

# 2011 | LEARNING REVIEW





**ACTION HUNGER**

**ACTION HUNGER**

External Evaluation  
ACF Provision of Food Aid and Livelihood  
Prevention to the Most Dzed-Affected Herd

**ACTION HUNGER**

Security Pilot Project

July 2011



External Evaluation  
Cash transfer components of two ACF projects in  
Samangan and Day Kundi Provinces  
Funded by The Cash Learning Partnership (CLP)  
December 2011

**ACTION HUNGER**



External Evaluation  
Sustainable Improvement of the Livelihoods of  
People Living with HIV/AIDS and Their Families in  
Zimbabwe  
Funded by EuropeAid  
Walter West, May 2011

**ACTION HUNGER**



External Evaluation  
Réduction de l'impact des excréta humains  
dans le département du Nord-Ouest, Haïti  
Financé par AFE  
Aurélien Fauriol, Avril 2011

**ACTION HUNGER**



External Evaluation  
ACF International's Emergency Response to  
Pakistan Floods in August 2010

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**To the HQ personnel, Heads of Mission, Country Directors, Programme Managers, Technical Advisors and all other ACF International staff around the world that supported learning and evaluation activities in 2011. Thanks also to the consultants who shared their insights and to the beneficiaries, for opening the door and letting us in.**

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# Foreword

As a culture of evaluation has grown and developed in the humanitarian system we are now beginning to see positive changes and real improvements in practice. This improvement is built upon approaches which collect good evidence but it is also based on an organisation's desire and commitment to learn and improve. And that is why it gives me so much pleasure to write a short Foreword for ACF's Learning Review – as it provides a clear example of one agency's commitment to develop a system for learning and to put this learning into practice.

ACF have thought long and hard about what they want to achieve and have developed a method which draws on the most important tools and elements of evaluative good practice – such as the OECD DAC criteria – but they have also thoughtfully built on and adapted these tools to make them more precise and context specific and, as a result, more useful to their own programming needs. The scoring metric linked to the DAC criteria is an innovative approach and it is heartening to see evaluators having the imagination and confidence to experiment with well established methods.

What is particularly striking in the ACF approach is that evaluations are not carried out for their own sake but are explicitly used to catalyse attention around the evaluative process and the experiences that are derived from it.

ACF's approach does not say 'look at me I know how to do evaluations' – rather it says 'let's use the evaluative process to share what we have learned and help our colleagues to do a better job'. The process is designed to be collectively owned as experience shows that when people take part in the evaluation process, they are far more likely to put learning into practice. Involvement takes place at several different levels allowing space to be created for different affiliates to express their views and to provide inputs.

The evaluations have captured some important experiences and the report presents a number of good practice examples from around the world including remote management; targeting; experience from a beneficiary ombudsman; mapping water points in pastoralist regions; and cash distribution. These examples are of interest not only to ACF but to other humanitarian stakeholders and I hope this report will be distributed widely so that these valuable experiences can be shared across the humanitarian system.

*John Mitchell*

**John Mitchell**  
Director ALNAP





# Introduction

The present publication is the culmination of a lengthy process that began long before any of the current members of the Evaluation, Learning & Accountability (ELA) Unit at ACF-UK had joined the organisation. In 2005, ACF-UK launched their first Meta-Evaluation. This Meta-Evaluation, and those that followed it annually until 2010, aimed to provide ACF International with a sense of its collective performance and the strengths and weaknesses of its programmes. All of them, however, struggled to fully make sense of the complex qualitative and quantitative information generated by external evaluations, hindered by the lack of clear, comparable information with which to measure progress from year to year. What was missing was a framework to collect and analyse data, something to guide the process and ensure that evaluations were useful and transformative.

In 2011, the ELA Unit decided to address this by introducing a new ACF International Evaluation Policy & Guideline (EPG). The EPG brought together three key ideas that are at the core of the ELA Unit's vision for evaluation and learning. **First, evaluations are only valuable if they are used.** ACF field teams can and should look forward to external evaluations, as a means of answering the kind of questions that no one in the field has time (or the necessary detachment) to investigate or research. **Second, evaluations**

**must give us some way to track progress.**

Progress made from year to year at field level, and between missions and country offices at a global level. **Third, evaluations must be made an integral part of organisational learning.** Few processes are capable of sharing with one field mission what happens in another, and evaluations must support this kind of cross-fertilisation. The architecture put in place under the EPG set out to prove that all of these processes could not only co-exist under a common framework but could also yield the necessary information to produce a new kind of annual learning review.

The content of the Learning Review reflects this multi-layered, but interconnected, approach to learning and evaluation. It opens with a brief overview of the external evaluations carried out by ACF International in 2011. It then offers an analysis of collective organisational performance using the internationally-recognised DAC Criteria. The aim is to identify common strengths and weaknesses and highlight areas for future improvement. It continues with a summary of some of the most interesting and relevant aspects of the programmes evaluated in 2011, from Good Practices in Fresh Food Voucher Programmes to Remote Programming and the increasingly important issue of nutrition programme coverage.

But the real essence of this publication comes in the form of over a dozen Best Practices identified as part of the evaluations carried out in 2011. These Best Practices were identified and analysed jointly between the ELA Unit, the consultant(s) and ACF field level staff. They offer an insight into some of the most unique, cutting-edge and un-orthodox approaches being used successfully by our missions around the world. Together they remind us of our capacity to innovate and think outside of the proverbial box.

We hope that you enjoy reading this review as much as we have enjoyed putting it together. But above all, we hope that it helps to answer some old and persistent questions as well as raising new ones, creating an ongoing debate within ACF International that is essential if we are to continue pushing the boundaries of what we can achieve.



**Saul Guerrero**  
Evaluation, Learning  
& Accountability  
Advisor, ACF-UK



# ACF International Evaluations in 2011

January

**Jan – March**

Zimbabwe

**Food Security**

An Integrated Approach to Reduce Levels of Malnutrition in Urban Areas of Masvingo District, Zimbabwe

Sustainable Improvement of the Livelihoods of People Living with HIV/AIDS and Their Families

**WaSH**

Humanitarian Assistance on Water, Sanitation and Hygiene to the Population in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe Water, Sanitation and Hygiene project: A sustainable approach based on development of local management capacity

February

**Feb – March**

Chad

**Nutrition**

Comparison of the Effectiveness of Ready-to-Use-Food, Associated with Food-for-Training in the Prevention of Acute Malnutrition among Children in Vulnerable Neighborhoods of Abeché, Chad

March

**March – April**

Haiti

**WaSH**

ACF's Emergency Response to the Cholera Outbreak in Haiti

Reduction in the Impact of Human Excreta in the North-West Department, Haiti

April

**April – May**

CAR

**Food Security**

Programme to Prevent Malnutrition Through Reinforcement of Food Security

**April – June**

Mongolia

**Food Security**

ACF Provision of Food Aid and Livelihood Disaster Prevention to the Most Dzud-Affected Herders in Mongolia

May

**May – June**

Zimbabwe

**Food Security**

Improving the Nutritional Status of Vulnerable Households in the Communal Areas of Chivi, Gutu and Mberengwa Districts, Zimbabwe

**May – July**

Liberia

**FS/Nutrition**

Nutrition, Advocacy and Food Security Pilot Project Monrovia, Liberia

**May – June**

Myanmar

**Nutrition**

Nutrition Programme In the Maungdaw and Buthidaung Townships of Northern Rakhine State, Myanmar

**May – June**

Afghanistan

**WaSH**

Humanitarian Support to Vulnerable Households in the Most Water and Sanitation Scarce and Cold Regions of Afghanistan

June

**June – July**

Pakistan

**Emergency Response**

ACF International's Emergency Response to the Pakistan Floods in August 2010



July

**July – Dec**  
FFV Meta-Evaluation

**CBI**  
Meta-Evaluation of ACF Fresh Food Voucher Programmes

August

**Aug – Oct**  
Haiti

**Multi-Sectoral**  
Support to Vulnerable Persons in Communities of Nord Artibonite Department that Received Influxes of Persons Displaced in the Wake of the January 12, 2010 Earthquake

**Aug – Sept**  
Somalia

**Multi-Sectoral**  
Emergency Nutrition, Health and WaSH interventions for conflict-affected population in South Central Somalia

**Aug – Sept**  
Nigeria

**Nutrition**  
ACF Community-based Management of Acute Malnutrition Integration Programme in Yobe State, Nigeria

**Aug – Oct**  
Mali

**Nutrition**  
Programme to Reinforce Local Capacity Building of CMAM in the Gao Region, Mali

**Aug – Oct**  
Afghanistan

**WaSH**  
Humanitarian support to vulnerable households in the most water and sanitation scarce and cold regions of Afghanistan

September

**Sept – Nov**  
DRC

**Food Security**  
Programme to Reinforce the Food Security of the population affected by conflict in the Health Zones of Dingila and Poko

October

**Oct – Nov**  
Ivory Coast

**Emergency Response**  
ACF's Emergency Humanitarian Response to the Post-election Crisis in the Ivory Coast

**Oct – Nov**  
DRC

**Nutrition**  
Emergency Response for the Nutritional Rehabilitation of Vulnerable People in the Health Zones of Walikale and Kirotshé, North Kivu, DRC

**Oct – Dec**  
South Sudan

**Strategy**  
ACF Operational Approach and Strategy in Warrap and Northern Bar el Ghazal States, South Sudan

November

**Nov – Dec**  
Afghanistan

**CBI**  
Learning from Cash in Afghanistan: ACF CaLP Mid-Term Evaluation

**Nov – Dec**  
Ethiopia

**DRM**  
Community-based Drought Risk Management in 3 Woredas in the Borena Zone of Oromiya Region, Ethiopia

**Nov – Dec**  
Zimbabwe

**Food Security**  
Livelihoods for Improved Nutrition in Zimbabwe

**Nov – Dec**  
Mauritania

**Nutrition**  
Programme to Reinforce and Consolidate Local Capacities for the Management of Malnutrition According to National Protocol in the Guidimaka Region, Mauritania

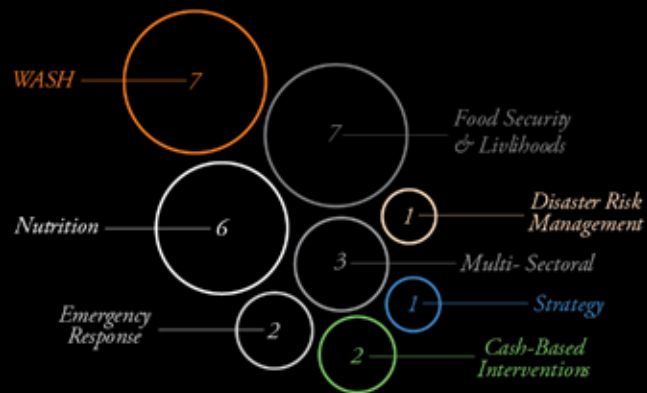
**Nov – Dec**  
Niger

**WaSH**  
Sustainable Development of Access to Water and Basic Hygiene in Partnership with the Population of Keita, Niger

