# Foreword

**Sean Lawrie**
Director
**Start Network**

**I first encountered Action Against Hunger last Century in a remote part of Cote D'Ivoire along the border with Liberia. The team was helping to stabilise the health of refugees that had fled Liberia's cruel civil war. I was working for another organisation at the time, and we all shared a deep sense of purpose which was reinforced by our daily contact with the refugees and their local hosts. The Action Against Hunger team was inspirational: smart, fast, focussed and brave.**

Twenty years later, I encountered Action Against Hunger once again. This time in London, in a world irrevocably changed, with the pace of change escalating beyond comprehension. Action Against Hunger was a founding member of the NGO Network to which I had just been recruited and had just established the use of feedback, evidence and learning as routine practice in the new Network. While the context was fundamentally different from my first encounter with Action Against Hunger, the staff and organisation were the same: smart, fast, focussed and brave.

### Capturing good practices and innovating for the future
The Start Network, a consortium of 27 leading international NGOs, connects people in crisis with the best possible solutions. It is based on a realisation that the challenges humanity faces today are systemic in nature and cannot be addressed by any single organisation alone.

Action Against Hunger has become an early adopter of this new way of working that spans organisational boundaries. In fact, the Start Network would not have a learning programme at all had it not been for Action Against Hunger. In 2010, Action Against Hunger politely insisted that the Start Network pilot should have a separate learning component and since then it has consistently brought forward ideas about how the Network can better incorporate evidence into its decision-making and programme design.

Last year, Action Against Hunger provided the monitoring, evaluation and learning services for all of the Start Network's projects - a massive and highly visible undertaking and one of the largest ever investments in learning from the past to prepare for future disasters. The evidence that is generated from this programme alone could influence how the community of humanitarian organisations transforms itself into a more decentralised locally-led system; and thereby evolve in step with a rapidly changing world.

### Meeting the challenges of working in a fast changing world
Organisations don't like uncertainty. People don't like the pain that comes with change. Therefore, I feel we need to learn how to acquire the emotional skills for operating in a turbulent and fast changing world. For me, one of the great contemporary challenges is in acquiring individual and organisational intelligence to effectively manage the emotions that accompany learning. I believe it is in this area where the Action Against Hunger Learning Review will generate most value in the years to come.

I believe that what Action Against Hunger is saying in this Learning Review has legitimacy for several reasons. First, as a network itself, Action Against Hunger's incentives align with the way the world works. The information in this review is founded in a realistic perception of the structures that create and address human vulnerability. Second, the transparency in this review about results, successes and failures over the past year will enable Action Against Hunger to be held accountable by its stakeholders to ensure the organisation is evolving appropriately. Third, this review throws down a gauntlet to other humanitarian actors - not just NGOs but governments and donor agencies - about the evidence and systems upon which they base their decision-making. It can only be a good thing if we are inspired by Action Against Hunger to ensure our decisions are based on evidence, and that organisations are actually learning.

I'm honoured to introduce and recommend this year's Learning Review. You will encounter in the following pages nothing less than enlightening data visualisation, brilliant analysis, challenging findings and strategic recommendations.

Photo: Selibabi, courtesy Sylvain Cherkaoui

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# Introduction

**Alexia Deleligne**
Senior Programme Quality Assurance Advisor

Evaluation, Learning and Accountability Manager

**Action Against Hunger-UK**

2015 has been a great year of collaboration for the Evaluation, Learning and Accountability team. We have established strong and enjoyable cooperation across the network. This is positively reflected in the content of this year's edition of the Learning Review. The publication was prepared in a highly participatory manner relying on the generous inputs from across the network. With the experience of last year and the development of the new Evaluation Policy and Guidelines, we were also able to improve the quality and accuracy of the analysis.

Last year's new design of the Learning Review was very much praised, therefore we decided to keep the new colourful and positive look! The content is structured around the same three sections: (i) a meta-analysis of centralised project evaluations conducted in 2015, (ii) a selection of articles discussing hot topics and new approaches, and (iii) a set of good practices selected on their quality and potential to improve ongoing and future interventions.

The first section presents a summary of selected Action Against Hunger projects performances through the adapted Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria. For each criterion, a description of how the performance was measured through areas of enquiries, as well as an illustration of the performance against the criterion is presented. A summary and a short analysis of the criteria ratings together with a note of caution on the ratings follows. The section ends with some follow-up updates to the recommendations that were formulated in 2014 to improve evaluations. This is the perfect read if you are curious about our strengths and weaknesses or want to learn about conducting quality evaluations!

The second section is a compilation of articles on hot topics in the network. They touch upon means and modalities for delivering operations, improving monitoring, evaluation and learning in projects and humanitarian networks. All articles encourage discussion around success, failure and offer a constructive and practical way forward. This selection of articles should give you food for thought!

The third section presents a set of good practices which emerged not only from centralised evaluations but also other sources not considered before such as internal evaluations, HQ's fundraising campaigns and donor letters. These good practices have been carefully selected for their quality. They all have the potential to be replicated or scaled-up across the network. Make sure you identify those that could be integrated into your ongoing and upcoming activities!

Enjoy the reading and feel free to contact the team if you have any questions on the content or suggestions for improvements.

Photo: Nepal, courtesy Daniel Burgui

# Action Against Hunger Evaluations in 2015

## NUMBER OF ACTION AGAINST HUNGER EVALUATIONS BY YEAR AND HQ
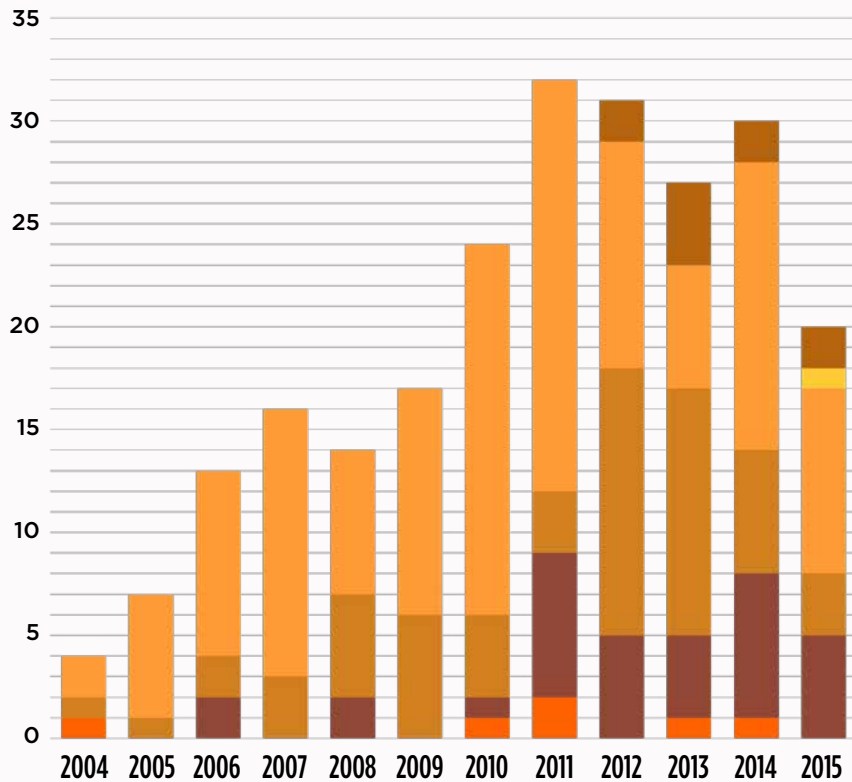


**Legend:**
- Action Against Hunger International[1]
- Action Against Hunger - Canada
- Action Against Hunger - France
- Action Against Hunger - Spain
- Action Against Hunger - UK
- Action Against Hunger - USA

[1]Involving more than one ACF HQ.

## EUROS SPENT ON EVALUATION BY DONOR FUNDING THE PROJECT [2]



Local Institutions
€ 11,049

United Nations Funds
€ 18,416

Action Against Hunger/
Governments and
the European Union
€ 19,000

5%   8%   8%

232,045

79%

Governments and the European Union
€ 183,580
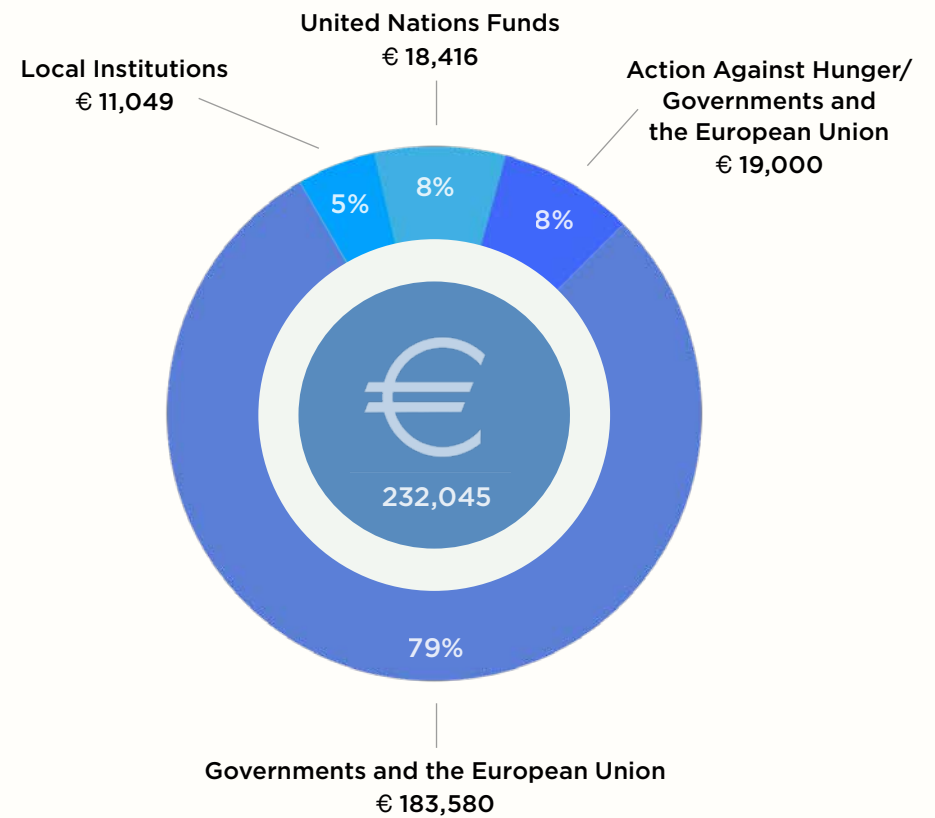
All amounts converted into Euro, based on Action Against Hunger International Network Exchange Rate during the month of February 2016

[2]Excluding Joint Evaluations, Self-Evaluations, Country Strategy Evaluations and Real-Time Evaluations.

