affordability rather than to encourage families to consume their own products. Investing in environmental hygiene as part of livestock interventions is key in order to mitigate the health risks to children due to fecal contamination or zoonotic respiratory disease. In fact, the presence of animal feces was found to be more likely a greater threat to child health than open defecation (Headey 2016). This points to the importance of SBCC approaches to create an enabling environment within which families with livestock practice key hygiene behaviours to prevent the transmission of zoonotic contamination and disease, which can seriously undermine the health and nutritional status of vulnerable groups.

[3] The WEAI is a composite tool that measures women's engagement in the agriculture sector in five domains: (1) decisions about agricultural production; (2) access to and decision-making power over productive resources; (3) control over use of income; (4) leadership in the community; and (5) time use.

Table 2: Summary of Outcome Results from IFPRI 2017 evidence review: Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture: What Have We Learned and Where Do We Go From Here?

CHILD OUTCOMES	Bioforticiation (3)*	EHFP (9)	Livestock (3)	Value Chain (1)	Irrigation (1)
Diet diversity/ Intake nutritious food				N/A	
Intake of fortified products					
Anemia/ Hb					
Diarrhoea/ Days Sick					
Stunting (HAZ) (1 out of 6 studies)					
Wasting (WHZ) (3 of 6 studies)					
MATERNAL OUTCOMES					
Underweight/ Hb					
Empowerment Domains					

*indicates number of studies

Courtesy of World Bank Myanmar

REVIEW OF LIFT NSA PROJECTS

For the purposes of this brief, 24 of LIFT's current and past nutrition-sensitive agriculture projects from the Delta, Dry Zone, Uplands and Rakhine were reviewed. LIFT's 11 most recent projects were designed to be nutrition sensitive after the inclusion of nutrition in the 2014 LIFT Strategy; however, most projects prior to this were not designed with nutrition objectives in mind. Nevertheless, thematically relevant projects designed prior to 2014 have been reviewed in order to garner lessons to inform opportunities for future NSA programming.. Data for review included project proposals, project reports, mid-term evaluations, final evaluations where available, and in two cases key informant interviews with project staff. The projects were examined in light of global recommendations, including the 10 principles for nutrition-sensitive agriculture programming, developed by FAO and adapted slightly by DFAT and USAID. This section presents a synthesised version of lessons learned, with the caveat that there is significant variance in quality of project design and implementation capacity. One limitation of the analysis is that the most recent nine of these projects—which also happen to be the most nutrition sensitive— have not closed. Therefore, it is not yet possible for these projects to measure final achievements against their objectives; nevertheless it is possible to make preliminary observations based on project design and implementation progress. A second related limitation is the fact that overall there was limited relevant quantitative data in the documentation provided to support conclusions on the effectiveness of LIFT's prior NSA projects, so a number of conclusions are based on IP self-reporting, external evaluators' observations and assessments, and project design documents.

The review of the LIFT project portfolio highlights **the extent to which LIFT and IPs have improved their NSA designs over time**. A number of past projects may have been nutrition-sensitive had they measured certain relevant outcomes or made project adaptations or additions – in some cases minor. However, LIFT and partners have clearly matured in their understanding and approaches to NSA, likely due in significant part to the inclusion of nutrition in LIFT's strategy and programmes. This attention to NSA has led more IPs to link agriculture and improved nutrition in their project rationales, theory of change models, and measurement frameworks.

Although a number of LIFT's ongoing projects demonstrate an improved contextual understanding of the agriculture to nutrition pathways, there is still significant room for improvement in project design. Though nearly all projects demonstrated an understanding of the causes of malnutrition, in some cases it was unclear the extent to which project design was informed by data. This presents a major constraint to proper contextual analysis and understanding of the causes of nutrition unique to a given target population.

Several projects were overly ambitious both in terms of targets as well as activities given the "on the ground" reality, particularly those IPs which were new to operating in a given area. As a result, when it came to implementation the projects faced significant challenges—this was emphasised in a number of annual reports and evaluations. In terms of nutrition impact, some organisations sought to impact stunting despite the fact that the programme intervention was unlikely to see any results with respect to that indicator given the project design and timeframe.