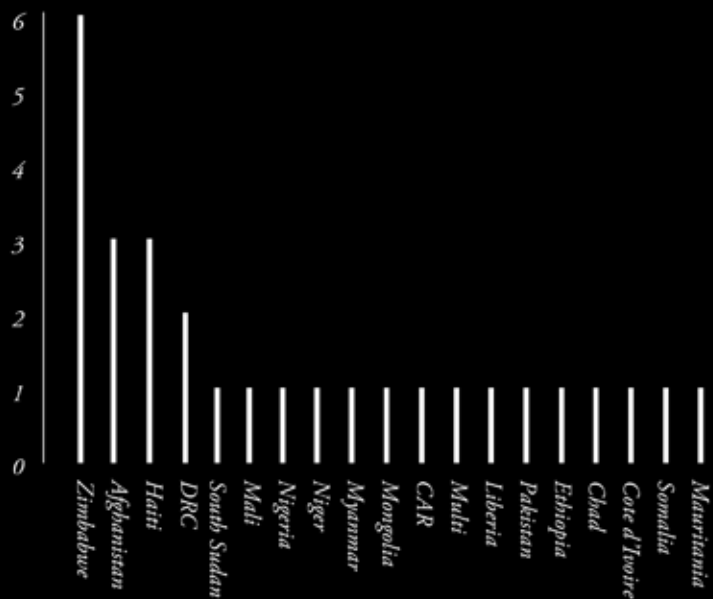
December

# Evaluations in Numbers

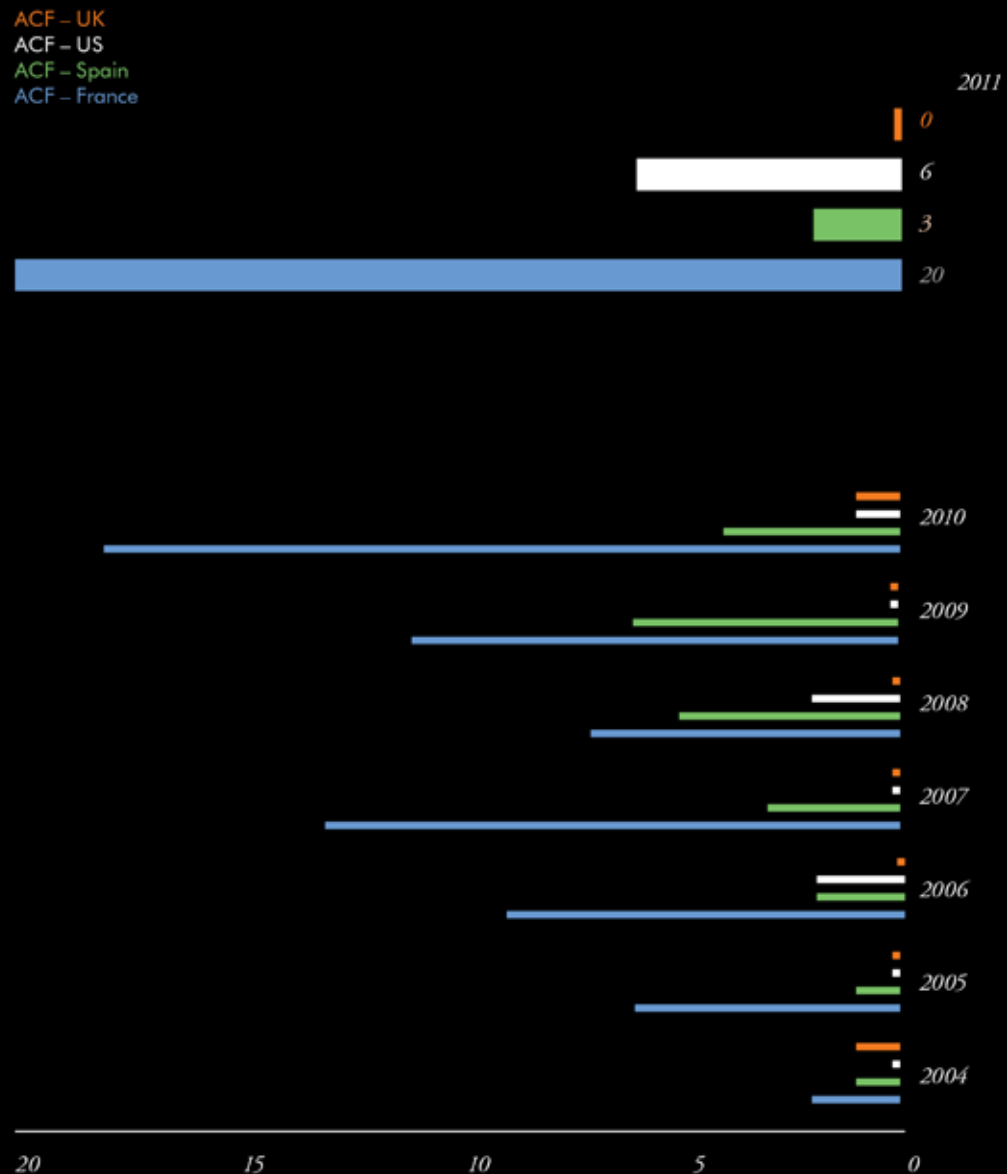
## Evaluations by sector



## Evaluations by country



## Evaluations by HQ



# Evaluators

	"Community-based Drought Risk Management in 3 Woredas in the Borena Zone of Oromiya Region, Ethiopia"	Raya Abagodu		"Reduction in the Impact of Human Excreta in the North-West Department, Haiti"	Jonathan Hecke		"ACF Provision of Food Aid and Livelihood Disaster Prevention to the Most Drought-Affected Herders in Mongolia"	Antony Penny
	"ACF Operational Approach and Strategy in Warrap and Northern Bar el Ghazal States, South Sudan"	Patrick Andrey		"Meta-Evaluation of ACF Fresh Food Voucher Programmes"	Kerren Hedlund		"Programme to Reinforce and Consolidate Local Capacities for the Management of Malnutrition According to National Protocol in the Guidimaka Region, Mauritania"	Aurelie Rabet
	"Nutrition, Advocacy and Food Security Pilot Project Monrovia, Liberia"	Martin Aspin		"Humanitarian Support to Vulnerable Households in the Most Water and Sanitation Scarce and Cold Regions of Afghanistan"	Sarah House		"An Integrated Approach to Reduce Levels of Malnutrition in Urban Areas of Masvingo District, Zimbabwe"	Walter Welz
	"Development of a Major Afghan Urban Centre Through the Provision of Better Water Services"	Manuel Bedran		"Emergency Nutrition, Health and WASH interventions for conflict-affected population in South Central Somalia"	Wim Klaassen		"Sustainable Improvement of the Livelihoods of People Living with HIV/AIDS and Their Families"	John Wiater
	"Programme to Reinforce the Food Security of the population affected by conflict in the Health Zones of Dingila and Poko"	Zlatan Celebic		"Humanitarian Assistance on Water, Sanitation and Hygiene to the Population in Zimbabwe"	Tonderayi Madmire		"ACF's Emergency Humanitarian Response to the Post-Election Crisis in the Ivory Coast"	Jean Charlmagne Yoda
	"ACF Community-based Management of Acute Malnutrition Integration Programme in Yobe State, Nigeria"	Mary Corbett		"Zimbabwe Water, Sanitation and Hygiene project: A sustainable approach based on development of local management capacity"	Aly Teyeni Mana		"Support to Vulnerable Persons in Communities of Nord Artibonite Department that Received Influxes of Persons Displaced in the Wake of the January 12, 2010 Earthquake"	Adbou Moussa
	"Nutrition Programme In the Maungdaw and Buthidaung Townships of Northern Rakhine State, Myanmar"	Juan Luis Dominguez		"Improving the Nutritional Status of Vulnerable Households in the Communal Areas of Chivi, Gutu and Mberengwa Districts, Zimbabwe"	Eulade Mboneye		"Comparison of the Effectiveness of Ready-to-Use-Food, Associated with Food-for-Training in the Prevention of Acute Malnutrition among Children in Vulnerable Neighborhoods of Abeché, Chad"	Floor Grootenhuis & Josephine Hutton
	"ACF International's Emergency Response to the Pakistan Floods in August 2010"	Andy Featherstone		"Livelihoods for Improved Nutrition in Zimbabwe"	Adbou Moussa		"Emergency Response for the Nutritional Rehabilitation of Vulnerable People in the Health Zones of Walikale and Kirotshe, North Kivu, DRC"	
	"ACF's Emergency Response to the Cholera Outbreak in Haiti"	Yvan Grayel		"Programme to Reinforce Local Capacity Building of CMAM in the Gao Region, Mali"				
	"Learning from Cash in Afghanistan: ACF CaLP Mid-Term Evaluation"	Floor Grootenhuis & Josephine Hutton		"Programme to Prevent Malnutrition Through Reinforcement of Food Security"				
				"Sustainable Development of Access to Water and Basic Hygiene in Partnership with the Population of Keita, Niger"				





Photo courtesy of Burger Phanie

# Collective Performance: ACF International through the DAC lens

*The OECD-Disaster Assistance Committee (better known as DAC) Criteria are widely regarded as the most relevant and appropriate areas of evaluation for humanitarian and development programmes.*

The seven criteria – Impact, Sustainability, Coherence, Coverage, Relevance/ Appropriateness, Effectiveness and Efficiency – have become key features of most evaluations carried out in the sector today. The biggest strength of this set of criteria is their ability to provide a common approach to defining the quality of humanitarian programmes. But it is also its biggest weakness; by adopting a standard approach, organisations often fail to explore context-specific questions not covered by these seven criteria.

The inclusion of DAC criteria as part of the intrinsic architecture of ACF's Evaluation Policy & Guideline was the subject of some debate. If ignored, how could ACF programmes be evaluated in a comparative manner? If included, how could we ensure that they would not become the sole focus of evaluations? Its eventual inclusion sought to provide ACF with a means by which to measure progress

over time. By asking evaluators to assess programmes according to a simple rating system (1 low, 5 high) based on the seven DAC criteria, programmes could evaluate their progress over time, and support/technical staff at HQ could evaluate the performance of one programme against another.

The following section offers an analysis of ACF International programmes based on the data collected through this system. The DAC-based system, however, is more than just about quantifying performance; it is about identifying the factors that impact (positively/negatively) on it. This section therefore provides the average rating achieved by the organisation for each of the seven DAC criteria, but also examples of how ACF's activities (and the contexts in which we work) determine the collective performance of the organisation.

# Impact

*The positive and negative, primary and secondary, short, mid and long-term effects produced by an intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.*

3.6

## MEASURING IT

Whilst it is considered relatively easy to garner immediate quantitative results from a programme, impact in a broader sense is less tangible and thus harder to measure. In order to gain a thorough understanding of the impact that a programme has had, one must look beyond simple statistics. Issues of timing have a significant effect on the reporting of impact within ACF

programme evaluations. Because the majority of programmes are funded on a 12-18 month basis, measuring their mid or long-term impact is challenging. Even when evaluations were carried out in the months following the cessation of programme activities, it still proved difficult to accurately gauge the level of impact.

## ACHIEVING IT

Where programmes received the highest DAC ratings for impact, the effects of that intervention were deemed to be long-lasting. This is shown, for instance, in the evaluation of one multi-sectoral project in Liberia which reported that the intervention had not only 'increased food diversity by 100% in over 75% of 200 households' but also 'provided long-term links to nutrition'.

The evaluation of ACF's Food Security programme in the Central African Republic (CAR), for example, highlighted the potential negative impact that the involvement of Village Chiefs had on seed distribution, and the resulting marginalisation of women and some of the most vulnerable members of the community.

Evaluations also awarded higher ratings where impact was felt beyond the immediate objectives of the programme. In Niger for example, one WASH programme was successful not only in improving beneficiaries' well-being by providing sustainable access to safe drinking water, but also in creating local jobs for the maintenance of wells and latrine building. Programmes were also commended for extending their remit beyond their targeted sector, as was reported in the evaluation of a nutrition programme in Mauritania which expanded to other areas beyond purely health and nutrition. Projects that were deemed to have narrower objectives were given marginally lower scores as was the case with the evaluation of a CaLP programme in Afghanistan which argued that the programme could have had broader goals regarding 'sustainable change in practices, livelihood security and gender'.

Finally, achieving a high level of impact can be hindered by external, context-specific factors. The need to monitor the impact of seasonal restrictions or issues arising from social hierarchies was stressed in several evaluations.

*"Where programmes received the highest DAC ratings for impact, the effects of that intervention were deemed to be long-lasting."*

Photo courtesy of Time Frank



# Sustainability

*A measure of whether the benefits of an activity are likely to continue after donor funding has been withdrawn and project activities officially cease.*



## MEASURING IT

Not all ACF programmes are designed with a lasting legacy in mind. Some are purposefully planned as purely temporary interventions and therefore sustainability does not always feature highly on the list of planning priorities. As the evaluation of ACF's Emergency Response in Ivory Coast stated; 'The short-term nature of the emergency response never permitted interventions that could produce sustainable results'. The evaluation of a research programme in Chad, similarly, reflected upon the fact that the project was designed to be punctual in addressing dietary needs during one particular season of food insecurity, and was not intended to be sustainable beyond that period. Despite this, sustainability was a key consideration in most of the evaluations completed in 2011, especially those that were reviewing programmes of a medium to long-term nature.

## ACHIEVING IT

The majority of evaluations conducted in 2011 strongly suggest that the sustainability of a programme is linked to the development of local capacities through training and community-based management. The heightened importance of such initiatives and those involving local community associations (especially where state cooperation and support is lacking), is underlined in several evaluations including the review of one food security programme in DRC which suggested that a lack of support from the state and other structures left it to rely solely on 'local community associations, groups and committees and the development of their productive capacities' to ensure future sustainability.

Securing government buy-in was shown to have a significant and positive effect on initiatives. One such positive example of state support comes from the evaluation of a nutrition programme in Nigeria which highlighted the heavy involvement of Ministry of Health staff in programme activities.

From an organisational perspective there were concerns highlighted in some evaluations regarding the reliability of logistic supply-chains and the ensuing impact on sustainability. The evaluation of one nutrition programme in Mali showed that a lack of supply-chain management meant frequent pipeline breaks and stock-outs. It was reported that 'if the disruptions become frequent there is the risk that the mothers will stop visiting the nutrition centres', thus reducing

community buy-in and jeopardising the future of the intervention. Ultimately, the level of success that a programme has in securing its future sustainability hinges on receiving buy-in not only from the government, but also, perhaps more importantly, from communities themselves.

Forward planning by ACF programmes to maintain installations, infrastructure and/or systems created as part of an intervention is key. Bringing community and local partners to be part of a programme's long-term maintenance strategy (through training for example) has proven to be particularly successful. The evaluation of one ACF WaSH programme in Afghanistan provided examples of how the sustainability of water points was ensured by training community members in their repair. Ownership and responsibility for such on-going maintenance were found to be key in ensuring the longevity of such initiatives.

2.6

# Relevance/ Appropriateness

## 4.3

*A measure of whether interventions are in line with local needs and priorities (as well as donor policies), thus increasing ownership, accountability, and cost-effectiveness.*

Photo courtesy of Samuel Hauenstein Swain



### MEASURING IT

Evaluations of several ACF programmes from 2011 highlighted the fact that ACF's interventions will always be fundamentally relevant given the overwhelming hardships facing the countries and regions where ACF is present. Where a need has been identified, be it for nutritional support, better access to clean water and hygiene or to ensure that communities are food secure, humanitarian interventions will always be relevant in the broadest sense.

The identification of basic needs is only the beginning: programmes that were found to be relevant and appropriate by evaluators had developed specific actions and processes tailored to each context. This includes the targeting approach used to select beneficiaries and the timing of the intervention vis-a-vis the times of greater need in programme areas. The most defining feature of relevant/appropriate programmes evaluated, however, was their adaptability to change and their capacity to review needs and adapt their support accordingly.

### ACHIEVING IT

The relevance of an intervention depends, in the very first instance, on the quality of the needs assessments carried out early in the project cycle. Often, the needs are clear. In Keita, Niger, only a third of the population have access to safe drinking water, and the demand for the type of WaSH programmes was high. But to identify the most suitable approaches and targeting for each context, communities must be actively involved in the design and planning of the intervention. Programmes that rated highly were praised in their evaluations for having used a participatory approach to assess the needs of the beneficiaries and other stakeholders. Needs and solution analysis featured prominently in the approach of many programmes and was positively noted as having been successfully implemented in WaSH initiatives in both Zimbabwe and Haiti. Community engagement, however, must be wide and inclusive. If it is not, as the evaluation of one food security programme in Zimbabwe showed, programmes risk involving local authorities whilst neglecting to adequately involve beneficiaries themselves in the project decision-making process.

Needs change, and programmes must remain flexible to remain relevant. The evaluation of the Emergency Response in the Ivory Coast also found that 'the types of emergency interventions were absolutely relevant to the needs as they were evolving in scope, sequence and location'. Programmes must actively engage communities during needs assessments, but this level of engagement must continue in order to identify and adapt to changes over time.



# Coherence

## 3.9

*The need to assess existing interventions, policies and strategies to ensure consistency and minimise duplication.*

### MEASURING IT

The coherence of humanitarian interventions depends largely on their understanding of, and adaptation to, a range of contextual factors including government policy, existing humanitarian projects and programmes (by national and international NGOs), beneficiary needs and donor requirements. Assessing the level of coherence of a programme will be based on the understanding of these factors amongst programme planners and how resulting projects individually address them in a coordinated manner. Optimal coherence ultimately rests on the ability of programmes to deal with these external and internal factors, and their ability to design, implement and adapt their activities in a coordinated manner.