## AVERAGE EVALUATION SPENDING BY ACTION AGAINST HUNGER IN 2015
### (IN EURO, PER TYPE OF EVALUATION, PER SECTOR) [3]



THOUSANDS OF EURO
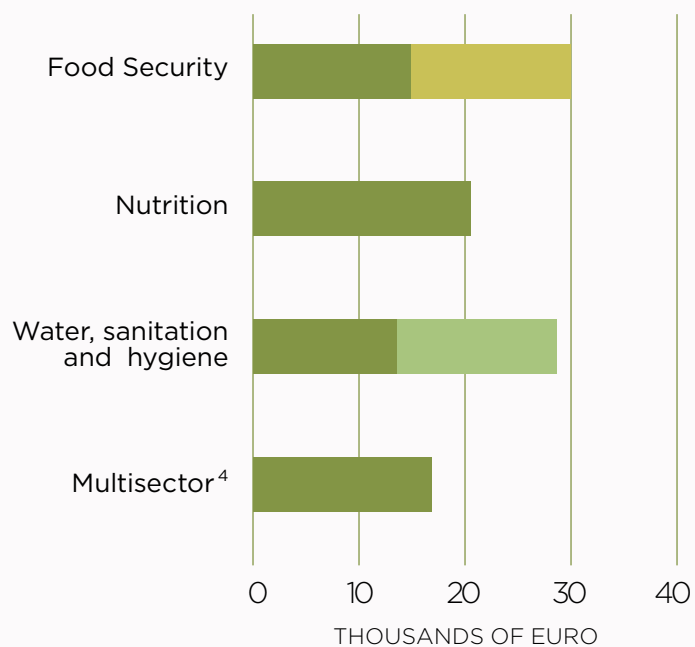
- Independent Final Project Evaluation
- Independent Mid-term Project Evaluation
- Real-Time Evaluation

[3] Excluding: Joint Evaluations, Self-Evaluations and Country Strategy Evaluations.
[4] Involving more than two sectors.

## EVALUATIONS BY COUNTRY [5]

**AFRICA 11**

**BURKINA FASO**
Food Security 2
Water, sanitation and hygiene 1
3

**CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC**
Water, sanitation and hygiene
1

**DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO**
Nutrition 1
Food Security/Nutrition 1
2

**MAURITANIA**
Food Security/Livelihood/Water, sanitation and hygiene
1

**WEST AFRICA**
Food Security/Health/Nutrition/Advocacy
1

**NIGERIA**
Food Security/Livelihood/Water, sanitation and hygiene
1

**SIERRA LEONE**
Food Security/Livelihood/Nutrition
1

**SOMALIA**
Food Security/Livelihood/Nutrition/Water, sanitation and hygiene
1

**ASIA 2**

**PAKISTAN**
Water, sanitation and hygiene/Food Security/Livelihood
2

**GLOBAL 1**

**GLOBAL**
Water, sanitation and hygiene/Food Security/Livelihood
1

**TOTAL 14**

[5] Excluding: Joint Evaluations, Self-Evaluations, Country Strategy Evaluations and Real-Time Evaluations.

# The Evaluations and the Evaluators

**PERFORMANCE**

### Regional Strategy Self-Evaluation

**Charlotte Fontaine**

*Burkina Faso, Chad, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone*
West Africa Operational Strategy 2011-2015

### Country Strategy Independent Final Evaluation

**Jeff Duncalf**

*Zimbabwe*
Action Against Hunger
Zimbabwe Country Office

### Independent Final Joint Evaluation

**Anne Boutin**

*Mali*
Projet d'appui à la diversification de l´alimentation à Banamba, Mali (PADABA)

### Independent Final Project Evaluation

**Christine Bousquet**

*Democratic Republic of the Congo*
Réhabilitation nutritionnelle d'urgence et renforcement des moyens d'existence des populations vulnérables dans les zones de Zanté de Kingandu et Mosango, province du Bandundu, République démocratique du Congo

Pool d´urgences nutrition République démocratique du Congo (PUNC II)

**Zlatan Čelebić**

*Mauritania*
Réponse humanitaire à la crise des réfugiés maliens en Mauritanie

**Tristan Dumas**

*Burkina Faso*
Food Security Thematic Program (FSTP) Tapoa, Burkina Faso

**Komi Kpeglo**

*Burkina, Niger, Sierra Leone*
Programme de renforcement de la sécurité nutritionnelle maternelle et infantile dans la région d'Afrique de l'Ouest

**Bernd Leber**

*Nigeria*
Humanitarian Multi- Sectorial Rapid Response Mechanism, Yobe State, Nigeria
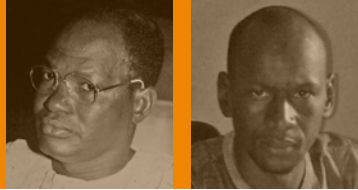
**Gigliola Pantera**

*Global*
Improvement of Inter-Agency Coordination and Management of Emergency Nutrition Assessment Information through SMART

**Saeed Ullah**

*Pakistan*
Humanitarian Support to Vulnerable Populations in Pakistan

## Independent Mid-term Project Evaluation



**Mahamar Hamadi, Garba Kebe**

*Mali*
Programme du cadre commun pour l'eau, l'hygiène et l'assainissement reliant urgence, reconstruction et développement au Nord Mali



**Alex Jaggard, Naw Bway Pale Paw, Andrew Whitehead**

*Myanmar*
SUSTAIN Programme, Sustainable Approaches for Improved Nutrition.



**Nicolas Riviere**

*Burkina Faso*
Programme de renforcement de la résilience des populations pauvres et très pauvres et amélioration de la sécurité alimentaire et nutritionnelle dans la province de la Gnagna (PROGRES)



**Aurélie Girard**

*Central African Republic*
Réponse d'urgence en eau, assainissement et hygiène à la crise humanitaire à Bossangoa, République centrafricaine



**Yvan Grayel**

*Burkina Faso*
Mobilisation des acteurs locaux en eau, assainissement et hygiène pour la réalisation des objectifs du millénaire dans la Tapoa, Burkina Faso



**Mohamed Ali Gure**

*Somalia*
Integrated Emergency Response to Drought and Conflict Affected Population in South-Central Somalia

## Real-Time Evaluation

**PROCESS**





**Zaki Ullah**

*Pakistan*
Humanitarian Support to Vulnerable Populations in Pakistan

Safe Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Support for Flood Affected Community in Pakistan



**Kathleen Webb**

*Sierra Leone*
Reinforcing Institutional Capacity for Treatment of Acute Malnutrition, Prevention of Malnutrition in Freetown Peninsula, Western area and National Sensitisation for Nutrition Security in Sierra Leone

**Bjoern Ternstrom**

*Nepal*
Nepal Earthquake Response

# PART I  Evaluation Criteria Analysis

# Introduction

## Evaluating Action Against Hunger Performance through the DAC Lens

This section shares the findings of the **meta-analysis of evaluations** conducted between 16th December 2014 and 1st January 2016. It provides an idea of areas in which selected projects are performing well, where they should maintain their gains and draw on strength in future interventions. It also presents areas in which Action Against Hunger has some gaps, where it needs to build its capacity and improve its approach in future interventions.

This year projects have been evaluated using an adapted set of the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria. This set of criteria incorporated **design** as a key factor influencing the implementation of the intervention and the quality of the evaluation. Due to the nature of these interventions, the methods used to generate evaluation findings and the resources available for measuring the impact criterion it was decided to rename the impact criterion 'Likelihood of Impact'. The decision was also made to merge **Sustainability** and **Likelihood of Impact** as one criterion because the two are interrelated.

The evaluation analysis section is structured around the following **evaluation criteria**: (i) **Design**, (ii) **Relevance and Appropriateness**, (iii) **Coherence**, (iv) **Coverage**, (v) **Efficiency**, (vi) **Effectiveness** and; (vii) **Sustainability and Likelihood of Impact**.

This year the evaluators have again been requested to **rate the intervention using this set of criteria** from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent). This section provides the average rating achieved for each of the seven criteria for 14 out of the 22 evaluations conducted in 2015 under the management of the Evaluation, Learning and Accountability team at Action Against Hunger - UK[6]. This is a small sample of projects which is not necessarily representative of all the Action Against Hunger interventions, rather it gives a general idea of areas of performance and scope for improvement in selected interventions.

For each of the criterion there is a brief introduction to how it has been measured by the evaluators followed by **examples** of how Action Against Hunger's interventions in various contexts have determined the collective performance of the organisation and The **Wrap** which presents key recommendations for the way forward.