For a number of projects a significant gap was observed between the design and the capacity of field teams to deliver it. The reasons for this vary, and include the targeting of separate beneficiary groups, weak technical skills of field staff, poor coordination or communication between partners, and challenging implementation contexts, among other reasons.

In some cases, external evaluators observed challenges in integrated implementation of multi-sectoral projects, where **agriculture and nutrition activities were sometimes implemented as separate, rather than integrated sectors**. In some cases this disconnect was because the beneficiary groups for agriculture and nutrition were different with distinct staff involved only in their sectoral activities, highlighting one of the challenges of multi-sectoral programming.

A common theme in external evaluations was the number of **missed opportunities for evidence generation and learning,** either because projects were not designed to be nutrition sensitive, or else through weaknesses in data collection or implementation. Some projects either did not collect—or did not use standard indicators to collect—certain relevant data, particularly with respect to food consumption and women's empowerment, which makes it difficult to compare or aggregate data across projects. In some cases, projects did respond to internal learning or feedback and adapted their MEAL frameworks to include relevant or improved nutrition indicators. For those that did engage in research or learning, there were mixed results in terms of their ability to analyse the information and feed that learning back into the project. Many organisations engaged in nutrition-related evidence gathering have faced challenges due to limited staff capacity, and in some cases the long lead time needed for government ethical approval, which is required if the organisation intends to share findings outside the project.

Despite the challenges and constraints faced by organisations highlighted above, it is clear that project designs have improved significantly since nutrition was included in the LIFT strategy in 2014. This is probably due in large part to an increased commitment, interest and possibly capacity of the FB and FMO to more significantly integrate nutrition into overall LIFT programme guidelines and national results framework, in addition to capacity-building investments such as the LEARN[4] Project to support IPs and the FMO to engage in and improve nutrition-sensitive programming. The importance of donor-driven demand,

[4] Leveraging Essential Nutrition Actions to Reduce Malnutrition (LEARN) project, funded from 2012-2018 and hosted by Save the Children International (SCI). Phase 1 (2012-2016) was implemented as a consortium in partnership with Helen Keller International and Action Contre La Faim.

requiring organisations to consider nutrition problems in the communities they serve, cannot be overemphasised.

STRENGTHENING LIFT'S APPROACH TO NSA

This section outlines 10 recommendations to LIFT for its overall approach to NSA as well as for supporting IPs to realize LIFT's approach. These are based on global review of evidence as well as the review of LIFT NSA projects and the current policy context.

Recommended Actions for LIFT FB and FMO

1: Invest in LIFT IPs to support and capacitate MoALI staff at all levels (national, state/region and township) to lead NSA efforts in the nutrition sphere. Though in the past MoALI has in many ways taken a backseat to the MoHS on nutrition matters, MoALI is an equally important nutrition stakeholder. MoALI has the opportunity to take leadership in NSA through the Myanmar Agricultural Development Strategy (ADS) and accompanying investment plan, as well as in the on-going development and implementation of the Myanmar Multi Sectoral-Nutrition Plan of Action for Nutrition (MS-NPAN) at national, state/region and township levels. Through these processes, MoALI has been defining its role in and articulating its relevance to supporting positive nutrition outcomes. The LIFT FMO and IPs, along with key stakeholders and partners such as the FAO and the World Bank, has the potential to strengthen and develop synergies at policy and implementation levels with MoALI, supporting the ministry to be a key nutrition player. In Myanmar, nutrition has historically been owned by the MoHS, despite the fact that it supports nutrition-specific interventions only. MoALI's active contribution in nutrition-sensitive interventions and policies would accelerate the achievement of positive nutrition outcomes in Myanmar. LIFT is uniquely positioned to serve as the lead non-governmental actor in supporting the strategic decentralisation of NSA. Given LIFT's unique and extensive network of IPs engaged in programming at all levels of governance, the FB, FMO and LIFT IPs should capitalise on LIFT's and IP's relationships with MoALI at state/region and township levels. This work should be done in complementarity with key national policy partners who have limited or no sub-national presence.