Photo courtesy of Ben Allen

### ACHIEVING IT

Evaluations showed that ACF is capable of developing strong partnerships with local authorities and programmes were generally found to be consistent with governmental policies. The evaluation of one ACF food security programme in CAR, for example, reported that it had successfully adhered to national strategies dealing with the fight against poverty and other national strategies relating to agricultural and rural development. The evaluation of a nutrition programme in Mauritania, which rated the intervention highly in terms of coherence, highlighted that it was in-line with national policies, well-coordinated with project partners and contextually pertinent.

Working within the cluster system can provide a solid platform for improved coordination and coherence, in particular with other NGOs operating in the same programme areas. The potential benefits of this approach were captured in the evaluation of ACF's WaSH programme in Niger, where staff regularly attended cluster meetings, which enabled ACF projects to coordinate with regional authorities and other stakeholders. In Haiti, the involvement of ACF in WaSH Cluster coordination activities during the cholera outbreak was singled out by the evaluation as a key reason for its improved coherence with other WaSH initiatives.

The challenge is not to be coherent at some level, but to achieve coherence at all levels. In Chad, for example, the evaluation of an ACF nutrition

programme found it to be coherent with the aims of local government as well as with other humanitarian agencies, but not with national health policies. Conversely, the evaluation of an ACF food security project in Zimbabwe found it well integrated with national initiatives and those of other development partners at a national level, but lacking in coordination and collaboration with agencies at a local (field) level. Achieving coherence at all levels is challenging but feasible; an evaluation of other food security programmes in Zimbabwe found it to be 'well-coordinated with Government and the donor community's strategy on poverty reduction in Zimbabwe.' The project was also 'well integrated with the work of national stakeholders, including that of Agritex and the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare (MOHCW). By integrating all the different project components in each of the target Wards beneficiaries [were] able to learn from each other through informal support networks...'

**“The challenge is not to be coherent at some level, but to achieve coherence at all levels”**

# Coverage

*The need to reach the highest proportion of the population in need wherever they are.*

## MEASURING IT

The primary challenges in measuring the coverage of an intervention are firstly, knowing the actual scale of the problem (number of people affected) and secondly, using reliable means by which to ascertain the proportion reached by a programme. For many programmes (e.g. nutrition) there are clear tools to measure the coverage of programmes directly and reliably. The coverage of other types of ACF programme, however, is generally measured in relation to the caseloads estimated at the start of the project. In such

cases, planning and good needs assessments are key in enabling programmes to measure their coverage. There are problems with this approach: the evaluation of ACF's Haiti Cholera WaSH programme and the DRC Nutrition programme for example, both showed programmes reaching a higher caseload than originally planned. What neither evaluation was able to determine, however, is whether this was due to an initial underestimation of need or due to exceptionally high performance by programmes.



## ACHIEVING IT

In the case of the Haiti multi-sectoral programme, the evaluation established that it was precisely this initial underestimation of need that led to inadequate coverage in terms of beneficiary numbers. The findings of the evaluation suggest that there were probably more food insecure households than were originally targeted by the programme, possibly as a result of the strict definitions of vulnerability used in the initial planning phase. Establishing beneficiary numbers in the planning stages and monitoring them throughout the project is not always easy. It is made harder when programmes have to be implemented remotely such as the multi-sectoral programme in Somalia.

Some programmes managed to reach a broader range, or different groups of people, than had originally been targeted by expanding the programme in ways that avoided putting extra strain on existing resources. In Zimbabwe, for example, a food security project did not reach all the intended project areas (or wards), but instead, expanded the remit of its activities within active areas to include more health education sessions for a wider section of the community.

Geographic reach is also a key consideration. Stretching projects over a wide area with limited resources to support them can have a negative impact on their impact and efficiency. This is a common challenge raised by external evaluations; projects stretched over too wide an area with limited resources available leads (predictably)

to reduced levels of contact between programme staff and beneficiaries, with those living in more inaccessible areas seldom reached by field staff.

The ability to plan effectively for coverage is often undermined by aspects outside the control of the programme. Security and access in particular play a significant role; the evaluation of DRC food security programmes, for example, highlighted how accurate geographical planning based on needs had to be reviewed during the implementation of the programme to reflect security restrictions and irregular field access.

Overall, the key to improving coverage lies in adequately identifying the scale of the needs, developing suitable interventions that can adapt to changes and providing these with sufficient human and financial resources to fulfil their goals.

3.3



# Effectiveness

*The extent to which the intervention's objectives were achieved, or are expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance.*

3.9

## MEASURING IT

Most evaluations measured the effectiveness of a programme against two main criteria, namely: the number of beneficiaries reached with emphasis on the level of local buy-in and the chosen timing of programme activities. Comparisons were also made between the results achieved relative to the short term and long-term objectives of a programme.

According to evaluation results, short-term effectiveness was often achieved whilst long-term effectiveness was less certain. The Haiti multi-sectoral programme, for example was seen to be effective in the short-term in the provision of trainings to a high number of beneficiaries over a short period of time. Information retention of lessons learned, however, is yet to be determined. Achieving optimal levels of effectiveness depends on the performance achieved over both time periods.

## ACHIEVING IT

Local buy-in was a key factor determining levels of programme effectiveness, particularly in the short term. For projects with a specific focus on capacity building and knowledge transfer, community understanding and buy-in of ACF's goals is essential to effective programming. The evaluations of ACF WaSH programmes in Afghanistan, for example, found improved hygiene practices amongst the beneficiary community, but uncertainty about the long-term willingness and/or capacity of communities to build latrines or buy hand-washing soap after supplies donated by ACF were depleted. Other evaluations, including the review of the multi-sectoral programme in Liberia, provided further evidence about the importance of community involvement and evidence on the importance of community involvement and of successful incorporation of local knowledge.

Another key factor linked to effectiveness is timing. Programmes that were carefully timed to correspond with periods of heightened need were seen to be more effective. This was highlighted by the evaluation of an ACF food security programme in Chad where delivering food assistance was timed to coincide with the hunger period, providing relief at the time of greatest need. Conversely the evaluation of the Emergency Response in the Ivory Coast found that the Cash Transfer component in the capital city of Abidjan was slow in meeting the food security gaps when they were at their worst. Generally speaking, programmes were evaluated

as having been more effective when they ran to schedule. The Cholera WaSH intervention in Haiti, for example, was deemed less effective due to delays in delivering supplies and in Nigeria the evaluation of a nutrition programme found that initial delays at set-up of the project meant fewer admissions to the OTP than initially planned for.

*“Programmes that were carefully timed to correspond with periods of heightened need were seen to be more effective.”*

Photo courtesy of Richard Mosse



# Efficiency

*A measure of how economically resources/ inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted to results.*

Photo courtesy of J. Langevin/ACF, Somalia



3.6

## MEASURING IT

Evaluations conducted in 2011 found that the efficiency of programmes was impacted upon by several key factors, but in particular, the manner in which projects manage financial and human resources. Evaluations also highlighted the importance of access, and as the evaluations in Afghanistan and DRC demonstrated, how security can ultimately define the level of programme efficiency.

**“Programmes that were found to underperform in terms of efficiency also showed inadequate planning on a number of levels.”**

## ACHIEVING IT

Efficiency has its roots in project planning; programmes that were found to underperform in terms of efficiency also showed inadequate planning on a number of levels. Planning according to the geographical scope of a programme can influence its ability to be managed efficiently. This, coupled with the lack of ‘planning or operational monitoring tools software in use’, as an evaluation of one of Zimbabwe’s WaSH programmes noted, reduces the time spent by managers ensuring the efficiency of their activities.

But these are not the only challenges; external deadlines can affect the design and performance of a programme. In Chad, ACF’s nutritional research programme imposed deadlines that, according to the evaluation prevented ‘rigorous and thorough’ planning. Contexts change over time and as noted elsewhere (see Relevance/ Appropriateness section) flexibility in programme planning is vital to increase its efficiency. The evaluation of a food security programme in the DRC, for example commended the programme for reacting quickly and adapting its plans in the face of delayed financing which could have otherwise undermined its efficiency.

Financially, ACF offered a consistently positive performance. The majority of the evaluations carried out in 2011 concluded that the programmes had remained, on the whole, within their available budgets. The majority also used the money awarded efficiently for its intended

purpose, as was noted in the evaluation of an Afghanistan CaLP programme which concluded that ‘the budget proportions spent on overheads/ HR versus directly to the beneficiaries are relatively well balanced’.

Human Resources (HR) play a crucial role. Where some programmes managed to increase their impact by sharing knowledge with local partners thus extending their reach, others struggled due to lack of staff or high changeover rates in staff members. One nutrition programme in Nigeria was party to both increased and decreased efficiency at the hands of staffing issues. On one hand, effective capacity building meant that local Ministry of Health staff carried out activities as part of their daily activities, making the programme more cost efficient but at the same time, delays in procurement were caused by logistic limitations due to HR shortfalls. This was particularly the case in ACF’s response to the Cholera outbreak in Haiti, which saw a high turnover of expatriate staff impact on the logistics of the programme. To improve efficiency programmes must plan carefully, but they must also identify, increase and retain staff according to their changing needs.





Photo courtesy of Samuel Hausen in Swan

# Meeting the Challenges of a Changing Sector

*In 2011, ACF International carried out more evaluations than ever before. It also carried out a wider range of evaluations; from single-project evaluations and evaluations of multi-HQ emergency responses, to sectoral meta-evaluations and country-wide strategic reviews. These evaluations tackled some of the most relevant and most pressing issues affecting ACF International.*

Last year South Sudan gained its independence, and to help prepare ACF to deal with the changes that come with the birth of a new state, an evaluation of the Operational Approach & Strategy was commissioned. The evaluation offered practical recommendations for enhancing ACF's work in-country, but it also provided ten key strategic recommendations that read as the ten pillars of any country strategy. National strategies, however, need to adapt to context-specific, and often changing, conditions. With security and access worsening in many countries, humanitarian organisations are increasingly turning to Remote Management (RM) as an alternative model of programme implementation. The recent evaluation of ACF operations in Somalia helped identify some key elements to ensure the success of humanitarian programme managed remotely. Another innovative approach that has rapidly

established itself as a key component of the humanitarian toolkit is the use of Fresh Food Vouchers (FFV). The Meta-Evaluation of ACF's FFV programmes in five countries (Bolivia, Kenya, oPT, Haiti and Pakistan) helped ACF and its partners from the Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP) identify emerging good practices for delivering more effective and appropriate FFV programmes. This desire for improved impact also led ACF to adopt new and innovative means of measuring the coverage of its nutrition programmes. These coverage assessments not only highlight the current strengths and weaknesses of ACF's nutrition programmes, but they also offer clear strategic recommendations for improving organisational performance. As part of this Learning Review, we chose to feature these four experiences as examples of how ACF is meeting the challenges of a changing humanitarian sector.

# What Works: Good Practice in the Use of Fresh Food Vouchers

*Over the last few years there has been a steady increase in the number of Cash-Based Interventions (CBIs). Fresh Food Voucher (FFV) programmes have proven to be particularly effective at maintaining or improving nutritional status during emergencies.*

Whilst the appropriateness of FFV programmes depends on each context, ACF International and many other organisations are increasingly including the approach as part of their essential toolkit. In 2011, ACF International carried out a series of evaluations and reviews to identify key lessons and trends in CBIs and FFV programmes. Experiences from the use of FFV in a range of contexts – from drought stricken Bolivia, post-earthquake Haiti and post-floods Pakistan to chronic emergencies in camps in Dadaab (Kenya) and the occupied Palestinian Territories (oPT) – were used to identify emerging good practices in the use of FFVs. The report, entitled “Emerging Good Practice in the Use of Fresh Food Vouchers” identified five areas of good practice and a number of key questions that programme managers should consider during the design, implementation and evaluation of FFV programmes.

## **Good Practice 1: Conducting Nutrition Sensitive Needs Assessments & Nutritional Causal Analysis**

- Have you done a “nutrition sensitive” needs assessment that includes the assessment of food consumption, and the likely causes of poor diet?
- If malnutrition is an actual or potential problem, have you done a causal analysis of malnutrition, including the individual’s and household’s food consumption as well as infant and young child feeding practices (IYCF)? Have you considered that care and health practices may be contributing factors?
- Given the above, do the objectives of your programme reflect the needs assessment and problem analysis, including a clear and logical link between the FFV and the specific pathway or cause of malnutrition?
- Have you done a gender analysis both in terms of women’s needs and women’s role in the consumption of a healthy diet?

## **Good Practice 2: Understanding Markets**

- Have you done a market assessment to understand the capacity of markets to meet beneficiary fresh food needs? Is your market monitoring system adequate to note and predict changes in quality, supply, prices and impacts on beneficiary and non-beneficiary consumption, including seasonality?

- Are there simple and timely interventions to benefit market actors that will enable them to meet the needs of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries?

## **Good Practice 3: Ensuring the Voucher and Complementary Programmes are Designed to Meet Stated Objectives**

- Have you done a response analysis based on nutrition sensitive assessments and market analysis that considers the potential impact, including cost-effectiveness, of different programmes to achieve the same objective?
- How will the design of the voucher programme reflect the nutritional analysis, i.e. reflect the specific food requirements of the target group?
- How has your market analysis influenced the design of transfer value, frequency and timing?
- Are staple foods an assessed need? If there is no other guaranteed source, e.g. complementary cash or in-kind distribution, the voucher must include staples.
- Malnutrition has multiple causes and normally requires a multi-sectoral approach. If you are implementing an integrated approach, how will the fresh food voucher complement the other programmes? How will monitoring and evaluation reflect the complementary objectives of different programmes and detect synergies?

- Similarly, if behaviour is one cause of malnutrition, have you identified a narrow set of well-tailored, actionable nutrition-related messages? Will monitoring systems detect a change in behaviour? How does the behaviour change programme promote the best use of the voucher?

- If using conditional vouchers, have you clearly defined the role of the voucher as an incentive and/or an enabler, and included in your design and monitoring the ability to detect unintended negative effects? If the voucher is effective, attendance at complementary programmes will increase. Have you planned for maintaining the quality and quantity of complementary programming?

- If your aim is to improve micronutrient consumption and thereby contribute to the reduction of micronutrient deficiencies (MND), such as anaemia, have you clearly identified the cause of the MND and is this reflected in the design of the voucher as well as monitoring and evaluation indicators and tools?

## **Good Practice 4: Implementing a Framework for Accountability, Monitoring & Evaluation and Learning and Complementary Programmes that are Designed to Meet Stated Objectives**

- How have beneficiaries and other stakeholders participated in the design, implementation, and evaluation of the programme? How will you



share the results of the voucher programme with stakeholders?