At the end of the section, a summary presents the **DAC analysis in a nutshell** together with an updated **note on ratings**. There are also some general recommendations on how the Evaluation, Learning and Accountability team has improved evaluation practice based on learning from last year and a set of **recommendations** for improvement in future evaluations.

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[6] The following eight evaluations were excluded as they were not Action Against Hunger project evaluations: 'Zimbabwe Country Office Country Strategy Final Independent Evaluation', 'West Africa Operational Strategy 2011-2015 Regional Strategy Self-Evaluation', 'Projet d'appui à la diversification de l'alimentation à Banamba, Mali (PADABA) Independent Final Joint Evaluation', 'Programme du cadre commun pour l'eau, l'hygiène et l'assainissement reliant urgence, reconstruction et développement au Nord Mali Independent Final Joint Evaluation', 'Nepal Earthquake Response Real-Time Evaluation', 'SUSTAIN Programme. Sustainable Approaches for improved nutrition Independent Final Joint Evaluation', 'Start Fund 6 month 'Design and Build' Phase External Independent Evaluation', 'Start Fund (8 crises responses) Independent External Evaluation'.

# Design

*"A measure of whether the design is logical, allows for results-based management and includes a sustainability strategy involving local partners and beneficiaries"*

**DAC RATING AVERAGES BY YEAR**

(3.4)

2011    2012    2013    2014    2015
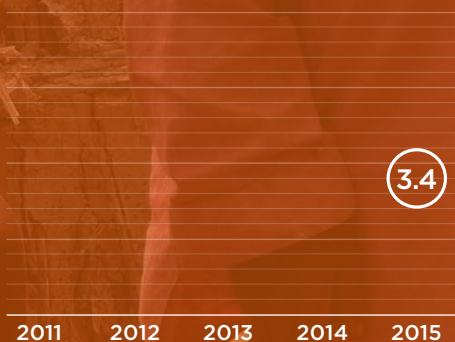
## Measuring it

The quality of design is a crucial starting point for every project, and thus an important area for evaluation. While the process includes various steps, evaluations focused specifically on two areas of inquiry; (i) the **intervention logic**, including causality, internal alignment, and specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound objectives and; (ii) **gender mainstreaming**. These were complemented by relevant questions for each evaluation.

Most of the evaluations reviewed included a separate design section. To determine the strength of the project design, different areas of inquiry have been used including: (i) integration of gender in the project design; (ii) quality of the logical framework; (iii) the causal-effect links between project and intended results and how realistic these hypothesis were and; (iv) alignment between the stated objectives and the design. Other areas considered were: linkages to other initiatives; accountability; innovation and cultural sensitivity.

## Achieving it

The overall score achieved for this criterion **(3.4)** is one of the **lowest among the criteria set**.

Two water sanitation and hygiene programmes in Pakistan reported that **available inputs** for the project **were inadequate for the scope of activities planned**, thus showing a weak link between design and available inputs. An evaluation of a food security, livelihoods and nutrition project in the Democratic Republic of the Congo described weak links between the project design and likelihood of achieving the intended results. Firstly, it was noted that Action Against Hunger had relatively little experience in some of the project areas, suggesting that some activities were over-ambitious. Secondly, while the project

benefited from Action Against Hunger's experience in the area of implementation, **a comprehensive situation analysis did not take place** and several activities did not meet all needs. This highlights that, while building on past experiences is a strong starting point, each project design should take into account the unique circumstances in which it operates. Finally, one project evaluation noted that the **project's objectives were too ambitious compared with the available time**.

In relation to the logical framework, a water sanitation and hygiene project in Central African Republic had indicators that were selected from a donor's list. They could not adapt to the context of the project which limited their relevance. A multisector programme in West Africa reported that **there were no targets for most indicators** in the logical framework, while an evaluation of a food security, livelihoods and nutrition project in Sierra Leone found that **indicators were not measurable** and the targets unattainable. Finally, two evaluations reported that some indicators did not cover the full scope of activities implemented, or the realization of the desired outcomes.

Most evaluations reported on gender in relation to data collection and reporting (i.e. sex-disaggregated data), but less so on whether gender mainstreaming was included in the full project cycle. An evaluation of a global nutrition and capacity building programme reported gender sensitive programming and compliance with Action Against Hunger's International Gender Policy. **Data were regularly sex-disaggregated** and showed that women and men equally received support from the project. Similarly, evaluations of two multisector projects reported that sex-disaggregated data was collected. In relation to gender awareness, an evaluation of a project in Nigeria reported that **more awareness-raising and capacity building on gender mainstreaming was needed** for local staff. Finally, two evaluations specifically looked at how gender was integrated in different project activities. The first found

that gender mainstreaming was not integrated in the project design but was introduced during implementation, and that improvements in the quality of activities were reported as a result. The second example described efforts to achieve gender equality by ensuring women and girls are represented in all project levels.

Two water sanitation and hygiene projects in Pakistan reported that **an exit strategy was integrated into the project design**. The first project introduced clear steps for handing over to the community, or to ensure that the items constructed will continue functioning. The second project worked closely with government counterparts to ensure they could take over when the project ends.

### THE WRAP

A strong project design should include needs assessments, stakeholder analysis, and developing a logical framework. A comprehensive logical framework allows tracking and assessment of whether an intervention has a systematic structure for identifying, planning, implementing and managing projects.



Photo: Pakistan, courtesy Saeed Ullah Khan

# Relevance and Appropriateness

*"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"*

**DAC RATING AVERAGES BY YEAR**

| 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
|------|------|------|------|------|
| 4.3 | 3.9 | 4.1 | 4.3 | 4.0 |
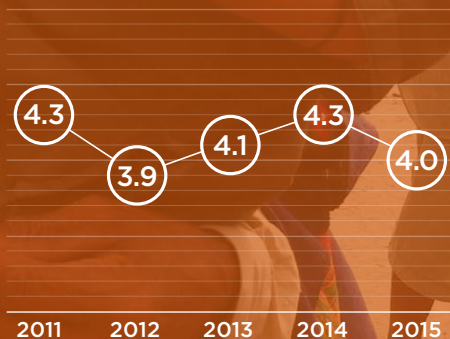
## Measuring it

Most evaluations enquired **whether the programme had met the needs of the communities served**. Other areas of inquiry included (i) the **degree of involvement of the community** during the planning and implementation of the project; (ii) the **project alignment with donor policy**; (iii) the **synergies between the project and other ongoing initiatives** and; (iv) **project sensitivity to local customs**. Few evaluations enquired whether the objectives of the project were in line with government agenda or whether the activities and delivery mechanisms were appropriate. Finally, other areas of inquiry included whether Action Against Hunger's contribution was adding value (as opposed to other internal or external actors) or whether there were any steps taken to secure community ownership.

The **data collection tools used to review this criterion were all qualitative** as expected, including documentary review, interviews and focus group discussions with relevant stakeholders and, less commonly, field observations.

## Achieving it

This overall score for this criterion **(4.0)** is the **highest of the seven criteria** measured, as in 2014, however there was a slight decrease from the previous year. Generally, the analysis shows good performance in relation to implementing relevant and appropriate interventions, by **responding to currents needs and priorities** of the communities served, and doing so while **respecting the social and cultural context**.

Evaluations with the highest scores noted that interventions were relevant to community needs, similar initiatives, or government strategies. An evaluation of a water, sanitation and hygiene project in Pakistan attributed the relevance of activities to the **detailed assessment conducted prior to implementation. Communities were also involved in the selection of sites** for construction which contributed towards greater relevance. Indeed, the evaluation found that the community as a whole considered the interventions relevant and appropriate.

**Community participation in needs assessment was a common theme among the projects which received high ratings** for this criterion. An evaluation of another water, sanitation and hygiene project in Pakistan described community participation in the needs assessment; a survey with women from the community was conducted to determine their key priorities, and the activities were designed accordingly. On the contrary, an evaluation of a water, sanitation and hygiene project in Central African Republic noted that the intervention would have been more relevant if the community would have participated in the needs assessment. Finally, an evaluation of a nutrition, food security and livelihoods intervention in the Democratic Republic of the Congo highlighted that while the project responded to the needs of targeted communities, specific issues that affect people in the different areas of implementation were not considered.

An interesting example from a nutrition, food security and livelihoods project in Sierra Leone showed **links with government priorities** as it was noted that the intervention was in line with the government implementation plans in three areas. During interviews with the Ministry of Health, it was highlighted that **the project added value to the Nutrition and Food Security Implementation Plan** by including specific priority areas such as; (i) advocacy for food and nutrition security; (ii) promotion and facilitation of adequate national and household food security and; (iii) adoption of feeding practices for vulnerable groups.

**Adaptability was also seen as a positive factor** when assessing relevance. To follow a no-touch policy as a precaution against contracting Ebola in a multisector

project in West Africa, screening activities were adapted. In this case the mid-upper arm circumference measurement used to identify malnourished children was done directly by caregivers rather than project staff.

**Cultural appropriateness and consideration of local traditions** were highlighted as good practices when assessing appropriateness. A multisector project in West Africa demonstrated **adaptation to local traditions and customs** and was indeed among the highest scoring evaluations for this criterion. For example, community mobilization and awareness activities followed the village tradition, with the village chief authorizing activities and leading the call for community's support. In addition, traditional healers were given the mid-upper arm circumference measurement bands as they were traditionally the ones consulted by caregivers when a child was ill. At the same time, the evaluation showed the **tension** that could arise **between respecting local customs and achieving the project's objectives**. Some caregivers were concerned that sending their children for screening or treatment would stigmatize the family. The project therefore targeted village chiefs, religious leaders or community volunteers who helped to sensitise the families. This example shows that when children's health was in danger the project took measures that may be seen as inappropriate but would otherwise undermine the wellbeing of the community served.