2: LIFT investments impacting on food access and availability should have a strong nutrition-sensitive approach. In LIFT strategy, programme and project designs, nutrition should be considered not only with respect to consumption (utilisation), but also diversified availability and access—both at the system and household levels. In its programmes, LIFT should support organisations to increase incentives for availability and access in addition to consumption of nutrient-rich foods throughout the year. It will be important for LIFT projects to monitor and measure access to safe, diverse and nutritious foods year-round, in addition to measuring dietary consumption indicators, particularly among vulnerable groups. This could be done using the cost of diet tool or price tracking throughout the year, for example.

3: Integrate standardised packages of evidence-based synergistic interventions or approaches in new LIFT programmes to achieve maximum nutrition impact. IPs will need the flexibility to adapt or change the approaches to their community contexts, however encouraging IPs to leverage known, positive interactions—either internally or through geographic overlap—in the intentional design of new LIFT programmes can lead to greater advances in nutrition. One example of an evidence-based package is the Enhanced Homestead Food Production model (Finding 3) with quantifiable impact on the widest range of

nutrition outcomes. Even in programmes that are not designed to address nutrition as comprehensively, there are simple combinations of interventions that can enhance nutrition outcomes. For example, global evidence reveals that coupling small livestock programmes with WaSH interventions is essential to minimising the negative impact of livestock presence in or around the home on child health and nutritional status. In projects that increase women's engagement in productive activities, LIFT can direct IPs to take measures to prevent unintended negative effects and enhance positive ones. Projects designed with synergistic interventions can also be platforms for generating evidence on what packages are most successful in Myanmar through routine project monitoring and evaluation.

4: **Support IPs to improve contextual analyses to ensure project relevance.** A strong contextual analysis helps practitioners ensure that the project is relevant to the local needs and context, as well as to identify the NSA pathway the project will address. This will in turn result in better use of LIFT investments through stronger theories of change and more relevant evidence generation. This support could include technical feedback upon submission of project proposals, workshops, trainings, provision of existing tools, or mentorship by LIFT FMO staff, consultants or the LEARN project.

Relevant existing tools to consider:

- The USAID's SPRING project is a useful resource that has developed *A User Guide to Context Assessment Tools for Linking Agriculture and Nutrition* (https://www.spring-nutrition.org/publications/tools/user-guide-context-assessment-tools-linking-agriculture-and-nutrition). SPRING has also developed a comprehensive summary guide of tools for contextual analyses, including cost of the diet, value chain analysis, livelihood security assessment, and an IYCF assessment tool, among many others (https://www.spring-nutrition.org/sites/default/files/publications/tools/spring_context_assessment_tools_all.pdf). Each tool is summarised, including description, uses, tool components, operations (number of staff, time, cost, etc.), and which of the pathways (Table 1 above) it addresses. If a project plans to change nutrition behaviours— which many LIFT projects reviewed have—the barriers and drivers of behaviours should be understood through formative research. Several types of formative research tools, such as the barrier analysis and ProPAN 2.0, are described in SPRING's document.

Additionally, LIFT FMO staff reviewing proposals should evaluate whether IP project designs are informed by their contextual analysis and appropriate in scope for the project time-period. While LIFT's programming portfolio can have an impact on children's nutrition status over time, it would be useful for LIFT to support IPs to be realistic about their individual project contribution to nutrition, exploring and measuring the intermediary steps between agriculture and nutrition. Should LIFT fund projects shorter than five years, LIFT should caution projects against using stunting as an indicator if the project is not a nutrition-intensive project with a high quality SBCC component. LIFT should steer IPs towards focusing on dietary diversity practices (including standard household and individual level dietary diversity tools in addition to consumption of targeted products) and women's empowerment, if relevant, or other appropriate outcomes.

5: Provide standardised design and measurement tools to IPs to strengthen NSA programme design and learning. To support the development of sound theories of change, a basic 'agriculture to nutrition pathway' tool could be provided to organisations when they apply for LIFT NSA funding to conceptually map their NSA projects to ensure that they are consistent with NSA causal pathways. Projects should also ensure that there are relevant indicators at the various stages of a project's agriculture to nutrition

pathway. LIFT FMO staff reviewing proposals should be familiar with these tools and evaluate NSA project proposals against them.