- Do you have a strategy and a system in place to enhance the accountability of your agency, beneficiaries, vendors and the broader community? Do you have a contingency plan if small changes to the voucher programme are not sufficient to resolve problems?
- Are other agencies doing cash and/or voucher interventions? Is it feasible and desirable to consider working as an alliance or consortia?
- Have you set up a monitoring system that considers the programme's intended and unintended impacts?

#### Good Practice 5: Making Paperwork Worth it

- Have you thought carefully of the required human resources, monitoring, administrative, logistical and financial requirements for your FFV programme?
- Have you considered innovative partnerships and the comparative advantages of different technologies, and service providers including financial institutions, to reduce transactions costs and make the implementation of voucher programmes more efficient?
- Are you documenting the process of programme implementation, noting changes to the programme as they happen?

Photo courtesy of Breanna Ridsdel/ACF Ivory Coast



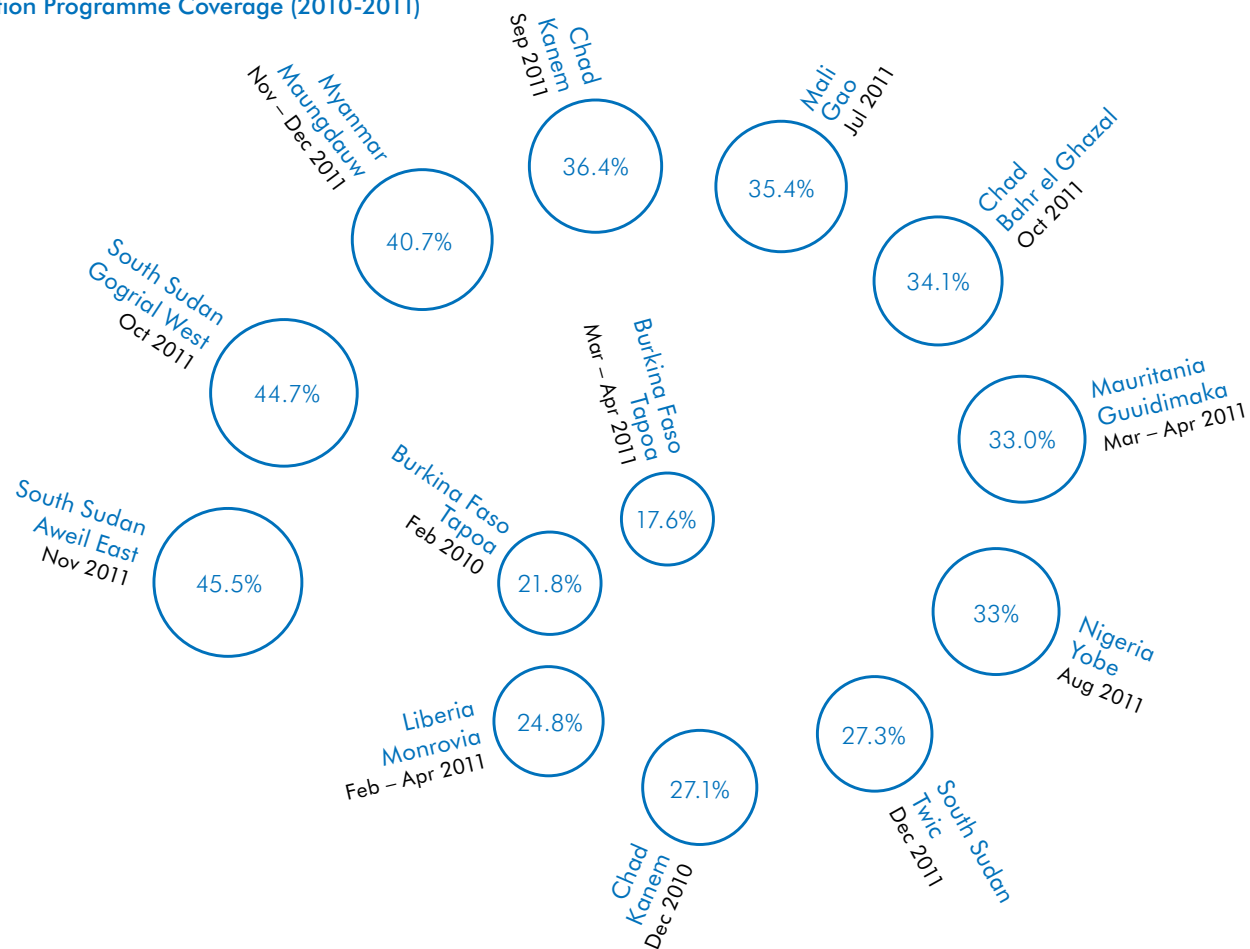
# Nutrition Programme Coverage: What We Know Now

*The nutrition landscape is changing: in less than a decade the sector has shifted from centralised care to community base models to MoH-integrated approaches. How are these changes affecting the performance and impact of Community-based Management of Acute Malnutrition (CMAM) programmes?*

The importance of programme coverage has been reflected in its inclusion in SPHERE Standards. The Standards stipulate minimum coverage standards of 50% (rural), 70% (urban) and 90% (camp). These standards are problematic (e.g. urban programmes have never achieved higher coverage than rural programmes, and population movement is a lot more fluid than the camp standards suggest). Yet, they provide a sense of the high expectations placed on current nutrition models.

Assessing programme coverage has traditionally been an expensive, time-consuming exercise which prevented many programmes from reliably measuring it. In 2009, a number of organisations including ACF developed new coverage assessment techniques that made regular coverage monitoring possible. Since then, these techniques (and in particular the Semi-Quantitative Evaluation of Access & Coverage, SQUEAC) have been widely adopted across ACF, providing valuable insight into the strengths and weaknesses of our nutrition programmes. Since 2010, over 14 different coverage assessments have been carried out by the three operational HQs. The assessments have shown that on average ACF nutrition programmes are reaching approximately 32% of the affected population (SAM children) present in our areas of operation.

ACF Nutrition Programme Coverage (2010-2011)



These results are higher than those normally achieved by Therapeutic Feeding Centres (c. 10%) but remain lower than SPHERE Standards and comparable programmes implemented by other organisations. The question is; how can ACF improve the coverage of its nutrition programmes?

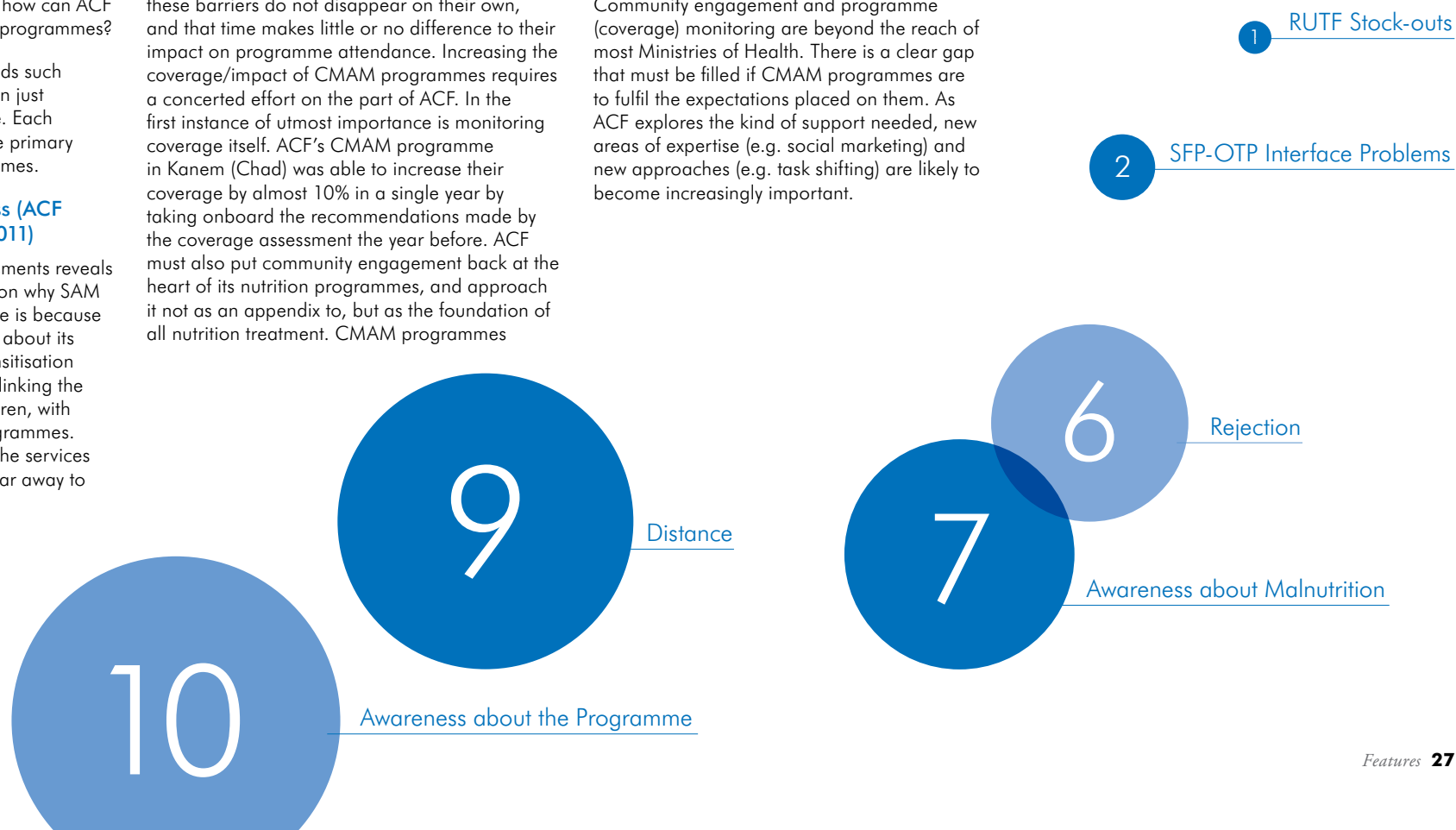
Current coverage assessment methods such as SQUEAC provide much more than just an estimate of programme coverage. Each assessment also provides a list of the primary barriers to access affecting programmes.

#### Most Common Barriers to Access (ACF Coverage Assessments, 2010-2011)

What the data from coverage assessments reveals is that the single most common reason why SAM children fail to attend the programme is because their caretakers simply do not know about its existence. The limitations of ACF sensitisation are also preventing caretakers from linking the conditions that they see in their children, with the services offered by nutrition programmes. Even when caretakers are aware of the services available, they are often simply too far away to enable them to use it.

These issues are not unique to ACF; published research on determinants of coverage in CMAM programmes has identified these same barriers to access. Yet, experience has also shown that these barriers do not disappear on their own, and that time makes little or no difference to their impact on programme attendance. Increasing the coverage/impact of CMAM programmes requires a concerted effort on the part of ACF. In the first instance of utmost importance is monitoring coverage itself. ACF's CMAM programme in Kanem (Chad) was able to increase their coverage by almost 10% in a single year by taking onboard the recommendations made by the coverage assessment the year before. ACF must also put community engagement back at the heart of its nutrition programmes, and approach it not as an appendix to, but as the foundation of all nutrition treatment. CMAM programmes

that perform optimally are those that have a comprehensive and well-resourced mobilisation strategy. But above all, ACF must re-evaluate the nature of their role as a support organisation. Community engagement and programme (coverage) monitoring are beyond the reach of most Ministries of Health. There is a clear gap that must be filled if CMAM programmes are to fulfil the expectations placed on them. As ACF explores the kind of support needed, new areas of expertise (e.g. social marketing) and new approaches (e.g. task shifting) are likely to become increasingly important.



# Remote Management: Lessons from Somalia

*Deteriorating security conditions in many countries (in the Horn of Africa, the Maghreb region and elsewhere) is changing the way in which humanitarian organisations like ACF operate.*

The extent of the constraints faced varies, from limited access to areas within a district (e.g. Mauritania), to limited access to parts of a country (e.g. Mali) to limited access to an entire country (e.g. Somalia). In many of these contexts, senior (mostly expatriate) staff are unable to travel between and/or be based in project areas. To deal with these challenges, ACF has increasingly turned to Remote Management (RM) as a means of continuing to support operations in these areas. The strategic planning & coordination level is based in Nairobi, where the Country Director heads a team consisting of Programme, Logistics, Nutrition-Health, WaSH, HR, Security and Administration Coordinators, each with an assistant and support staff. At field level, the teams are headed by a Base Officer, with Field Officers responsible for Nutrition and Health, WaSH, Logistics, Security and Administration, each with an assistant at project level. The lack of regular, face-to-face contact is the single biggest challenge faced by a model that separates both functions of the programme. The recent evaluation of the Somalia programme offered some lessons about how best to ensure that RM can be successfully implemented.

## 1. Staff Profile & Training

Remote Management, like any management model, relies on human resources for its success. Unlike other models, however, RM requires a unique profile of staff: at a strategic level it requires managers that are capable of supporting and steering programme staff with minimal contact, and who are able to strike a balance between autonomy and accountability. At field level, RM requires organisations to recruit staff capable of performing their tasks with minimum direct supervision. Some organisations choose to approach this by investing in higher salaries, but a more appropriate alternative is to invest in staff development by adopting a long-term strategy centred on staff progression and retention.

Once appropriate staff are identified, programmes must also ensure that additional training is provided. The Somalia evaluation identified key areas for training of staff on both sides of the programme. These include:

- How management roles and effectiveness are impacted by remote working;
- Challenges inherent to these management models;
- Identifying ways in which a manager can be effective in this situation;
- Building trust between remote teams and the organisation at both capital and HQ level;
- Identifying roles, responsibilities, and relationships in teams working remotely;

- Establishing communication and reporting protocols in remote management environments;
- Developing tools to help apply effective management practices in the remote environment.

## 2. Clear Roles & Responsibilities

Roles and responsibilities can become muddled due to distance and lack of regular contact between both sides. It is therefore essential that the roles and scope of work of all staff are clearly defined at the start of the programme. It is also essential that as the RM approach is adapted to specific contexts, the comparative strengths of staff and their teams are recognised. In the case of Somalia, for instance, the evaluation highlighted the key role that the Nairobi team plays in coordination of activities due to their proximity to other organisations and Clusters operating in the same location. The field team, on the other hand, plays a more decisive role in terms of procurement because of their proximity and understanding of locally available services.