**THE WRAP**

A thorough needs assessment is the basis of ensuring relevance and appropriateness. This requires the participation of communities and consideration of local customs and traditions.

Photo: Pakistan, courtesy Saeed Ullah Khan

# Coherence

*"A measure of whether interventions are consistent with existing interventions, global and national policies and strategies to ensure consistency, maximize synergies and minimize duplication"*
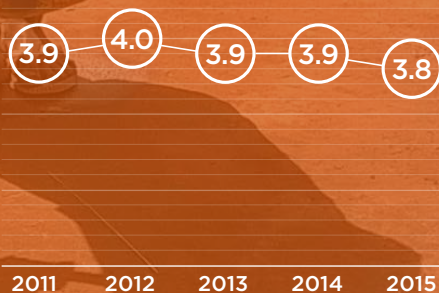
## Measuring it

The measurement of coherence in evaluations focussed mainly on the **coherence between the intervention** and (i) **national policies** and **strategies**; (ii) **other Action Against Hunger interventions**; (iii) **the** Country Office strategy; (iv) **other organisation's interventions** in the area of intervention, and; (v) **donor strategies or approaches**.

**All data collection methods** used to measure the criterion were **qualitative**. The most common data collection methods used were (i) **interviews and/or key informant interviews with** project staff, implementing partners, United Nations organisations, and Governments, (ii) **desk reviews** and in few instances, the (iii) **review of field intervention data**.

## Achieving it

Coherence received the **second best score among the criteria set (3.8)**. This is a slight decrease compared to 2014 and the criterion score has been fairly constant since 2011. It is important to bear in mind that the scores for this year might be underestimated, as aspects not directly linked to coherence (e.g. coordination and stakeholders' participation in the project design and implementation) have been considered to rate this criterion.

Most interventions were coherent with national policies and strategies, other Action Against Hunger interventions and country strategies and donor strategies. The most recurrent issues for improvement related to the **lack of coordination among different actors**, which **prevented synergies** and **effectiveness** of the interventions.

The **high involvement of state institutions** and **written**

agreements regulating these appeared as key factors for the **achievement of external coherence**[7] **across evaluations**. A food and nutrition security project in Tapoa, Burkina Faso had strong internal and external coherence. First, the evaluation found **strong geographical and thematic consistency and complementarity with other Action Against Hunger interventions** in the region. This coherence was shaped over the span of several consecutive interventions since 2010 when floods hit the northern provinces of the country. Second, the project built **strong partnership with local actors** through a "Protocole de collaboration" at the provincial level and a "Conventions de Partenariat" with towns, which enabled the project to fit within existing institutional frameworks. Another food and nutrition security project in Freetown peninsula, Sierra Leone, was found to have good **external coherence**. The project showed strong consistency with the national "Food and nutrition implementation plan" and **strong involvement of national institutions** which was formalized through a **written agreement of collaboration**. The agreement **specified clear roles and responsibilities** of the different actors which was a key factor in the Ministry of Health taking coordination role with the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) initiative.

A water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), food security and livelihoods project in Yobe State, Nigeria reported that WASH national **policies** were **not always aligned with humanitarian international standards such as SPHERE**. This highlighted the challenges in ensuring coherence when there is a lack of harmonization between national country policies and international standards.

A water, sanitation and hygiene project in the Sindh Province of Pakistan utilised a participatory design process involving the local government in the selection of villages for the project. Local government also took part in the supervision of water and sanitation activities and in the

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### DAC RATING AVERAGES BY YEAR

| 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
|------|------|------|------|------|
| 3.9 | 4.0 | 3.9 | 3.9 | 3.8 |

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[7] We understand "internal coherence" as the alignment among the intervention being evaluated and other Action Against Hunger interventions. We understand "external coherence" as the level of alignment among the intervention being evaluated and interventions by other organisations.

provision of continued monitoring and technical support to the communities. Despite the good design process, the project was unable to engage the local government in the monitoring and long term technical support roles. This was mainly due to the absence of an agreement and **unclear definition of various government department roles** such as municipal administrations and public health engineering departments. Various organisations working in the WASH sector faced the same challenge.

## THE WRAP

Formal collaboration agreements with local governmental institutions often led to stronger coherence. Written agreements tended to foment a bigger commitment and provide clarity on respective roles and responsibilities, creating stronger synergies between each actor.



Photo: Central African Republic, courtesy Aurélie Girard

# Coverage

**DAC RATING AVERAGES BY YEAR**



3.3 — 2011
3.4 — 2012
3.5 — 2013
3.7 — 2014
3.4 — 2015

## Measuring it

To assess the coverage of a project, most evaluations examined the **targeting criteria** and the **selection process of beneficiaries** used by the project.

Almost all evaluations enquired **whether the selection criteria and targeting mechanism were appropriate and adequate to meet the projects' objectives**. Evaluations also considered **whether the most vulnerable people were included**. Other areas of inquiry included: (i) the coordination with other humanitarian actors to cover gaps that the project cannot address; (ii) whether the coverage was sufficient (including geographical area); (iii) transparent and unbiased selection process and; (iv) gender balance in the selection of beneficiaries. Finally, one evaluation enquired whether stakeholders were consulted in order to define the selection criteria.

Evaluations used different tools to assess this criterion, including document and database reviews, interviews with partners and project teams, surveys with beneficiaries, and occasionally direct observations.

## Achieving it

The overall score achieved for this criterion **(3.4)** is one of the **lowest among the criteria set**, representing a decrease from the previous two years.

The evaluation of a nutrition project in the Democratic Republic of the Congo highlighted that although efforts were made to meet demand in a wide geographic area, **coverage was inadequate**. It was also noted that **the most vulnerable groups** such as young children from 0 to 5 years old, **did not receive enough support**. At the same time, the evaluation of a water, sanitation and hygiene project in Burkina Faso suggested that the **targeting**

criteria did not specifically seek to identify the most vulnerable groups. At the same time, the evaluation of a food security project also in Burkina Faso mentioned that differences in vulnerability and exposure to risks were not sufficiently taken into account.

The evaluation of a multisector project in Somalia provided an insight to one of the **possible reasons for weak coverage**. It was noted that coverage was limited given the **funding constraint** vis-à-vis the proportion of vulnerable population requiring assistance. The evaluation of a nutrition, food security and livelihoods project in the Democratic Republic of the Congo noted that meeting the needs of all vulnerable groups was constrained by the **availability of resources**. The same evaluation acknowledged that it was hard to come up with an adequate method for targeting given the limited **availability of information**. For example, in order to suggest appropriate interventions for households living in extreme poverty, the project would have benefited from a **mapping of livelihoods by socio-economic groups and areas of intervention**. It was also noted that some of the **selection criteria** were **too complex and subjective**. It was suggested that having a clear **communication strategy** of the vulnerability criteria would help minimize wrong inclusion of households.

On the contrary, an examination of the highest scoring projects in this criterion showed that the **targeting** was **based on vulnerability criteria**. The evaluation of a water, sanitation and hygiene project in Pakistan showed that **a comprehensive vulnerability criteria was established** to cover **multisector and crosscutting issues** and was developed **in line with Action Against Hunger International Gender Policy**. This was informed by a prior knowledge, attitude and practices survey that outlined the priority needs of the communities, with detailed age and sex-disaggregated data. The evaluation of a second project in Pakistan noted that **the project provided services in the worst affected districts**. Targeting was

similarly based on surveys that helped identifying those affected by crisis.

Finally, the analysis **showed mixed trends** with regard to the **transparency** of the **selection process** and its **participatory nature**. One evaluation noted that households were not consistently aware of the selection criteria except for poverty, which seemed to be a common theme. During the evaluation exercise it was discovered that **80% of the households were not clear on why they have received the "easy" latrine**. An evaluation of a food security project in Burkina Faso highlighted that the process to identify beneficiaries was **rigorous and highly participatory**. Social welfare officers, village authorities and the communities were systematically included in the process. **Targeting committees** and **complaints mechanism were established**, and village assemblies launched and validated the selection process.

## THE WRAP

Coverage is an area that still requires more attention in future programming within Action Against Hunger's network. Positive examples highlighted the importance of ensuring clear criteria for identifying those in need, and the importance of targeting through a participatory and transparent process.



Photo: Mali, courtesy Ben Allen

# Efficiency

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

**DAC RATING AVERAGES BY YEAR**

3.6 — 3.3 — 3.2 — 3.4 — 3.3

2011   2012   2013   2014   2015
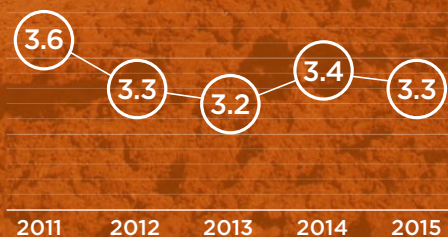
## Measuring it

Recurrent areas of inquiry have been **(i) the ability to deliver according to financial and activity plans**; **(ii) cost effectiveness**[8] assessing if the same objectives could have been achieved with lesser resources; and **(iii) adequacy of resources** (financial, human and material) to implement activities and achieve results. Other recurrent areas of inquiry included **partnerships, coordination, procedures** (especially related to purchases but also for ensuring accountability towards beneficiaries, donors and partners), **adequacy of management arrangements** and **tools** to facilitate **learning**.

**Data collection methods** used to measure the criterion were **qualitative**, mainly through **desk review and staff interviews from the intervention**. To a lesser extent, other methods also involved **the intervention field data and observation**. Across all evaluations, there was a consistent lack of an analytical framework to accurately assess "cost effectiveness". There are two options to tackle this issue: (i) ensure evaluators assess alternative options (e.g. local staff versus expatriate staff) or (ii) avoid including cost effectiveness questions in evaluation terms of reference if the budget and timeframe do not allow for this particular part of the assessment to be conducted.