In order to promote high-quality data for evidence-generation and programme quality, LIFT can provide technical NSA MEAL resources for IPs. The FMO can develop and endorse a library of standard nutrition-relevant indicators for IPs to integrate into programmes, drawing on tools developed by LEARN as well as FAO's compendium of indicators for NSA (accessed at *http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6275e.pdf*). This should also include agreed-upon data gathering tools (with standard survey questions) for IPs to use when collecting data on these indicators. LIFT could request that the government provide provisionary ethical approval for use of these survey questions in project survey exercises. Please see recommendation 8 below for more detail on this point.

6: Support external evaluators to analyse relevant LIFT projects through a nutrition-sensitive lens. The mid-term evaluation is a critical juncture in the project lifecycle when relevant recommendations have the potential to make changes that can positively impact the course of the project. In some cases, mid-term (and final) evaluations did not present a thorough analysis of the project's nutrition-sensitive components. External evaluators, understandably, have varying levels of familiarity with nutrition and NSA. Providing them with a standard tool or guidelines to evaluate projects more systematically through a nutrition-sensitive lens could help ensure that they know what LIFT is looking for when evaluating projects.

> To ensure that we are able to track progress along the impact pathway, a range of nutrition relevant indicators should be selected. The challenge in only measuring one high-level indicator (e.g., under-two child stunting) is that we are not able to understand changes in the underlying determinants of nutrition. For example, an agricultural programme which fails to show improvement in child nutritional status has not necessarily failed to affect nutrition; if it shows positive impact on underlying determinants of nutrition, then it has succeeded in creating some of the conditions necessary (but not always sufficient) for good nutrition. Similarly, improvements in child nutritional status may not necessarily be caused by the agricultural programme; it may be caused by a safe water supply programme that is implemented in the same area. Tracking progress along the impact pathway will allow the programme to attribute changes. (DFAT 2014)

7: Strenthen the quality of research generated by IPs through the provision of practical guidance in study design and data collection for project-specific, LIFT-wide, and global learning. In addition to the FMO providing IPs with tools (please see next section), the investigation of LIFT's Evaluation and Learning Questions (ELQs) will contribute to local, regional and national learning, as well as feed into global conversations on NSA. LIFT has a unique opportunity to coordinate and support cross-learning among NSA actors in the country to improve implementation and inform future programming. Potential research areas:

- In LIFT implementation areas, does women's empowerment act as a mediating factor between agricultural interventions and nutrition outcomes? If so, how? Which dimensions of women's empowerment most powerfully support (or undermine) improved nutrition outcomes?[5]

[5] May include: Potential negative impacts due to time constraints, including women's ability to manage care, feeding and health of young children; women's socioeconomic status, control of resources and their ability to influence decisions; project outcomes/impacts on women's own nutritional status as well as that of their children

- In agriculture programmes in Myanmar, what are effective entry points and platforms for nutrition-related interventions?
- What is the impact of the EHFP (or similar intervention model) on improving food security, nutrition, livelihoods and women's empowerment in Myanmar?
- What are best practices in designing and implementing effective, yet affordable, SBCC strategies in the context of agricultural programmes?
- What are the greatest technical, operational and environmental challenges or bottlenecks in implementing sound NSA programmes?
- What is the relationship between increased access to markets, production diversity and nutrition outcomes? Under what conditions can investments in markets support improvements in positive nutrition outcomes and consumption patterns?
- What are the most successful interventions to support increased consumption of animal-sourced foods, particularly among nutritionally vulnerable populations?
- What are promising practices with respect to increasing the capacity of MoALI at local and state/regional levels, particularly through agricultural extension systems, to support NSA?

LIFT can also strengthen or pursue strategic linkages to national and global academic and research institutions, such as the International Food Policy Research Institute, Cornell University, University of California- Davis, Tufts University, USAID's SPRING Project, Leveraging Agriculture for Nutrition in South Asia (LANSA), BRAC and Myanmar universities, among other potential research partners.