## 3. Adequate Communication & Feedback

The overall programme must be kept together through strong and regular communication. Programmes must make use of technological advances and communication tools available to introduce regular information exchanges using telephone, email and teleconferencing whenever possible and appropriate. Programmes should also strive to introduce concrete information sharing mechanisms, to replace ad hoc demands

that are inefficient and ineffective. In developing these systems, programmes should acknowledge the expectations and needs at both sides; at a field level, there is a need to understand the strategic and tactical directions of the programme, whilst at coordination level there is a need for key performance information to allow for more informed decision-making. As the Somalia evaluation concluded, the communication between both ends of the programme should be a constant dialogue in which programme information responds to strategic discussions (field shows progress made towards a strategic goal) and strategic information responds to practical discussions (country office confirm or alter the direction of the programme on the basis of data).

## 4. Reporting, Monitoring & Evaluation

One of the clearest needs, and challenges, in implementing RM approaches successfully is identifying and utilising appropriate reporting, monitoring and evaluation systems. Such tools are essential to ensure that communication between the field and the country office remains focused. In October 2010, the Somalia mission commissioned a set of tailor-made planning, monitoring and reporting tools.

Other missions have also explored similar means of integrating monitoring and evaluation to ensure adequate follow-up of programme activities. In Mali and Mauritania, for example, ACF was able to use the Semi-Quantitative Evaluation of Access & Coverage (SQUEAC) method remotely.

Following from similar exercises by Oxfam-Novib & SAACID in Somalia, the ACF teams were able to adapt the methodology to mirror RM, by separating analysis and strategic planning of the assessment from the actual process of data collection. These exercises also provided specific recommendations for the mainstreaming of data collection and analysis in programmes operating RM.

### 5. Synergy between Strategic & Implementation Teams

Ultimately, the success of the RM approach rests on the degree of synergy that exists between the different sites. All of the formal issues and mechanisms previously mentioned can help create a unified programme, but achieving synergy in the programme requires an additional, more informal approach. As the Somalia evaluation stated, “[c]apacities need to be acknowledged... [t]rust towards each other need to be expressed – perhaps questioned, but then reconfirmed as needed”. Creating the physical spaces for teams to meet and discuss issues is part of the answer. But as the Somalia evaluation showed, regular face-to-face meetings is only effective if they successfully identified the needs of staff at all levels, and specifically set out to address these needs. RM is about recognising the comparative strengths of teams at all levels, and creating the environment for these to support and successfully complement each other.



Photo courtesy of Samuel Hausenstein Swen



# Operational Approach & Strategy: 10 critical Recommendations from South Sudan

*In November 2011, the ACF South Sudan programme conducted an external evaluation of its operational approach and strategy. The review came at a key point in the life of both the mission and the country as a whole.*

In January, South Sudan officially gained its Independence, an event that not only closed one of Africa's longest running conflicts, but which has also changed the prospect of humanitarian operations in the country.

This unique set of circumstances – continuing humanitarian needs but the capacity to adopt a long-term perspective – enabled the evaluation to identify 10 Key Recommendations. These recommendations are valuable not only for ACF's work in South Sudan, but represent central pillars of any comprehensive and holistic intervention anywhere else in the world.

- 1.** ACF strategy should aim at having a more holistic and longer term approach
- 2.** A comprehensive approach needs to be put in place in order to address the seasonality of malnutrition and have a stronger impact on preventing seasonal peaks of malnutrition
- 3.** In order to strengthen and sustain its impact, ACF should plan for longer term programmes that would aim at reducing the structural nutrition vulnerability of the local communities
- 4.** ACF should take advantage of its high profile in the nutrition sector to advocate towards a better inclusion of acute malnutrition within the health sector and contribute in promoting a multi-sectoral approach to prevent acute malnutrition
- 5.** ACF needs to strengthen its integrated approach and build evidence in order to advocate for a multi-sectoral approach to prevent acute malnutrition
- 6.** ACF will need to continuously strengthen the capacity of the Ministries and the communities by involving them in information sharing, and in the design, implementation and evaluation of programmes
- 7.** ACF needs to adapt its human resources setup in order to transfer more decision making power and management capacity at field level with the aim of empowering all management levels within the mission
- 8.** ACF should aim to strengthen the use of existing processes and tools with the aim of improving internal communication and anticipation
- 9.** ACF should further investigate the means of gaining cost-efficiency and take better advantage of its geographical positioning
- 10.** While advocating for humanitarian donors to continue supporting South Sudan and while continuing to build good relations with existing donors, ACF should diversify its funding and look towards longer term funding opportunities



**ACTION**  
AGAINST  
**HUNGER**  
INTERNATIONAL NETWORK

THE  
UNG  
INTERNATIONAL NETWORK





Photo courtesy of Time Frank

# Best Practices from ACF International

*What makes an ACF field programme stand out?*

The Evaluation Policy & Guideline (EPG) introduced in 2011 was designed with this very question in mind. By using evaluations as a primary means of identifying the strengths and weaknesses of ACF's work, the aim was to promote cross-fertilisation and experience sharing within the organisation. The evaluators were asked to play a central role in this process, by identifying a positive feature (technical or programmatic, strategic or tactical) from the project or programmes under review. Field staff were also involved in documenting these practices; they provided background information on the rationale for adopting these practices, the experiences in implementing them and the potential for mainstreaming them across ACF. It was from this multilateral dialogue between evaluators, HQ and field staff, and the ELA Unit, that the following Best Practices emerged.

Together, these fourteen practices cover almost all areas of ACF's work; from the way in which needs assessments are conducted, to the way in which resources are managed and partnerships created and maintained. The context, timing and people involved in the design and implementation of these practices contributed to their success in their country of origin. But the objective in showcasing them to a broader audience is to promote greater understanding of how our field programmes deal with common challenges, to inspire other programmes to explore the adoption of similar practices and to inform and strengthen ACF approaches elsewhere.

# Innovation in reaching those in need:

## A discrete targeting process in Afghanistan

*The Ghor Region of Afghanistan is an ethnically diverse area affected by years of conflict. Communities are fragmented, and the presence of influential and heavily armed commanders has created a powerful patronage system. Community leaders constantly seek to secure humanitarian and government support for their own constituents instead of addressing the actual needs of the most vulnerable. In such a context, local definitions of vulnerability and standard needs assessment and targeting techniques are unreliable, forcing humanitarian actors to explore alternative means of identifying those in need.*

### THE PRACTICE

The discrete targeting technique used by ACF aimed to assess the needs of the population, without explicitly stating the purpose of such assessment, as a means of reducing political interference in the process. The exercise was presented to local commanders under a more general framework of understanding the level of vulnerability in the region. In practice, the technique involved four key steps:

1. A Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was held by each community in their own village, with emphasis on ensuring maximum participation of all households. The community ranked households according to three categories: poor, very poor and extremely poor. At the end of the exercise, all community representatives, ANDMA (Afghan National Disaster Management Authority) and ACF signed forms listing families according to each category.
2. On the same day, ACF, ANDMA and community representatives filled out a questionnaire relating to the vulnerable households identified, took pictures of each of these households (inside and outside) and recorded their GPS coordinates. These questionnaires were also signed by every stakeholder.
3. ANDMA returned to the communities and shared the list of selected families. This selection was made based on findings from the FGD

validated by the questionnaires. It was explained to the community under what criteria the selections were made and the communities confirmed and signed the form again.

4. Finally, the distribution cards were delivered to the “extremely poor”, entitling them to the winter kits to be distributed later by ACF.

Community feedback was generally positive with agreement that the distribution reached the most vulnerable families. However, in spite of the high level of community participation complaints about the targeting (and exclusion of selected) households were raised. ACF’s response focused on the exhaustive and participatory selection process, and the three different forms used and signed by all stakeholders. These forms, supported with photos of the household, were produced as proof that the allocations were based on their own selection.

Prior to the implementation of these assessments an exhaustive process of gaining endorsement for the process allowed greater transparency about the targeting and distribution of the kits. This included signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) at capital and provincial level, as well as local authorities joining ACF on field assessments. Finally heads of community and commanders were requested to be present when the beneficiaries received distribution cards.

### MOVING FORWARD

The discreet targeting technique used by ACF in Ghor is controversial, mainly because it chooses to release only partial information about its intended use. This approach, however, must be seen in context; in places like Afghanistan, where community-led targeting of households is heavily politicised and open to exclusion of those in need, ACF must explore alternative means of reaching the most vulnerable. This targeting approach can be of use to programmes both in Afghanistan and similar contexts elsewhere. This approach remains work in progress, and further trials must be carried out in order to maximise transparency whilst retaining its effectiveness. In exploring the future of such an approach, four key considerations have been identified:

1. Coordination with relevant authorities at all levels is paramount in order to gain legitimacy and ensure their support in the case of complaints.
2. The approach can only be implemented once in a given community. Once the ultimate aim of the exercise is revealed, the assessment becomes once more exposed to political manipulation.
3. The level of support linked to this targeting approach needs to be carefully balanced to minimise post-distribution complaints.

4. Availability of time is important as this practice requires extensive community participation. Its use in emergency situations should be carefully considered.
5. The direct targeting of each family also enables ACF to adapt the distribution to any specific needs the recipient may have. For example, in the case of the disabled or those unable to travel to the distribution sites.

“ACF must explore alternative means such as the discrete targeting process to reach the most vulnerable”

# Tight lines: Respecting the project procurement plan in the Democratic Republic of Congo



*To ensure that a humanitarian project delivers according to its intended budget, a realistic and appropriate budget plan is essential. Like many organisations, ACF projects occasionally exceed budget ceilings for individual project activities. Costs committed by managers at field level often surpass budget limits and are committed without prior validation from coordinators at capital level. Infrequent and/or complete lack of budget monitoring often worsens the process. This, coupled with unclear budget narratives, leads to overspending.*

## THE PRACTICE

For the nutrition project in North Kivu, DRC, a clear project spending plan and control (as outlined in ACF's Kit Log V3) was designed to follow the project plan and enable Programme Coordinators to monitor spending under each activity closely. This plan, known as the Programme Procurement Plan (PPP), when implemented and respected has proven effective in most projects since its inception. To introduce the PPP, ACF staff at HQ and/or field level:

- Produced a good budget plan in line with the activities of the Logical Framework Analysis;
- Ensured that the spending plan was achievable given available funds;
- Ensured Programme Coordinators enforced a strict adherence to PPP;
- The budget holder (at base level) monitored spending and ensured that it was kept within PPP;
- The budget holder avoided unspecific and ad-hoc spending that was a potential cause for confusion;
- The Programme Coordinator communicated well with project staff over financial planning and monitoring.

These basic steps were supported by an MS Excel-based planning tool which included a tab

for each planned activity, each with an individual budget plan. This included all necessary spending amounts and a timetable for each budget. The Head of Mission or Programme Coordinator validated the PPP (to ensure it remained feasible and realistic) and HQ submitted it to the donor as part of the grant proposal.

The strength of this arrangement is that staff are unable to go beyond the planned expenses. Once the plan is executed, Project Managers at base level only request the amount of cash specified in the plan at the specified time. The budget holder is obliged to keep within the agreed plan and monitor spending themselves.

The PPP shows the importance of respecting the time and spending restraints stipulated. Programme Coordinators at capital level in the DRC are required to report back to HQ on a monthly basis and therefore it is paramount that each PPP is respected to ensure the global budget is adequately balanced. Adherence to the parameters established is particularly important for multi-grant projects, which must follow ACF's funding structure (based largely on grants) and donor strategies that prioritise co-funding. Multi-grant projects must account in a manner that facilitates attribution and reporting towards individual donor grants. This requires a broader financial view from the Programme Manager and more structured tools that bring together the various funding sources.



Photo courtesy of Gonzalo Hoahr

## MOVING FORWARD

Two components that would go a long way in assisting technical staff at base level to respect the PPP should be included in every project. First, **compiling a catalogue of daily costs**. The logistics department should compile a cost list of regular spending to give clearer guidance on daily spending. Second, **sufficient communication on the purpose of the PPP**. The rationale for the PPP (as a tool) and the requirements of each PPP must both be well understood by project managers and technical staff. The PPP restricts flexibility in funding which must be justified if the process is going to achieve buy-in from all users.

# Building a strong partnership:

## Good practice for collaboration in Niger



*ACF, like an increasing number of NGOs, subscribes to a partnership approach to humanitarian action. The main benefits of such an approach lie in the local partners' knowledge of the local context and the increased longevity of the projects activities as the expertise and knowhow brought by the project is embedded within the community. However, this approach is often marred by poor communication, lack of trust, low levels of efficiency and varying levels of success. Building on the partnership between the Centre Africain pour l'Eau Potable et l'Assainissement (CREPA) and ACF-Spain in Mali between 2006-2009 the two organisations embarked on a new partnership in the Keita region of Niger.*

### THE PRACTICE

CREPA's profile as social engineers and ACF as experts in hydraulic infrastructure allowed for the creation of a partnership based on complementarity. However the key strength of this partnership came from the manner in which it was implemented. Both organisations existed at capital level before the partnership was conceived, but as the project was launched at local level, CREPA staff where housed in the same office as ACF. Sharing a common roof made for fluid communication, trust and speedy decision-making, leading to increased efficiency, saving time and resources.

From the outset a unique management structure and system of information exchange between the two partners was established. CREPA provided a team of two supervisors and four animators (men and women). CREPA reported to the deputy project manager (ACF), on a periodic basis and on the progress of social engineering component of the project. The CREPA office in Niamey also supported the CREPA team at Keita level. Periodic meetings were held between all departments at Keita level to ensure that all staff (CREPA and ACF) were equally and adequately informed.

This arrangement strengthened the level of transparency and synergy between both organisations. Concerns were dealt with in a responsible and professional manner. Mutual respect and strong coherence means that today, the two organisations are seen as one by project beneficiaries.

Photo courtesy of Abdou Moussa



### MOVING FORWARD

In order to further capitalise on the benefits of this good practice and to ensure its sustained success, ACF should document the process behind the creation and implementation of this partnership, and the factors that contributed to its success. Harmonising this type of partnership is not without its challenges; the benefits and resources available to international NGOs like ACF and those available to regional/national NGOs are not equal, and neither are the systems in place to support (financial and otherwise) the staff of each organisation. Exploring ways in which to reduce these gaps is key to promote and strengthen partnerships with regional/national organisations.