## Achieving it

Efficiency has the second **lowest score among the criteria set (3.3)**, showing a slight decrease compared to 2014. The score has been decreasing since 2011, with a slight recovery last year. This result returns it back to its previous decreasing trend.

The **challenging humanitarian context** was a major factor in most projects impeding the achievement of a good efficiency performance. The evaluation reports presented several examples illustrating the challenges of **operational contexts**. For example, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the evaluator described the context as "very complex logistically" due to the lack or abandoned state of the road **infrastructure**, generating high logistics costs and complicating the deployment of field teams. In the case of Nigeria, the evaluation report pointed out the existence of armed conflict, resulting in various delays due to **security** reasons. Similarly in the Central African Republic, difficult access to quality materials resulted in the need to import manufactured goods from neighbouring countries. International purchases were delivered mostly by boat, which delayed **delivery** for more than three months.

As in previous years, few projects experienced **delays** due to internal and external factors resulting in **no cost extensions** for several interventions. For instance, a nutrition, food security and livelihoods intervention in Freetown peninsula, Sierra Leone was delayed due to the Ebola crisis. A nutrition , food security and livelihoods project in Bandundu Province, Democratic Republic of the Congo experienced cash disbursement restrictions, a late activity planning or an over ambitious amount of activities. Similarly, a water, sanitation and hygiene project in the Sindh province of Pakistan was delayed due to a change in the choice of targeted villages and internal community conflicts.

More than half of the evaluations reported **inadequate resources to implement activities resulting in delays in implementation**. One of the most recurrent issue was related to **human resources**, in particular management

[8] According to Fleming, F., Evaluation methods for assessing Value for Money, BetterEvaluation: Cost effectiveness is one of the six main methods that are traditionally used to assess Value for Money, which is not the equivalent of efficiency. The latter is only one of the aspects taken into account to assess value for money (other aspects are economic, effectiveness and sometimes equity).

staff turnover and/or **difficulties to recruit qualified applicants**. A nutrition, food security and livelihoods project in Bandundu Province, Democratic Republic of the Congo was unable to recruit highly technical positions which stayed vacant for several months. During that period, the positions were covered by the existing staff who were qualified for the task. This situation led to **dilution of responsibilities**, **staff overload**, **lost opportunities to capitalise learning**, delays in the implementation and ultimately a lower quality of the intervention. **Staff turnover** has also been recurrently linked to **lack or inconsistent monitoring and evaluation**. This was the case in a food security project in Tapoa, Burkina Faso where no monitoring and evaluation system was in place and monitoring tasks were done on an ad hoc basis by rotating staff.

The **unbalanced volume of activities** in relation to the implementation **time period** and/or the **financial resources available** was another issue identified in several evaluations. For example, a food security project in Gnagna, Burkina Faso, was found to be over ambitious as the number of activities to be implemented was inadequate with the timeframe. The project budget underestimated the costs for two activities. Similarly, a nutrition, food security and livelihoods project in Bandundu Province, Democratic Republic of the Congo, had insufficient resources mobilised for the geographic scope and the volume of activities planned. The project team said they had to "juggle the means at hand". The project had to use two old vehicles and purchase motorcycles that were inadequate and experienced frequent failure due to the lack of maintenance.

Finally, two good practices were identified as **lowering the risk of delays when subcontracting construction** in two water, sanitation and hygiene projects in Pakistan and Burkina Faso. In Pakistan, three local contractors were engaged for hand pumps rehabilitation and construction activities. It allowed the project to decrease dependence on a single contractor, lower the risk of delay due to under performance of one contractor, and encouraged competition between the contractors to deliver quality. In Burkina Faso, the project adopted similar approach

in launching calls for tenders and ensuring contractor commitment throughout the delivery.

**THE WRAP**

The inherent challenges of the operational contexts makes it difficult to excel in efficiency. Project design needs to be strengthened to minimise internal imbalances that might hinder the implementation of activities and ultimately the quality of the products and services delivered.
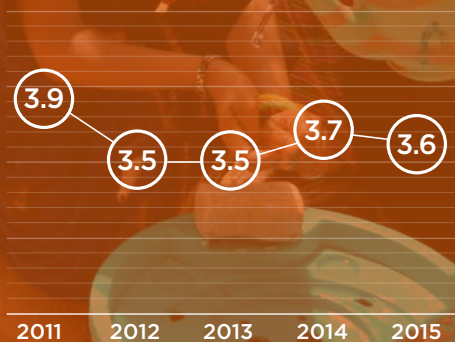
Photo: Mali, courtesy Susana Vera

# Effectiveness

*"A measure of the extent to which the interventions' objectives were achieved, or are expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance and illustrating the effectiveness of Action Against Hunger's approach"*

**DAC RATING AVERAGES BY YEAR**

```
3.9
      3.5   3.5        3.7   3.6

2011  2012  2013  2014  2015
```

## Measuring it

Recurrent areas of enquiry in measuring effectiveness were: (i) **degree of achievement of outputs and outcomes**, including the assessment of the **adequacy of approaches** or of the **integration of technical sectors** for the achievement of objectives; (ii) **community participation** throughout the project cycle management; (iii) **timely adjustment of the intervention based on the monitoring and evaluation system** or **beneficiary feedback mechanisms**. Some other areas of enquiry included **internal and external "factors" contributing or hindering the achievement of results**, enabling a holistic analysis throughout the result chain. In addition, **survey process** were analysed looking at data collection, data quality, timely data analysis and its use for timely decisions.

The **data collection methods** were mostly **qualitative** and sometimes **quantitative**. Analysis of this criterion was based on the most diverse triangulation of data, among all criteria. Most recurrent qualitative methods used included **interviews** of a wide range of stakeholders, **desk review**, **focus groups or group discussions** mainly involving beneficiaries. Quantitative data collection was through **observation**, **field data** and, in rare cases, beneficiary household questionnaires.

## Achieving it

Effectiveness was among the three **top scores** of the criteria set **(3.6)**, despite a slight decrease in comparison to 2014 results.

As in previous years, **all finalised interventions evaluated had achieved all of their objectives or most of them**, **measured by indicators in the logical frameworks**. This

was true even when delays in the implementation were reported (refer to efficiency section). Even though targets were achieved there were some concerns around the **low quality of products and services delivered**. This may be a result of some of the weaknesses identified under the design, appropriateness or efficiency sections.

For water, sanitation and hygiene projects there seems to be evidence of **higher effectiveness** when **project design** consistently integrated **technical sectors throughout the life of the project**. For example a water, sanitation and hygiene project in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh Province of Pakistan was found to have a high level of effectiveness as a result of the **good multi-sector integration in the implementation**. Another water, sanitation and hygiene project in Sindh Province of Pakistan could have achieved higher effectiveness if there were better linkages between nutrition, food security and livelihoods activities. For instance, the project missed the opportunity to use the overflow from hand pumps and soakage pits for kitchen gardening and/or simply for cattle's drinking purposes. Similarly, while cash for work was used for food security and livelihoods activities, it could have also been used for latrine super structure construction. The evaluation of a water, sanitation and hygiene project in Bossangoa, Central African Republic, recommended activities to be scheduled in line with agricultural or farming periods and integrated with the planning of food security and livelihoods activities to maximize effectiveness.

**Well-functioning monitoring and evaluation systems** were only found in two water, sanitation and hygiene projects in Pakistan and in a multi-sector emergency response in Mauritania[9]. These systems were set up by **in-country monitoring and evaluation teams**: the 'Programme Quality Assurance' team in Pakistan, and the 'Suivi, Evaluation, Apprentissage et Surveillance' team in Mauritania. The

[9] Those three projects were the ones receiving the highest rates for effectiveness.

existence of these teams seemed to be correlated with (i) timely and reliable information for decision making and (ii) higher quality of products and services delivered by the projects. Similarly, two evaluations conducted in the Democratic Republic of the Congo recommended setting up a monitoring and evaluation team in the country office. An evaluator also highlighted that these teams may be a key factor in ensuring higher neutrality and impartiality of knowledge and information management. The evaluation of a food security project in Tapoa, Burkina Faso, found that the absence of a monitoring and evaluation plan (not a donor requirement) resulted in a large amount of data being collected that was not useful for adaptive management.

Functioning formal accountability mechanisms towards beneficiaries were found in the very same projects in Pakistan and Mauritania. In both countries, the feedback mechanisms in place had a special focus on grievances[10]. In Pakistan, the evaluators acknowledged the comprehensiveness of the mechanisms, but did not find strong evidence of community familiarity with these. The evaluation suggested to extend the promotion of the service beyond the short activity period, and to include images on the posters to improve community understanding. The evaluation of the multi-sector emergency response to Mali refugees made explicit reference to the useful and reliable analysis of 1,388 complaints on beneficiary selection processes which was conducted by the monitoring and evaluation team in Mauritania. The analysis showed that only 24 out of the 1,388 complaints were justified (due to targeting errors or withdrawal of certain persons from the lists). Findings were passed onto the project team to take action. An informal community accountability mechanism was also found in a multi-sector programme in West Africa through periodic meetings in health centres and villages, which seemed useful for collecting feedback.