8: In addition to supporting the quality of data collection, facilitate the generation of evidence by supporting LIFT IPs to secure ethical clearance for research. Evidence gathering is crucial to IP learning and developing effective programmes; at the same time there are major constraints to IPs gathering evidence in Myanmar. Where possible, LIFT should support evidence gathering in light of the government's strict ethical-review policies and government-approval procedures. This would not only increase the efficiency of data collection but would also allow for more methodologically consistent data gathering that meets nutrition-industry standards. In collaboration with other partners such as 3MDG and the UN network, LIFT could make a high-level request for pre-authorise research procedures and tools for key indicators that may be utilised in nutrition-sensitive programmes. These could include standard survey questions for dietary diversity (household dietary diversity, individual dietary diversity, child dietary diversity, minimum dietary diversity for women score), infant and young child feeding, women's empowerment in agriculture index, women's time allocation, essential hygiene actions, handwashing practices, drinking water sources, etc. In particular, if these outcomes align with the MS-NPAN, LIFT should make the argument that these indicators would already be government-endorsed. LIFT could also draw from past ERC-approved research tools as additional justification for authorisation. This would help alleviate the time and human resource burden on IPs of securing ethical approval and potentially stimulate a stronger culture of cross-learning in Myanmar.

9: Ensure that gender equality and women's empowerment figure prominently in LIFT programmes and strategies, with accompanying implementation tools for IPs. Programmes or projects pursuing women's empowerment may support women's income generation, challenge cultural beliefs, reduce drudgery (workload), improve financial literacy, increase knowledge, promote decision-making power, and protect the health, nutrition and wellbeing of women by targeting women themselves, their husbands, family members or other community members through SBCC. The LIFT FMO, a gender consultant or the LEARN

project could develop or adapt simple but practical resources for IPs, such as a list of illustrative entry points, objectives and example indicators related to gender and women's empowerment. This relates to recommendation 5.

What is Nutrition SBCC?

Nutrition SBCC is a set of interventions that systematically combines elements of interpersonal communication, social change and community mobilisation activities, mass media and advocacy to support individuals, families, communities, institutions and countries in adopting and maintaining high-impact nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive behaviours or practices. Effective nutrition SBCC leverages enablers of behaviours and reduces barriers to adopting and maintaining behaviours over time. (USAID 2014)

10: Conduct a review of past LIFT projects' SBCC approaches and, based on findings, provide partners with practical resources and programme tools to improve SBCC design. Conducting a systematic review of IPs' current and past SBCC work would allow LIFT to understand IP SBCC approaches, capture their progress, and identify capacity gaps. This review could be implemented in conjunction with the LEARN Project, if funded, which could follow up with IPs to fill capacity gaps through training and mentorship. A number of LIFT projects reviewed for this exercise conflated behaviour change with health education or promotion. A variety of social, economic and environmental factors influence the adoption and maintenance of behaviours and it is important to understand and address these factors. In many cases, there is a wide gap between knowledge and practice. Therefore, LIFT should support IPs to go through the globally adopted SBCC process, which includes identifying optimal behaviours, gathering relevant secondary data, conducting formative research, developing an implementation strategy, and tracking changes. Not only should LIFT or LEARN develop a practical toolkit for IPs, but also LIFT FMO staff should ensure that partners have budgeted the necessary time, human and technical resources required to change behaviour. This will require LIFT to provide the necessary financial resources for IPs to conduct this work. SBCC activities should not be considered a project add-on, but rather an investment in more efficient and effective achievement of project objectives. USAID's SPRING project has a number of useful resources, including an online course, *Accelerating Behavior Change in Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture* (accessed at *https://www.spring-nutrition.org/publications/training-materials/accelerating-behavior-change-nutrition-sensitive-agriculture*). The USAID TOPS project has a training guide, *Designing for Behavior Change: For Agriculture, Natural Resource Management, Health and Nutrition)* (accessed at *https://www.fsnnetwork.org/designing-behavior-change-agriculture-natural-resource-management-health-and-nutrition*) These, however, could be adapted to the Myanmar and LIFT programming context.

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