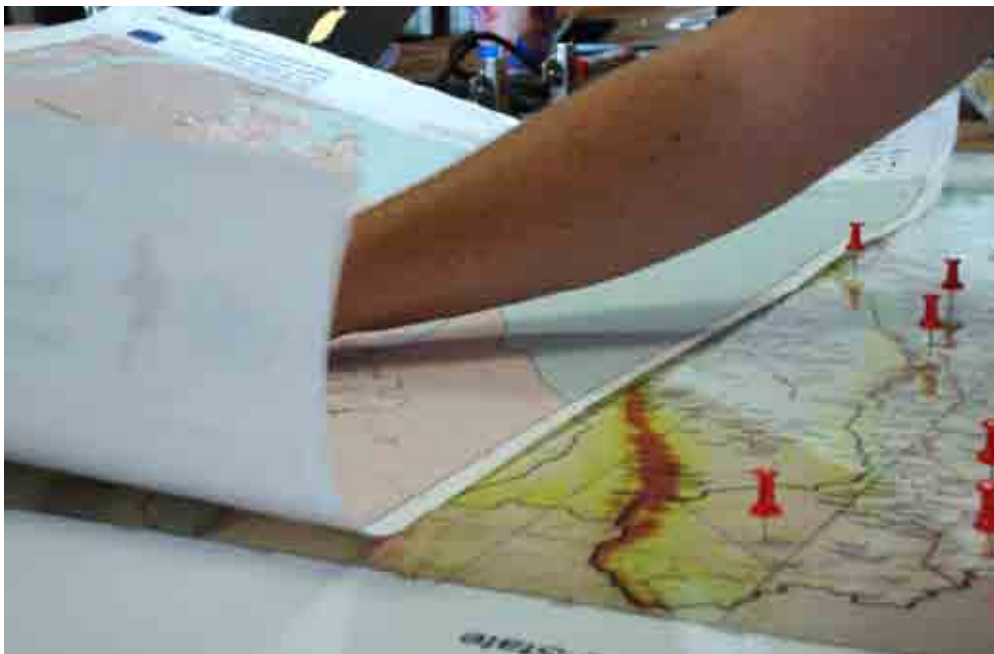
### WSA

Water and Sanitation for Africa, WSA (formerly known as CREPA) is an African NGO present in 17 countries in West and Central Africa. WSA works for the improvement of living conditions by improving access to water and sanitation services. It has developed a unique approach that includes 3 components – the use of low cost technologies, community participation and micro-credits. Their expertise lies in communication strategies, appropriate financial arrangements, capacity building and advocacy in the WaSH sector. Their local knowledge in these areas and their mandate of being a centre for sustainable WaSH programming makes them the ideal partner for ACF.

# Information is crucial: The mapping of water points in South Sudan

*One of the main structural constraints to ensuring coherence of humanitarian activities in South Sudan relates to the lack of basic information available. Overall, the mapping of humanitarian services and infrastructure is very limited. The high number of water programmes can make the identification of under-served areas difficult. Avoiding duplication and meeting the needs of the communities requires a better understanding of the location and status of water points.*

“Mapping contributes to a comprehensive understanding of gaps in water provision and helps coordinate efforts to improve access to water points”



## THE PRACTICE

The lack of an up-to-date database and mapping of water sources in South Sudan led the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) to carry out a survey of the location and condition of water points. This data was used by ACF to develop an easy-to-use database for Northern Bahr-el-Ghazel, including areas with a high NGO presence like Aweil East. By the end of 2010, ACF had collected GPS data and information on the status of most existing water points in Aweil East. To achieve this, the ACF South Sudan mission:

1. Obtained suitable maps of the programme area.
2. Developed a suitable database (in an easy to use MS-Excel format) to store data on water point location and status.
3. Ensured participation of program staff to identify GPS locations of water points and maintain the database.

## MOVING FORWARD

One of the key conditions for rolling out such a practice is having access to **good quality maps**. The maps currently in use are in bitmap (low quality) format which are at times not detailed and often do not represent the most up to date borders. Bitmaps provide a good visual representation but do not show enough detail to accurately pinpoint water points. By having a more detailed and accurate starting point, ACF would be able to obtain even more accurate results, leading to a more appropriate and coherent response. With better maps ACF will also be in a position to further develop and roll out this practice across all technical areas and across all missions.

With sufficiently detailed maps ACF will be able to **involve other humanitarian actors** in order to identify further water points, leading to a more complete mapping tool. In order to enable other actors to contribute mapping data to the database efficiently, a guideline for compiling the database should also be developed. This would also enable the practice to be expanded into other areas. Currently, the mapping system is only in place in one of the three working bases in the South Sudan mission, and thus is limited, even within ACF.

# The community's ombudsman: Beneficiary accountability system in Zimbabwe



*Whilst the need for transparency and accountability is a key feature of project cycle management, very rarely are coordinated and practical systems put in place to ensure that beneficiaries have a voice and actively participate in project implementation. More often than not transparency and accountability has been limited to the way in which beneficiaries and their needs are selected. In Zimbabwe, ACF recognised that its participatory appraisals and community discussion regarding project design were insufficient for beneficiaries to provide feedback to the project. Even in situations when feedback occurred – through frequent interaction with field staff for example – there was recognition that information was seldom passed to project managers or beyond. As a result the feedback loop was broken and the beneficiaries' views had little or no influence on the project.*

## THE PRACTICE

This practice is based on the selection of a Beneficiary Accountability System (BAS) representative to act as an ombudsman for the project, channelling feedback (both positive and negative) from beneficiaries to project staff, and vice versa. The BAS was established to ensure fluid and comprehensive communication between beneficiaries, programme staff and programme managers. The BAS representatives were selected by their communities/beneficiary groups using no formal criteria. ACF did encourage a rotation of representatives each year in order that more people have the opportunity to fulfil the role. In practice, people with authority in the village/group were commonly chosen. Changing this may be desirable, but influencing the selection process may ultimately prove more detrimental. In order to put the BAS in place the project took the following easy steps:

- Emphasised the importance of community participation and ownership of the project implementation processes ('our project' as opposed to 'their project');
- Familiarised project staff and partners with the BAS, including advantages, limitations and potential for use as an effective tool to enhance project performance;
- Ensured project teams coach and mentor beneficiaries on the BAS as part of planning and project start-up activities;

- Supported project beneficiaries in identifying their BAS representatives;
- Ensured beneficiaries committed themselves to meeting periodically to discuss pertinent issues, grievances and complaints in relation to the project;
- Committed project staff to make themselves available to the beneficiaries (visiting them on agreed dates) to discuss issues and provide feedback on matters raised;
- Introduced annual reviews that brought beneficiaries and project staff together to reflect on the BAS and identify ways of strengthening it.

Positive outcomes of implementing BAS included improved cooperation and trust between project promoters and beneficiaries, ownership of projects by beneficiaries and their communities, improved efficiency in implementation processes and sustainability of project results.

## MOVING FORWARD

The current BAS could be made more effective by providing more **coaching and mentoring** to the BAS representatives so they become more confident in their engagements with both ACF and their beneficiary counterparts. **The issue of proportionality** must also be addressed; the group assigned to one BAS Representative needs to be small enough to be able to make decisions/recommendations and be manageable. But, how many beneficiaries should one person represent? Finally, the BAS must promote and increase greater direct dialogue between ACF and beneficiaries, not replace it. ACF must ensure that existing opportunities for dialogue with communities are adequately used to complement and triangulate the information provided by BAS representatives, thus gaining a more complete picture of the needs and views of beneficiary communities.

**“The beneficiary accountability system facilitates a real and on-going voice in the project for beneficiaries.”**

### *BAS Representative Profile: Nylon Hungalani*

Nylon is a farmer and resident of Chisavanye village. She and her family have been beneficiaries of the project since 2009 receiving assistance from four interventions: Conservation Farming, Low input gardens, Goat Pass-On and Guinea fowl pass-on. Due to her active participation in the project and good interpersonal relations she was selected by her community as the BAS Representative in 2011.

# Gaining respect:

## Community sensitization in Afghanistan



*ACF has a duty to carry out thorough community sensitisation to ensure that local communities (including beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries alike) are well informed of project activities and aims and that in the process they become actively involved in the project design and implementation. The importance of community sensitisation increases in conflict affected countries such as Afghanistan, where community cohesion has undergone shocks. In such contexts, exacerbating existing rifts within the community (directly/indirectly as a result of ACF activities) can have dramatic consequences for beneficiaries and staff. Regular and open dialogue becomes essential.*

### THE PRACTICE

Community sensitisation can play a crucial role in ensuring the safety of ACF staff, programme beneficiaries and the general well being of the communities. Through community sensitisation, ACF ensures that its mandate and adherence to principles of neutrality and “do-no-harm” are communicated and understood by all stakeholders. This understanding then provides a foundation on which ACF can successfully communicate the nature of its works, including its Cash for Work (CFW) project in Samangan Province.

Four principles of this, and any other successful sensitisation strategy include:

- Ensuring awareness of the link between community sensitisation and staff safety;
- Cultivating awareness of the importance of community sensitisation in order to remain neutral;
- Facilitating knowledge of community dynamics and structures, and respecting these during the implementation of activities;
- Involving communities at all stages of the project cycle in an open and understanding manner.

In Afghanistan, ACF used a range of **community sensitisation channels** (group discussions, committees, informal interviews) to describe the aims and activities of the project. Clarity about the objectives of the project, its targeting process and intended beneficiaries was essential in ensuring the information could be easily shared with other stakeholders from federal to local level. This **respect to local hierarchal structures** at all levels began with regular communication with the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development at the provincial capital. This was followed by renewed engagement with district level offices and on to community development committees and traditional councils. The sensitisation messages and related strategy were tailored to each of these levels and its audience. This strengthened ACF’s reputation and increased community respect for the organisation. It also helped reduce the risk arising from lack of transparency and mistrust.

### MOVING FORWARD

In the case of the CFW project in Samangan, community sensitisation was used as a two-week long introduction to the project in preparation for community assessment and beneficiary selection, rather than as a permanent feature of the project cycle. As a result, subsequent changes in project

design were not communicated adequately with the communities. To avoid this and other potential challenges in community-based interventions, sensitisation must be designed as a regular and permanent activity critical for project success and risk reduction.



Photo courtesy of Floor Groothuis

# Local solutions to local challenges: Developing nutrition messages in Liberia



*The community gardening projects piloted by ACF in Monrovia, Liberia, initially struggled to meet their objectives. The challenges were underpinned by complaints from community members of limited consultation during the design and implementation of the project. In order to solve these issues, two particular challenges needed to be confronted. Firstly, the inability of project staff to speak local languages which created a significant barrier between them and the communities. Secondly beneficiaries lack of trust in project staff as knowledgeable gardeners. Enhancing community ownership and increasing the sustainability of the project was dependent on these two issues being adequately addressed.*

## THE PRACTICE

A local approach was promoted within the project in order to address the challenges of communication and respect within the community. This approach had 2 main pillars:

- 1. Dissemination of messages in the local dialect.** By delivering messages through its local partner Aid for the Needy Development Programme (ANDP) who were proficient in speaking the local dialect and helped strengthen dialogue between the project and beneficiary communities.
- 2. Working with local farmers as project staff.** Working with local farmers was effective at delivering a range of messages aimed at improving practice in the areas of food diversity, nutrition and hygiene. Beneficiaries immediately trusted and respected fellow community members as they were recognised as experienced gardeners with an understanding of local challenges and opportunities.

Once fluid communication with the communities and a willingness to engage with the project was established, the team were able to work closely with the community on all levels. Better interaction led to a greater level of familiarity

between the community and the project. In practice, the project was able to successfully use a range of approaches which included a combination of workshops and one-to-one mentoring, continuous home and garden visits and the use of local management committees to mobilise and motivate households.

The strength of this practice lies in its ability to empower local actors to pass on their knowledge in achieving better yields and improved nutrition. As soon as knowledge sharing at community level was embedded in the project the sustainability of change was better assured. Furthermore by building the capacity of local partners (ANDP) they became a resource centre for the local population. The project was further strengthened by the complementarity of ANDP and local farmers; ANDP brought expertise in nutrition and training tools (workshops, developing training materials etc.) and local farmers brought their technical knowledge of gardening practices. The success of the practice is demonstrated by a high level of community participation, the warm reception of project staff during home visits, and a high level of meeting attendance and knowledge gained during trainings.

## MOVING FORWARD

The local farmer model should be continued and built upon by further community involvement in the project (from design through to implementation) with the ultimate aim of the project becoming community led. ACF should continue to play an active support role in providing equipment, financial support and training of new project staff. ACF should also ensure continuity throughout the project and monitoring of the use of the support provided. In order to introduce locally led messages such as in Liberia, projects must:

- Have a strong partnership with a local organisation that has a good reputation and relationship with the community;
- Involve the local authorities;
- Exercise a high level of transparency in the selection of lead farmers to retain trust within the community;
- Keep training sessions intimate and brief to increase productivity and decrease the opportunity cost of attendance.





# Income generating activities: Supporting water point operation and management in Zimbabwe

*In Zimbabwe, the sustainability of community water points is a challenge, with UNICEF/Oxfam estimating in 2009 that 60% of rural water points were broken and in disrepair. This is the result of a number of factors including availability of spare parts, cost of repair, community capacity to make repairs and lack of government support. Increasingly, WaSH programmes in Zimbabwe have turned towards Community Based Management, the establishment of water point committees and/or the recycling of spare parts locally to address these gaps. In spite of the progress made through these approaches, a renewable source of funding remained a key barrier to the sustainability of water points.*

## THE PRACTICE

The ACF WaSH programme set out to address this challenge by helping to link Water Point Committees (WPCs) with Income Generating Activities (IGAs) capable of producing sufficient financial revenue to support operation and management of water points. WPCs were given one week's training by ACF on business skills prior to selecting the specific IGA. The types of IGA selected, for example, were determined by the availability of local resources and existing market demand. In the context of Zimbabwe, this included livestock businesses and bakeries. ACF provided WPCs with start-up materials (at an estimated cost of \$5,000). ACF IGA officers with food security and veterinary backgrounds provided follow-up support to the WPCs. WPCs showed a high degree of commitment and ownership over these IGAs, resulting in the majority of IGAs turning over profit in their first year. More importantly, perhaps, several of the groups quickly invested resources produced through the IGAs on the repair and maintenance of water points.

Three key lessons resulted from these successful experiences:

**1. Establish market linkages.** Ensuring that the IGA is well planned and relevant to the local economy is essential in ensuring the success of the initiative. This requires support from experts with an understanding of local economies.

**2. Integrate with other programmes.**

Early collaboration with other programmes, including Food Security & Livelihoods is essential to maximise the sustainability and impact of the IGAs.