When analysing monitoring and evaluation aspects, most evaluations made explicit reference to the monthly monitoring report of activities, the Activity Progress Report[11] (APR). Recurrent issues identified by the evaluators included the high volume of information and the excess focus on activities with no reporting on the advancement of outputs towards outcomes. In particular, the evaluation of a multi sector programme in West Africa misunderstood the APR as Action Against Hunger's monitoring "system". In addition to the lack of systematic data collection system, the evaluation also highlighted the absence of a baseline which prevented the measurement of progress. The evaluation of a food security project in Tapoa, Burkina Faso, highlighted the need to simplify the APR so as to collect only essential information that can directly serve better decision making processes. Similarly, the evaluation of a nutrition and food security and livelihoods project, in Bandundu Province, Democratic Republic of the Congo, highlighted the usefulness of the report for accountability purposes to track progress, while criticising its under exploitation considering the volume of data reported.

Finally, most evaluations made reference to surveys conducted by the project[12]. Again, where a monitoring and evaluation system was supported by a monitoring and evaluation team, clear indicators, methods, frequency of data collection and analysis were defined. A good example was the regular post distribution monitoring surveys conducted for the multi-sector emergency response to Mali refugees in Mauritania that generated baseline, mid-line and end-line data. Other recurrent issues identified were related to: (i) low quality of data; (ii) incomparability of data either across different surveys (which raises a need for the harmonisation of methods) or between baseline and end-line within the same survey; and (iii) collection of data by non-specialised monitoring and evaluation staff. A nutrition-focused emergency intervention in the Democratic Republic of the Congo experienced recurrent data inconsistencies in the Standardised Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transition (SMART) surveys. The project planned to use a mobile data collection system via the Open Data Kit (ODK)[13] to tackle this issue. This new technology combined with project update training on SMART and stronger support in the field, were expected to improve remote data collection and minimise errors associated with data manipulation. The evaluation of a nutrition and food security and livelihoods project in Democratic Republic of the Congo, found the methods applied in the food security and the SMART surveys to calculate food consumption and diversification scores were different. This made it difficult to compare information and led to duplication of efforts for data collection. The evaluation of a nutrition and food security and livelihoods project in Tapoa, Burkina Faso, highlighted some discrepancies in baseline and end-line indicators in the knowledge, attitudes and practices surveys and the use of different reporting formats. This made survey results even more difficult to compare. Finally, the project team of a multi-sector emergency response in Banadir and Bakool regions in Somalia, mentioned their need for capacity building on data collection, data analysis and reporting to the evaluator. In particular, the water, sanitation and hygiene field team complained about spending more time on data compilation and monitoring rather than on the implementation of the project. As a result, the evaluation recommended recruiting dedicated monitoring and evaluation staff that would increase impartiality of the monitoring activities at the field level.

**THE WRAP**

As in past years all or most of Action Against Hunger's project specific objectives were achieved. This year there was evidence that the presence of in-country monitoring and evaluation staff correlated with the provision of timely and reliable information to decision maker and higher quality of products and services delivered by the projects through the development of clear indicators, methods, frequency of data collection and analysis.

[10] For further information on Pakistan's beneficiary feedback and complaint mechanism, see the "Debate and Discussion" section in Learning Review 2014.
[11] The APR includes a narrative section and a database informing a wide range of indicators.
[12] The absence of detailed information around this aspect does not necessarily imply a lack of surveys carried out given that the content of the evaluation reports is based on ad-hoc evaluation questions.
[13] An open source application designed to capture, verify, disseminate and analyze real-time data.

# Sustainability and Likelihood of Impact

*"A measure of whether the benefits of an activity are likely to continue after donor funding has been withdrawn and activities officially cease. Early signs of positive and negative, primary and secondary, short, mid and long-term effects produced by an intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended"*

**DAC RATING AVERAGES BY YEAR**



| 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
|------|------|------|------|------|
| 3.1 | 3.4 | 3.4 | 3.3 | 3.2 |
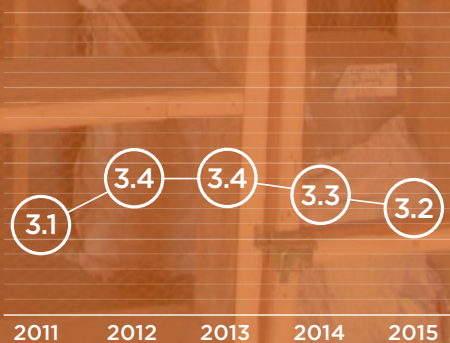
## Measuring it

The major areas of enquiry for measuring the **likelihood of impact** were: (i) **immediate foreseen**, **unforeseen positive and negative effects** of the intervention; (ii) **observed changes at the outcome level after the intervention**, making reference to the measurement of outcome level indicators; and (iii) **contribution** of the intervention **to observed effects**. Other enquiries were around the **value added of the project approach or strategy** to make an impact, and **external factors** hindering or facilitating the delivery of impact.

**Sustainability** was measured through the following areas of enquiry: (i) level of **appropriation** of the intervention by beneficiaries, local institutions, or eventual existing partners; (ii) **improved capacity** of beneficiaries or local institutions; and (iii) **exit strategies** or measures implemented to ensure sustainability. Some other areas of enquiry included **financial** ability of local institutions and the contribution of **partnerships** to ensuring sustainability.

The **data collection methods** used were **qualitative**, mainly through a **wide variety of stakeholders** being **interviewed** (project staff, beneficiaries, local institutions, and different types of external actors) and **desk review**. **The desk review** often included a database review to assess contribution through the achievement of indicator's targets. **Group discussions**, **focus group discussions**, and **observation** were other methods used. One evaluator made reference to the **theory of change** to answer contribution questions. However, this approach was not properly integrated either in the evaluation plan or in the evaluation exercise and did not produce the expected added value.

If we merge[14] both historical ratings for sustainability and impact since 2011, the new "Sustainability and Likelihood

[14]  The calculation done is a simple arithmetic average of both ratings.

## Achieving it

of Impact" criterion continues to achieve **the lowest rating (3.2)** of the criteria set. The score this year is slightly lower than in 2014. Based on the evidence in the evaluations and the justifications of the ratings, it seems that the merging of the criteria has resulted in a slight weighting towards the sustainability aspects.

About a third of the projects evaluated were **emergency responses**, with **short timeframes** and **links to eventual early recovery phases**. Because of the nature of these projects, sustainability would have been expected to be low. The evaluation of a short-term multi-sector emergency response in Banadir and Bakool regions in Somalia found **weak evidence of improved capacity of beneficiaries** due to the absence of baseline data. The project had not planned its **transition to early recovery**. There was also evidence after the first few months of stalled rehabilitated structures, filled-up pit latrines or vandalized hand-washing facilities. Another short-term multi-sector emergency response to Mali refugees in Mauritania, used **cash transfers** to assist beneficiaries in recovering from the shock caused by the conflict and the conditions of displacement. The aim was to help vulnerable populations to diversify their dietary intake rather than to start income generating activities. The **temporal nature of the cash component** was determined by the available resources and was clearly communicated to beneficiaries.

Surprisingly the multi-sector emergency response to Mali refugees in Mauritania was a top achiever on likelihood of impact. The judgement was partly based on the findings of SMART surveys conducted in the refugee camp that

showed that prevalence of under nutrition had gone under 10%. Despite the challenges of measuring project's attribution, the food security surveys showed positive developments within the target beneficiaries, confirming the likely positive contribution of the intervention.

**Most evaluations** found **baseline and end-line data**, even though the latter was not always available at the moment of the evaluation exercise. This data could allow projects to compare the before and after situation for each intervention, **assessing the project contribution** to the observed immediate effects[15]. The evaluator of the food security project in Tapoa in Burkina Faso was not able to compare baseline and end-line data to establish likelihood of impact. However, the evaluator was able to establish likely attribution of the positive results on household resilience, food security and malnutrition as the project was the only one working in the area focussing on those issues.

The evaluation of a nutrition, food security and livelihoods intervention in Bandundu province in Democratic Republic of the Congo found evidence of **the positive likely contribution**[16] **of the intervention for one of the targeted areas**. SMART surveys showed that the retrospective mortality rates were below the emergency threshold and the coverage of children through immunisation against measles had a significant increase. In addition, SMART surveys showed that the prevalence of global acute malnutrition and severe acute malnutrition fell below the emergency threshold, to a more acceptable level.

The food security project in Tapoa in Burkina Faso was identified as good practice of high community **appropriation** leading to sustainability. The **official partnership protocol** established a solid framework to: (i) involve provincial technical services on priority themes; and (ii) create local partners' ownership of the project and synergies with their own activities. However, **budgetary constraints** of provincial services were not addressed. In a water, sanitation and hygiene project in the Sindh

Province in Pakistan communities were repairing hand pumps and all the hand pumps visited by the evaluator were functional. This demonstrated that the **community had the required skills and had taken full ownership of the intervention**. Communities were trained on maintenance of the hand-pumps as part of the **"exit strategy"** of the project. Unfortunately, other products provided by the project were not as sustainable due to cultural factors and lack of maintenance training.

**THE WRAP**

The humanitarian nature of most of Action Against Hunger interventions made it difficult to achieve a good performance for sustainability in short periods of time. As in previous years, there were difficulties in measuring the contribution of projects to short term observed effects. Stronger monitoring and evaluation plans would enable the generation of solid evidence of the project's likelihood of impact.



Photo: Burkina Faso, courtesy Yvan Grayel

[15] The evaluations were always conducted at the end of the interventions, thus long term impact could not be measured.
[16]The evaluator emphasise the caution needed to interpret the results as there are several other interventions providing support to the health system, making it hard to isolate the effects of the project being evaluated.

# Performance Analysis in a Nutshell

**Relevance and Appropriateness, Coherence** are noted as the **best performance** criteria (rated 4.0 and 3.8 respectively), both showing a slight decrease compared to 2014. This consistently high performance suggests that Action Against Hunger has a good understanding of context and needs in its many areas of operation, as well as general alignment with national policies and strategies.

**Effectiveness** remains a **good performing** criterion (rated 3.6), although showing a slight decrease when compared to 2014. Since 2011 it has consistently been among the best three performance criteria. This is an indication that evaluated projects achieve all or most of their objectives, even if sometimes at the expense of the quality of products and services delivered.

**Design and Coverage** reveal an equal **average performance** (both 3.4) in 2015. On the one hand, coverage presents a slight decrease since 2014, being for the last five years always around the middle position in the ranking of the criteria set. On the other hand, design does not have previous references for comparison as it is a new criteria, added during 2015.

**Efficiency** is an **underperforming** criteria (rated 3.3), with a slight decrease compared to last year's rating. Since 2012, it has consistently been rated in the bottom two among the criteria set. Challenging operational contexts of Action Against Hunger's interventions are highly linked to these poor results. Risk monitoring and project's structures need to be strengthened to try to compensate for the numerous contextual challenges in the implementation of project activities.

**Sustainability and Likelihood of Impact** is the **lowest performing** criteria (rated 3.2), also showing a slight decrease in comparison to the 2014 rating. Since 2011, this merged criterion remains at the bottom of the criteria set. This consistent under performance is linked to the humanitarian nature of the interventions being evaluated and/or the challenges to change countries' structural weaknesses impede the possibility of sustainability. As in previous years, limited availability of good quality quantitative data to measure trends as well as well-functioning monitoring and evaluation systems prevent a thorough analysis of the likelihood of impact.

# Looking Forward: Recommendations for improvement and follow up to 2014

As follow-up to the 2014 recommendations for improvement, the following actions were taken in 2015:
• **Evaluation Focal Points (EFPs)** were set up to improve evaluation planning globally. The new **Action Against Hunger International Evaluation Policy and Guidelines** were developed in a **highly participatory way** and aligned with the International **Gender Policy**. As a result, **gender** was systematically introduced as cross-cutting issue in all evaluations.
• **Wide stakeholders' participation in the crafting of the evaluation questions** was proactively encouraged, adopting a highly participatory approach to drafting evaluation Terms of Reference.
• All evaluations conducted, included the development of an **evaluation plan** in the inception report where **methods and techniques for data collection** were clearly outlined with a strategy for data triangulation. The Evaluation, Learning and Accountability team advocated for improved monitoring and evaluation practices and developed practical tools for evaluation managers to deliver against these practices. **Specialised monitoring and evaluation teams** were set up in country offices and HQs. **Monitoring and evaluation guidelines** were developed and will be disseminated in 2016. The guidelines introduce rigor both in the planning and in the implementation of baselines and end-lines surveys in support to evidence-based evaluation.
• Advocacy for developing **project design guidelines** was conducted with limited success but more work is needed in this regard. The new evaluation criterion for project design will provide further evidence of weaknesses in this area and form the basis to continue advocacy in 2016.
• In trailing how projects incorporate evaluation recommendations: two projects reported on their **management response** to recommendations received. Project management teams responded positively and appreciated the follow up from the Evaluation, Learning and Accountability team. The tracking tool developed to capture evaluation recommendations and project team responses is designed to be easy to use and allows stakeholders to reflect on and be reminded of specific recommendations received. It was reported that relevant recommendations and learning were used for designing new projects. Also, it was pointed out that the recommendations were much more useful where a project was continuing (new phase funded or extensions granted).

Some main challenges persist:
• **Specification**: The number of recommendations should be limited and they should be more specific and feasible within the scope of the project.
• **Time and budget**: Recommendations at a given point in time, limits adaptability to rapidly changing contexts. Issues of whether or not the programme has continued access to future funding might hinder the programme's ability to address the recommendations.
• **Staff turnover**: The fluctuation of staff hampers the utilisation of the recommendations. The following is proposed as mitigation measures:
• **Design**: Previous evaluation findings and recommendations should by imperative be linked to the design of new proposals.
• **Data**: Due to high staff turnover, information should be centrally stored to mitigate the loss of institutional knowledge.
• **Sharing**: Develop case studies and continue sharing learning from evaluations through various channels.
• **Training**: Staff should receive more training on monitoring and evaluations.

# Note of caution on the performance scores

As mentioned in the Learning Review 2014, the ratings of the DAC scores should be taken with caution.

Last year, potential bias due to the **subjective interpretation of the ratings** by the evaluator was identified as an issue affecting the quality and consistency of the ratings. To reduce the potential for subjectivity, the following rating scale was developed within the new Evaluation Policy and Guidelines:

| Rating | Definition |
|---|---|
| **1. Unsatisfactory** | Performance was **consistently below expectations** in most areas of enquiry related to the evaluation criteria. **Overall performance** in relation to the evaluation criteria i**s not satisfactory** due to serious gaps in some of the areas. Significant improvement is needed. Recommendations to improve performance are outlined in the evaluation report and Action Against Hunger will monitor progress in these areas. |
| **2. Improvement needed** | Performance **did not consistently meet expectations in some areas of enquiry** - performance failed to meet expectations in one or more essential areas of enquiry. Some improvements are needed in one or more of these. Recommendations to improve performance are outlined in the evaluation report and Action Against Hunger will monitor progress in these key areas. |
| **3. On average meets expectations** | On average, performance **met expectations** in all essential areas of enquiry and the overall **quality of work was acceptable**. Eventual recommendations over potential areas for improvement are outlined in the evaluation report. |
| **4. Meets expectations** | **Performance consistently met expectations** in all essential areas of enquiry, and the overall **quality of work was fairly good**. The most critical expectations were met. |
| **5. Exceptional** | **Performance consistently met expectations** due to **high quality of work** performed **in all essential areas of enquiry**, resulting in an **overall quality** of work that was **remarkable**. |

This guidance has not been used yet in 2015, but is being introduced in 2016. It should help **harmonise ratings across all evaluations** and **reduce bias** with the objective of having more accurate aggregated ratings for the Learning Review 2016.

This year the following two additional issues were found to affect the quality of the ratings:
1. Criterion rating might be **overestimated or underestimated** due to the **inclusion or exclusion of areas of inquiry** that are not **related to the particular criterion**.
2. **Comparability of criteria ratings across evaluations** - the more homogeneity in the areas of inquiry (based on the nature of the evaluation questions) for each criterion, the more comparable scores are.

For centralised evaluations, the Evaluation Learning and Accountability team will take the following actions in 2016 to address these issues:
1. Develop a **list of suitable areas of inquiry** under each criterion.
2. **Balance the trade-off** between participation of stakeholders in the design of the evaluation questions and the suggestion of evaluation questions covering specific areas of enquiry for each criterion.

# Introduction
## Providing a Platform for Critical Reflection and Analysis in Action Against Hunger International

This section of the Learning Review goes beyond what we have learnt through conducting evaluations. It provides a space for the network to reflect upon its experiences over the course of the last year. Its aim is to enable the sharing of knowledge and learning between peers to improve the quality of Action Against Hunger's operations.

This edition features six articles. The topics covered by the articles include delivering operations through local partnerships, and the implications of this; the promotion of nutrition security, and why a specific approach is needed; a third article illustrates how cash-based programming can better serve the needs of disaster affected populations; a fourth focuses on mobile data collection and the challenges that come with having to aggregate such data; monitoring and evaluation for projects, and a final article discusses humanitarian networks and how they learn.

The intention of each article is to raise major issues which need to be addressed by the network in a concerted manner. It connects colleagues across the network who are facing similar issues and enables them to find common solutions. Each article ends with some practical recommendations on how to address these issues in a coherent manner.

Photo: Turkey, courtesy Juan José Torres

# Support to Life Partnership

*By Jean-Raphaël Poitou, Desk Officer Middle East, Action Against Hunger-Spain*

Working with Support to Life (STL) has forced Action Against Hunger to deal with constant challenges. Is it possible to implement emergency humanitarian response exclusively through a local partner? Why don't we open a branch in Turkey? Are the capacities and procedures of our partner adapted to our requirements? Will Action Against Hunger's intervention principles be respected?

It all began in 2011 with the **massive influx of Syrian refugees in southern Turkey**. At the time, only Action Against Hunger Spain was operating in the region (since 2006 in Lebanon, 2009 in Syria and 2002 in the Occupied Palestinian Territories). **Our positioning in Syria complicated the emergency response**. Being based in Damascus and working with the Syrian Arabic Red Crescent and Syrian Authorities made it impossible for us to intervene in the areas under opposition control. Nevertheless we had to access the refugees in the neighboring countries to fulfill our principle of neutrality. **A "low profile" strategy was established**. Zero visibility was key in order to conceal the fact that we were working on both sides of the border and risked being expelled from Syria. So emergency assistance needed to be delivered in Lebanon with no visibility and via a local partner in Turkey. Thus began the relationship with STL in Turkey.

The **selection of STL** was based on the **recommendation by a former expatriate of Action Against Hunger Spain**. Following an assessment, STL's **management capacity** and **intervention principles** were deemed to be acceptable and in line with our internal criteria. However their technical expertise and management capacity still had room for improvement.

The first joint projects followed the usual model of the local partner acting as an **implementing partner** but with **strong technical and logistical support** from Action Against Hunger. The capacities of the STL teams were strengthened in the areas of logistics and nutrition. After a number of small collaborations on emergency interventions, the Spanish Cooperation (AECID) decided to support a **mid-term project of psychosocial assistance to urban Syrian refugees**. The cooperation between Action Against Hunger Spain and STL was formalized. STL was the project leader and we were the technical expert. We provided two technical experts who were integrated into the STL team. Some new challenges came up: Would our partner become the line manager of our expatriates? Who would be responsible for our expatriates' security when the security and safety rules of the partner were so basic? On these two points, we had only a functional link. The objective was to **empower our partner** but on the security issue, the Action Against Hunger Spain security desk officer travelled to Turkey to rework **their security and safety plan** and adapt it to Action Against Hunger's standards. The decision was also taken to **maintain regular contact between the expatriates and the HQ**.