**3. Stay focused.** There is a need to maintain an active link between water point management and IGAs. Otherwise the need to reinvest the income generated for the water points can be challenged by competing agendas.



## MOVING FORWARD

IGAs are one of the many community based financing approaches (including revolving funds and micro-credits) that can be used by WaSH programmes to ensure sustainability of their interventions. The experience from Zimbabwe shows that they are an effective alternative that can be explored further. Although linking WPC with IGAs remains a work in progress, clear recommendations emerge from the Zimbabwe experience. These include:

- Understanding the markets is essential. In Zimbabwe ACF will partner with Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV) to carry out future market linkages work;
- To maximise their economic viability, it may help to establish a number of IGAs close together, producing the same product, so that economies of scale are created for buyers coming to purchase locally;
- The IGAs could potentially produce more cash than is needed for water point repair. Programmes must be able to forecast this and provide a mid to long-term map that helps guide the use of revenues;

- The type of IGA can significantly increase the likelihood that revenues will be channelled to water point operation and management. IGAs such as vegetable gardens that depend on the water point for example can be more effective than carpentry in cementing the link between revenue, investment and water points;
- Linking the WPC/IGAs under existing social frameworks that promote water and sanitation can further enhance the impact of this relationship. In Zimbabwe, the use of VHHCs (Village Hygiene Health Clubs) enables the programme to expand the scope of the IGA revenue use;
- Efforts should be made to monitor the performance and accountability of the IGAs, in particular the use of any revenue created, and to ensure that technical/administrative support is provided in a timely manner during the first months of their implementation.

# Data rocks: Training in CMAM data management and reporting in Nigeria



*One of the common challenges faced by integrated nutrition programmes is the limited amount of data collection, collation, analysis and reporting carried out by the Ministry of Health (MoH) involved in these programmes. Nigeria, where ACF began operations in early 2011, was no exception. As part of the ECHO-funded pilot project, ACF (with input from UNICEF) set out to proactively change this by developing the capacity of MoH staff to collect, manage and interpret data. This was done in tandem with capacity building of staff in stock management of which data management is a large component.*

## THE PRACTICE

The training on data management aimed to promote an understanding of the importance of CMAM indicators from the health facilities up to State level. In order to ensure that data was properly collected and collated it is essential for those involved to understand why data is important. The training aimed to enhance staff capacity at three levels:

- At **Regional level** (with health facility nutrition personnel) to be able to define solutions for indicators they reported on (i.e. reasons for defaulting or lower admissions);
- At **District level** (with Local Government Authority (LGA) and state nutritionists) to identify trends in different health facilities and plan supportive supervisions accordingly to investigate trends;
- At **State level** (with Maternal & Child Health (MCH) and Primary Health Care (PHC) coordinators) to ensure the State received a global picture of trends in the state of nutrition in order to inform strategic decisions.

The approach of building capacity at all levels reinforced the State leaderships position in bringing together LGAs supported by both ACF and UNICEF, allowing for a harmonisation of reporting approach across the State. Training on the management of nutrition data was conducted with key stakeholders at all levels to ensure data

was embedded within the HMIS (Health Management & Information System). Key components of the training included:

- Basic concepts of data management, reporting and monitoring;
- Data tools, uses, approaches, process and its reporting procedures;
- Indicators to measure the program performance, coverage and program effectiveness;
- Skills required for successful operation of the programme data and reporting;
- Technical expertise to manage CMAM data and reporting according to National CMAM guideline and tools;
- By the end of the training, the trainees are expected to pass on the training to PHC level so that the state will have a critical mass of skilled and well trained staff to facilitate the flow-of quality reporting at all levels.

On-the-job training and follow-up with key staff was conducted to ensure M&E systems were being followed through and conducted comprehensively. Finally in some cases computers were donated to enable key staff to ensure data was collated and analysed well. This meant that practical training was also conducted with key staff, to enable the training of data management to be applied.

## MOVING FORWARD

A comprehensive report on the state level training is now available. Additional reports for LGA trainings were also developed and can be used in other parts of the country to inform similar activities. These experiences have led to the development of a module to support trainings and the M&E section of the national guidelines. ACF could go further and develop generic training modules that can be adopted and adapted by other missions, following the HMIS system in country. ACF should also prioritise data management training as a key feature of the support provided to other integrated programmes.

“The training on data management aimed to promote an understanding of the importance of CMAM indicators”



# Strength in numbers:

## Village health and hygiene clubs in Zimbabwe

*Enhancing the understanding of the role of adequate hygiene on health is one of the primary objectives of WaSH projects. Although hygiene promotion can never be a substitute for proper sanitation and sufficient water supplies, good hygiene is key to reducing the incidence of water-borne diseases. Promoting hygiene can be challenging, but some approaches are known to yield positive results. In Zimbabwe, the work of one local NGO, ZimAHEAD, in creating Village Health and Hygiene Clubs (VHHCs) was shown to empower local communities with good health and hygiene practices, and in turn decrease the frequency of diarrhoea cases and other water-borne diseases. ACF decided to adopt this approach, based on a Participatory Health & Hygiene Promotion (PHHP) syllabus, to deliver its hygiene awareness messages.*

### THE PRACTICE

The process began by promoting the VHHCs to Village Health Workers (VHWs) informing them of the positive effects of membership. Once signed up VHWs were given membership cards with (positive) health messages. The VHWs were collected and trained for one week on PHHP and club management. The VHWs then returned to their respective communities, and mobilised the members to form health clubs. Attendance built up throughout the course of the syllabus, and often reached close to 100% participation of households. Beneficiaries that were actively engaged in the clubs after a full series of sessions (over approximately one year) became trainers/facilitators for new VHHCs.

The clubs worked on a few motivating factors for their success:

- **Pride, Peer Pressure & Competitiveness** between members. Members compete against each other for the most 'beautiful' home also involving the construction of hygiene enabling facilities.

- **Progress and sense of achievement.** Cards are checklists of the different sessions, each session is signed off, so the member can see their progress on the course, and once complete, they 'graduate' in a ceremony where certificates are provided.
- **Sense of belonging and social interaction** needs. Members are given membership cards which emphasise the collective feeling associated with a club. Meetings when members are able to interact with each other reinforce this feeling.

The VHHC model is now the standard PHHP method, and has gradually become the main entry points for all new rural WaSH programmes at community level in Zimbabwe. The impact of the VHHCs is also starting to show; there is a marked decrease in the prevalence of diarrhoea at household and village level. The project at hand established 177 VHHCs with a total of 3288 members. By 2014 ACF will have over 1800 clubs with potentially an estimated membership of 55,000.

### MOVING FORWARD

ACF will continue to support this approach by

- Developing partnerships (e.g. ZimAHEAD) and scale up VHHCs to all areas of ACF WaSH programming in rural Zimbabwe.
- Expanding the syllabus of the VHHCs to cover integrated topics such as IYCF/Nutrition promotion, environmental awareness, Disaster Risk Reduction, conservation, agricultural techniques, entrepreneurship training and IGAs, savings and micro credit systems.
- Developing the approaches to include social marketing of WaSH products and zero open defecation approaches based on localising experiences developed internationally for behavioural change.

To give VHHCs an on-going purpose, function and income, ACF also plans to link clubs with Income Generating Activities (IGAs). The club model and concept of a structured PHHP program is applicable to other contexts and should be actively promoted.



<sup>1</sup> VHWs, are officially recognised volunteers who report to Environmental Health Technicians (EHT) on a regular basis. The EHT gives action plans to the VHW and VHHC.

# Playing the long game: Seed multiplication associations in the Democratic Republic of Congo

Where state services are weak, ineffective or even non-existent, local associations form the first tier of the farming economy. In many areas of the DRC, for example, farming faces three challenges: a lack of access to good quality agricultural inputs including seed and other reproductive material; the absence of agricultural processing infrastructure such as mills, presses and post harvest storage facilities, and in some cases; the lack of access to agricultural markets due in part to degraded infrastructure and insecurity. As a result, farmers regularly obtain lower yields from their harvest, perpetuating levels of food insecurity. In this context, ACF set out to increase local agricultural production by supporting community seed multiplication associations, based on their proven potential to positively impact community agricultural production capacity.

## THE PRACTICE

Given the short duration of the project, ACF opted to support associations already in place or in the process of establishing themselves. Once the seed associations were identified (in collaboration with local officials) a general meeting was organised by each association to lay the foundations for the seed multiplication project. A partnership agreement was drawn-up between the group and ACF to ensure clear responsibilities. ACF provided support to the seed multiplication associations in the form of; 1) seed and farming equipment provision, 2) training on seed production, long-term investment, monitoring and technical surveys and, 3) on-going support to certain associations to overcome individual challenges. ACF also monitored the project at different stages (post distribution, post training and post harvest) in order to ensure the on-going effectiveness and relevance of the project.

### The seed associations then facilitated the following:

- The provision of quality seed and planting materials amongst members and the population via social networks (families, communities, churches etc.). Members of the seed associations have their own alternative economic activities and so to adequately reflect the different levels of time investment by members, participation was recorded and benefits allocated accordingly;

- The pooling of financial and human resources within the association to benefit from economies of scale;
- The sharing of land to enable greater collaboration on agricultural activities.

The development of production capacity increased crop yields and enabled a long-term market vision. This gave the communities enhanced economic power which firstly gave them access to markets, and secondly enabled them to store seed for the following season and for market purposes. With an increase in revenues the seed associations either re-invested in the development of long-term investment opportunities through shared Income Generating Activities (IGAs), or distributed profits amongst members, increasing individual disposable income. The seed associations enabled communities to come together to work on one common project and therefore enhanced social cohesion whilst maximising agricultural profits.

## MOVING FORWARD

To further increase the impact and scope of this practice ACF should work with technical personnel at State level and/or identify and train 'lead famers'. This would enable technical support to seed associations to continue after the end of the project. Secondly, to ensure the continued quality of the seeds obtained by the seed associations ACF should support the SENASEM (a State-run initiative) certification. Finally, ACF should extend the support provided to the associations to increase storage capacity for seeds and also provide more advanced business training to maximise the return on sales and IGAs.



# Raising nutrients: Growing a diverse range of vegetables in Zimbabwe



*Dietary diversity is key to improving and maintaining a good nutritional status. Many households in Zimbabwe, particularly rural households, grow vegetables in small kitchen gardens. However, the range of vegetables grown (and even bought or bartered for) is generally small, usually consisting of green leafy vegetables (most often rape), tomatoes and onions. ACF food security and livelihood programmes in Zimbabwe set out to change this by raising awareness of alternative options, and exploring viable ways of introducing a wider range of vegetables.*

## THE PRACTICE

The introduction and promotion of a diverse range of vegetables started by addressing common perceptions around some vegetables being a preserve of the better-off in the cities. Even though the acreage was small, farmers received training in intercropping and crop rotation thereby maximising returns from their small pieces of vegetable beds. ACF implemented this approach in three phases:

- 1. Get Buy-In.** The strategy for introducing additional vegetables into the gardens had a heavy training component designed to ensure that beneficiaries were aware of the value of having a greater variety of vegetables.
- 2. Introduce new vegetables gradually.** Interspersing new vegetables with ones beneficiaries were already familiar was seen as key to ensuring greater uptake.
- 3. Support Consumption.** Groups were given additional ideas and shown the use of new varieties. Exchange visits were done between gardens, with high-yielding gardens hosting visitors from other gardens. Additionally, cooking sessions were done once the vegetables were harvested, so that beneficiaries could explore different recipes that could be used with the new vegetables.

The garden groups involved in this project successfully took up the new varieties and succeeded in keeping them after the first season. The knowledge gained from trainings on nutrient diversity from different food groups helped beneficiaries recognise the value of the new products. Furthermore, the communities also appreciated the new varieties for their good taste. Finally, the experience of introducing new vegetables previously considered to be for the benefit of higher income households had a strong empowering effect on the rural communities involved in the programme.

## MOVING FORWARD

The ACF team in Zimbabwe have continued to employ this strategy of introducing new vegetables on other projects, and have recently started to expand the variety of vegetables even further to cover fruits and vegetables like strawberries, eggplant and Irish potatoes. Due to the recently improved market situation in the country (including increased availability of cash and some improvements in transport in rural areas), growing vegetables for selling at

the market has taken on increasing importance, and the opportunities for raising income as well as improving dietary diversity have improved considerably. This has further compelled beneficiaries to take a market approach to gardening, basing the types of vegetables grown on market research and responding to market demands. ACF's partnership with SNV (described earlier) will expand and strengthen the support provided to better reflect local market dynamics.



# Little by little: Cash distribution by instalments in Afghanistan



*The benefits of cash distribution in place of in-kind aid are well established within ACF and within the wider humanitarian sector. This method for supporting communities is cost-effective for the implementing agency (e.g. low logistics costs), empowering for the beneficiary and also stimulates local economies. However the methods used to distribute the cash vary and innovative approaches are constantly being explored. No matter how cash is transferred, questions remain of how much cash should be disbursed, the timing of the transfer and the size of each transfer. These all depend on the context and objectives of the project. In Afghanistan, ACF's Cash for Work (CFW) project needed to take into consideration another key variable; the need to transfer cash to beneficiaries in an insecure context.*

## THE PRACTICE

The project in Afghanistan was an emergency CFW project providing cash to; 1) increase the population's winter food reserves and; 2) cover the pre-harvest hunger gap in the spring. Therefore it was necessary to split the distribution in order to enable beneficiaries to benefit from the cash at critical times in the food cycle. Furthermore flexible timing was appropriate as hardships in food provision varied according to the level of yield and timing of the harvest.

This practice meant that the cash paid to beneficiaries was not given all at once. Cash grants were distributed in three instalments; a first part before the winter, a second part just after the winter and the last part at the end of spring. In the case of CFW this was done after key milestones when the works were completed. The aim was to encourage

recipients to continue working, as it provided a consistent incentive for beneficiaries to participate in activities until the end of the project period.

This strategy also reflected two additional concerns. First was security; providing beneficiaries with the full amount was known to increase the risk of theft. Security made the transportation of money difficult and lesser amounts are preferred by changers and others involved in the distribution. Second, the effect on local markets was also considered. The injection of cash into small rural markets can inflate the price of goods, causing the spending power of the cash distributed to be weakened and non-beneficiaries to become more prone to food insecurity. Finally market suppliers may increase prices speculatively in anticipation of the rise in demand as a result of the cash distribution.

## MOVING FORWARD

The distribution of cash in one single instalment can be suitable in some contexts. Deciding the most appropriate approach should take into account:

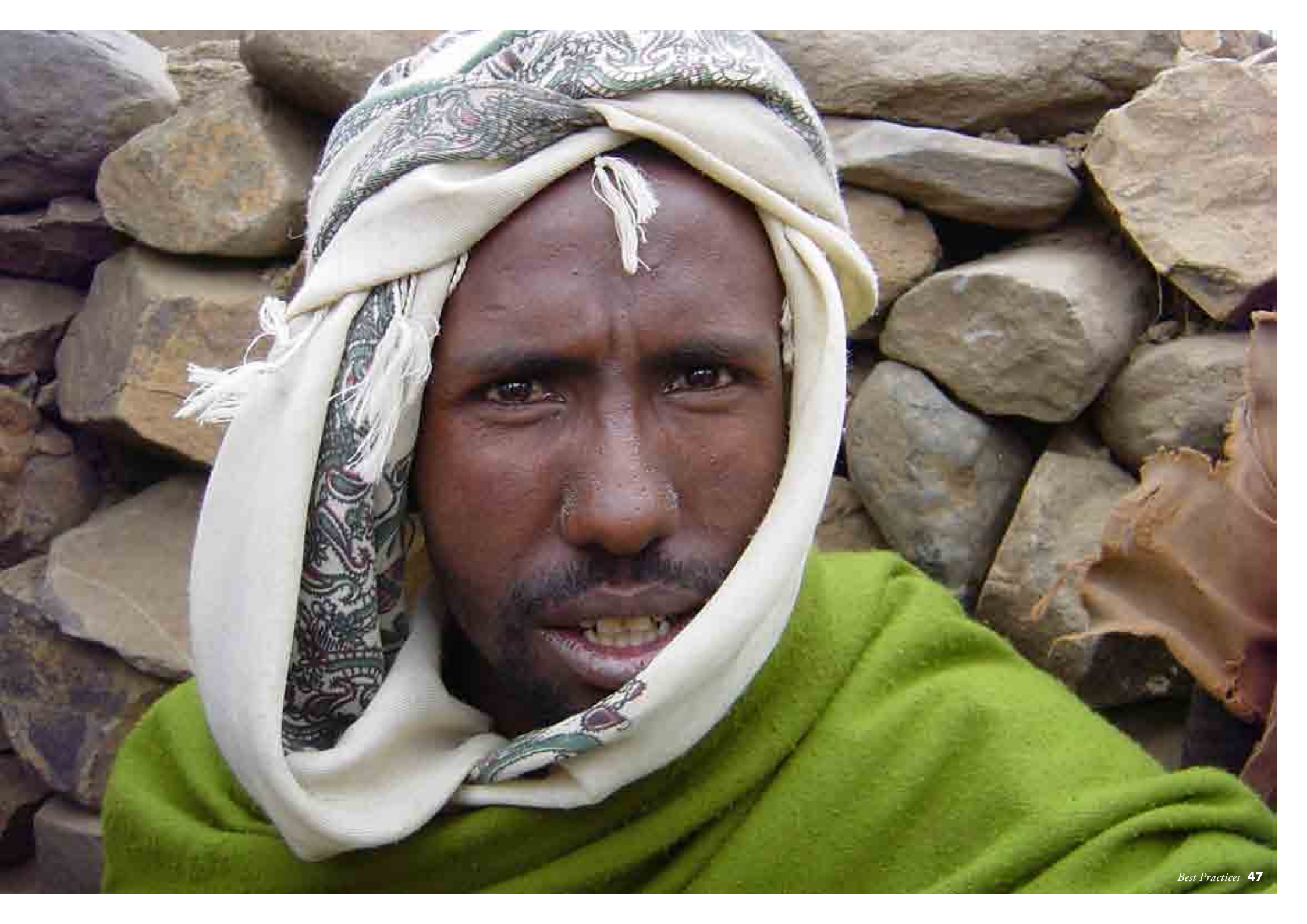
- **The objective of the project.** If the purpose of the cash transfer is to respond to emergency needs, the distribution in a number of small instalments would not impinge on the objective of the project. If the objective of the cash transfer is to respond to recovery and diversification of livelihoods (for example a loan for investment purposes), it may be necessary for the beneficiaries to receive all the cash in one instalment.
- **A thorough assessment.** It is important that a thorough needs assessment is done in order to evaluate the potential market response to the cash injection.
- **The security implications** of beneficiaries holding large sums of money and of ACF (or partner) transporting large sums of money.
- **The need to communicate** the purpose and details (in particular the length) of the project well with market actors in order to decrease the likelihood that suppliers put prices up in response to the increase in demand.

In order to have confidence that the cash is used in an appropriate manner, ACF must have confidence in the targeting as well as trust in the beneficiaries spending decisions. Whilst acknowledging the need to monitor the use of cash provided by ACF, the organisation must continue to empower beneficiaries to make their own spending decisions and to introduce projects that adapt to the needs of populations in each context.

**“Emphasis should always be placed on what is most appropriate for beneficiaries, not for service providers like ACF.”**

Photo courtesy of Floor Grootenhuys





# The road ahead:

## Establishing an exit strategy in advance in the Democratic Republic of Congo

*Nutrition projects in the DRC regularly face sustainability problems. Even CMAM programmes focusing primarily on capacity building (rather than direct implementation) find that soon after withdrawing from an area, the systems and structures put in place start to underperform. Programmes gradually record low admissions, logistics and supply systems begin to falter, formal and informal charges are introduced, and key community mobilisation activities (including sensitisation and case-finding) cease. Although ACF's emergency nutrition project was designed as a short-term intervention, the aim was to ensure the sustainability of some elements beyond the project period. To achieve this, the ACF project in North Kivu focused on the development of an exit strategy.*

### THE PRACTICE

By establishing an exit plan early in the project cycle, ACF was able to be both realistic and transparent about the future of the project. Rather than create resentment amongst the population (and other nutrition actors) by departing abruptly, ACF decided to involve stakeholders in the design of an exit strategy, a process that would ensure a comprehensive transfer of skills and responsibilities to the Ministry of Health (MoH). In practical terms the exit plan followed three key steps:

1. ACF, in collaboration with stakeholders (MoH and other nutrition actors) formulated a schedule for withdrawal. This included:
  - A schedule for training and a prior transfer of skills;
  - A time bound detailing of the transfer of responsibilities from one position to another;
  - A timeframe for the donation of materials and treatment items;
  - A progressively more prominent role for the partner within the management structure, the reporting duties and in the supervision of the project.

This dialogue ensured transparency about ACF's departure, enabling other stakeholders (MoH, but also other NGOs working in health structures where a nutrition project is implemented, local NGOs and community health workers involved in community sensitisation, etc.) to adjust their activities and fill in any potential gaps in services.

2. The Head of Mission (Chef de Mission) sent a 'letter of disengagement', with a schedule for withdrawal attached, to the Medical Officer of the Health Zone as well as all partners in the Nutrition Cluster. Giving sufficient prior notice enabled partners to plan and implement potential readjustment to their activities.
3. Strict adherence to the schedule and exist strategy developed.

Allowing all stakeholders the opportunity to be involved in the design of an exit strategy, also increased their ownership over different parts of the intervention, and the continuation of related activities beyond ACF's period of involvement. These included:

- Reinforcing the capacities of the established structures;
- Ensuring the advocacy and community mobilisation for the constant arrival of new cases;
- Guaranteeing the continued functionality of the nutrition centres;
- Allowing other actors to fill in the gaps in services where necessary.

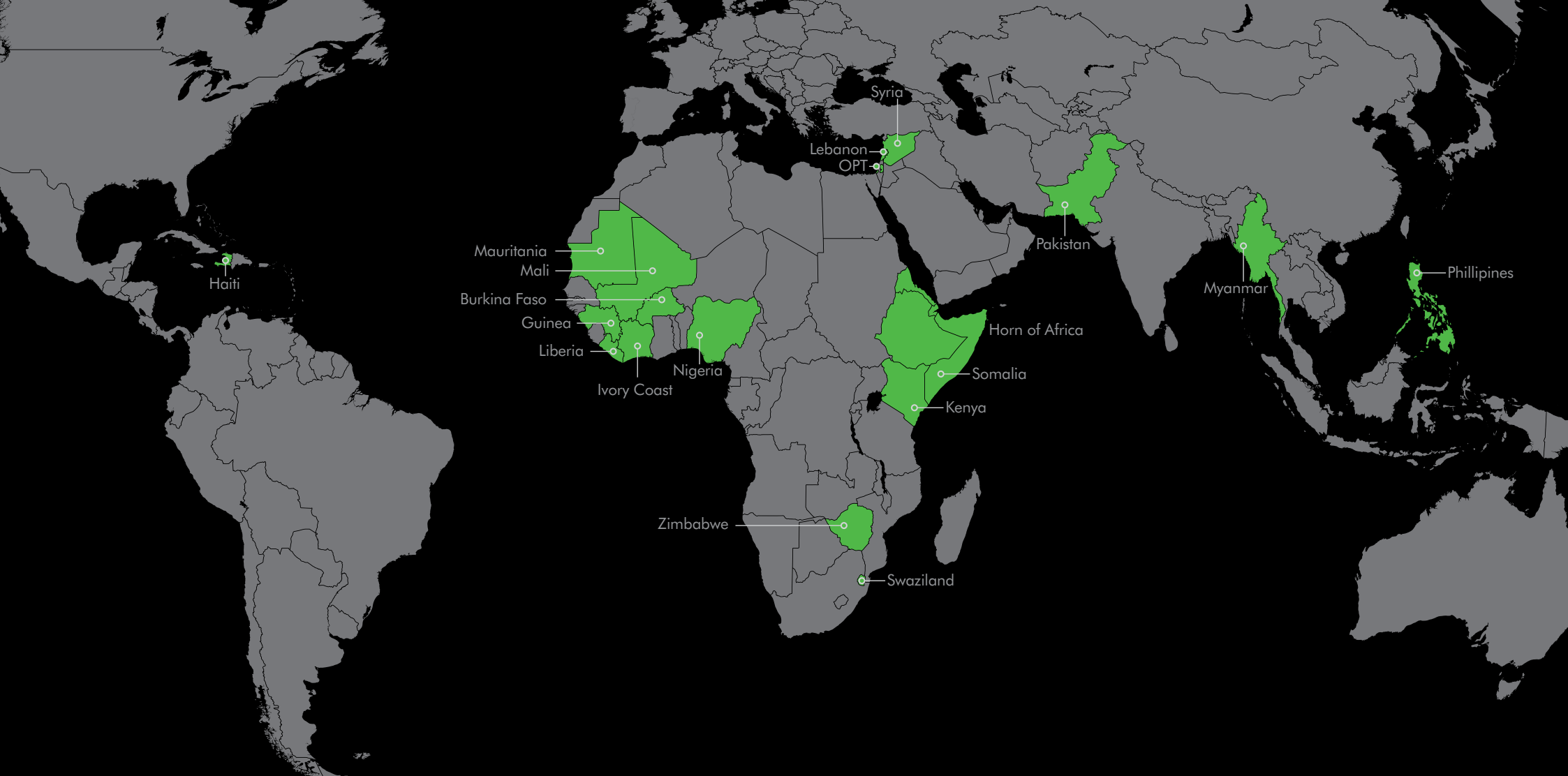
Although the practice is recommended in national policies, it is seldom implemented, and ACF has become one of the only members of the Nutrition Cluster to have introduced it.

### MOVING FORWARD

Active involvement of all stakeholders and partners of the Nutrition Cluster is needed in developing and implementing exit strategies. Poor communication between nutrition actors can be a challenge, but the success of exit strategies rests on the degree to which they are created in a participatory manner. Investing time in fostering and participating in coordination platforms should be prioritised.







## A Look Ahead: ACF International Evaluations in 2012

*Burkina Faso*  
WaSH

*Haiti*  
CBI, FSL

*Ivory Coast*  
CBI

*Lebanon*  
FSL

*Mali*  
Multi-Sectoral

*Myanmar*  
Multi-Sectoral,  
Nutrition

*oPT*  
FSL/WaSH,  
Multi-Sectoral

*Philippines*  
Multi-Sectoral

*Syria*  
FSL

*Guinea*  
FSL

*Horn of Africa*  
Emergency  
Response

*Kenya*  
Nutrition  
Nutrition/WaSH  
(x2)

*Liberia*  
WaSH

*Mauritania*  
Multi-Sectoral,  
FSL

*Nigeria*  
Nutrition

*Pakistan*  
Nutrition, WaSH,  
FSL, DRM

*Swaziland*  
Nutrition

*Zimbabwe*  
FSL

*Action Against Hunger's vision is of a world without hunger. A world in which all children and adults have sufficient food and water, equitable access to the resources that sustain life, and are able to attain these with dignity.*

*For more information about the evaluations featured in this review, please contact the Evaluations, Learning and Accountability (ELA) Unit at ACF-UK [evaluations@actionagainsthunger.org.uk](mailto:evaluations@actionagainsthunger.org.uk)*

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EUROPEAN COMMISSION



Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection



**ACTION HUNGER**

**Cash transfer components of two ACF projects in Sarawagan and Dayak Provinces**  
Final Government & Josephine Human, December 2011  
Funded by the Cash Learning Partnership/ECHO

**External Evaluation**  
Support to Vulnerable Women's Opportunities of Tourism Development in Cambodia  
July 2011

**ACTION HUNGER**

**Evaluation Externe**  
Implication des populations dans le renforcement durable de l'Assainissement Rural  
Février 2011  
Congo

**ACTION HUNGER**

**External Evaluation**  
ACF Community Based Management of Acute Malnutrition Program in Somalia  
July 2011

**External Evaluation**  
ACF Provision of Food Aid and Livelihood Disaster Intervention to the Most Dzaud-Affected Herders in Somalia  
Antony S Penney, June 2011

**External Evaluation**  
Sustainable Improvement of the Living with HIV  
June 2011

**External Evaluation**  
Emergency Nutrition, Health and WASH Interventions for conflict-affected population in South Central Somalia  
Wim Klaassen, September 2011  
Funded by ECHO

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**External Evaluation**  
Completion of the Effectiveness of Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food  
November 2011

**Evaluation Externe**  
Impact de Renforcement des Capacités Locales de Prise en Charge de la Malnutrition Aigue dans la Region de Mogadishu  
Février 2011  
Funded by ECHO  
Mly Tayeal Mehi, novembre 2011

**ACTION HUNGER**

**External Evaluation**  
Emergency Response in Somalia  
August 2011

Features Emergency R August 2010



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