While Action Against Hunger Spain and STL remain in regular contact, the project funded by the Spanish Cooperation was one of the last projects implemented jointly: STL's privileged position led to it receiving many requests for join collaboration with other INGOs. What **added value** could we bring if STL could secure money and projects locally?

Despite these difficulties, Action Against Hunger Spain considered it essential to **maintain a close relationship with STL**. Action Against Hunger's added value compared to other INGOs in Turkey lies in its **objective to reinforce local capacity rather than to implement activities directly**. Therefore in 2013, Action Against Hunger Spain decided to redirect its strategy, in line with Action Against Hunger International's strategy, towards strengthening STL capabilities. Indeed, after several rejected proposals (ECHO/Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration),

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the lack of expertise of the partner remained a limitation to Action Against Hunger Spain's scaling up strategy in Turkey. STL was therefore regularly invited to participate in training (Gender, Food Security, Contingency Planning) and meetings (national or international) organized by Action Against Hunger Spain or the Action Against Hunger network.

During 2014 and 2015, **no more joint projects** were initiated but **relations were maintained** and Action Against Hunger Spain was able to benefit in different ways from this collaboration. STL has always provided information on the needs of Syrian refugees and Turkish communities. Some STL employees have joined Action Against Hunger Spain's teams in the Middle East for training. These people benefited from the training and learnt about the work of Action Against Hunger during these events. Some still continue to work with us.

2016 will be a **new step in the collaboration**. Five years after the first contact with STL and joint projects, it is necessary to rethink Action Against Hunger's Turkish intervention strategy. Turkey is a country of **opportunities both for recruitment and private funding**. In terms of human resources, Turkish citizens have a high level of education and can move more easily around the Middle East than Western nationals. Action Against Hunger Spain therefore need to start exploring recruitment opportunities. As for private funding, Turkey is a country which still offers potential due to its high growth market. Finally, we should also consider the opportunities offered by the European Union grant which will enable Turkey to absorb the impact of Syrian refugees and limit their immigration to Europe.

The **geographical distance** between Action Against Hunger Spain and STL has always been and remains the **major obstacle in the development of a strong relationship**. The Action Against Hunger Spain Executive Committee therefore decided in December 2015 to base a **representative full time in Istanbul**. The objectives of this position will be to strengthen the relationship with STL and to define the strategy of Action Against Hunger Spain to meet the various challenges and opportunities required to work in Turkey with a partner.
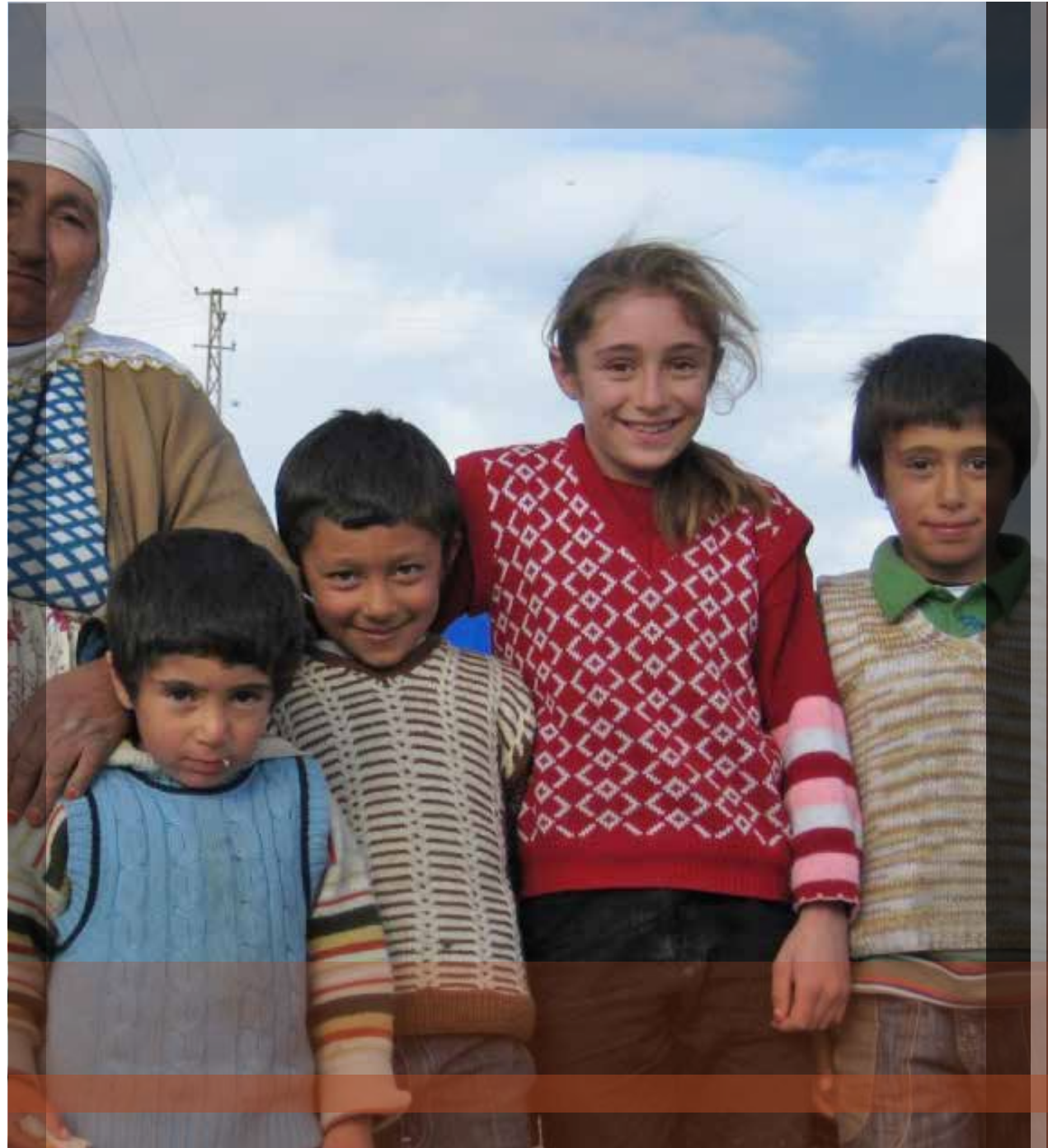


Photo: Turkey, courtesy Juan José Torres

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# Promoting a Comprehensive Nutrition Security Approach and Organisational Culture to Enhance Nutrition-Sensitive Programming

*By Julien Morel, Nutrition Security and Social Protection senior advisor, Action Against Hunger-France and Maureen Gallagher, Nutrition & Health senior advisor, Action Against Hunger-USA*

### What is Nutrition Security?

Nutrition security is "the ongoing access to the basic elements of good nutrition, i.e., a balanced diet, safe environment, clean water, and adequate health care (preventive and curative) for all people, and the knowledge needed to care for and ensure a healthy and active life for all household members."[17]

Nutrition security transcends the traditional concept of food security (access, availability, stability and utilisation of food) and recognises that nutritional status is dependent on an array of factors, all being necessary conditions, while none alone is sufficient. Nutrition security, unlike food security, looks at individuals.

### Why do we need a Nutrition Security approach?

Since 2011, Action Against Hunger has engaged in an institutional process to **better align** its **interventions with nutritional outcomes**. One key action has been the development of an organisational **Nutrition Security policy**[18] to provide a comprehensive and consolidated framework for mobilisation and action in the fight against undernutrition. The policy document:

• highlights the issues and challenges, and defines concepts around nutrition security
• defines the organisation's vision and positioning for a systematic nutrition security approach
• provides principles, ambitions and commitments at institutional, strategic and programmatic levels to apply this vision

It forms the basis for a **common multi-sectoral understanding of undernutrition** and how Action Against Hunger commits to **respond in a coherent, evidence based and holistic way**.

To support the translation of the Nutrition Security policy and principles into practice, a **number of initiatives** have been **implemented** within the organisation since 2011, including awareness, capacity building, learning, and technical development activities. These aim to promote and embed a nutrition security culture across the organisation, targeting technical and management personnel, at headquarters and country levels. The institutionalisation strategy was defined, overseen and coordinated by an inter-HQ cross-sectoral working group

[17]The World Bank (2013): Improving nutrition through multisectoral approaches. http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/2013/01/17211210/improving-nutrition-through-multisectoral-approaches
[18]Action Against Hunger International (2014): Nutrition Security Policy. A common multisectoral understanding and approach to address undernutrition. http://www.actioncontrelafaim.org/en/content/acf-international-nutrition-security-policy.

dedicated to promote and strengthen the nutrition security approach and interventions internally and externally.

While we currently do not assess data on how the approach is applied consistently across programmes, recent internal analysis showed that the **approach is well known** within the network, and response strategies and programmes are increasingly oriented towards undernutrition, using a multi-sectoral approach.

The approach does not call for radical changes in the way we operate, yet reaffirms and clarifies direction and recommendations that have emerged in the past years. Many of the **guiding principles** are not new - they sometimes lacked agreement, clear positioning or commitment. This implied different interpretations and levels of application depending on the HQ, technical sector and country strategies and programmes.

The approach **promotes rationalising current Action Against Hunger activities and strategies around a common nutrition objective** that is then made explicit: agreeing on a common and clear objective, and then measuring progress towards this objective, is a pre-requisite to deliver effective interventions. Nutrition-sensitive interventions should be designed to address specific locally identified underlying factors of undernutrition, targeting the most nutritionally vulnerable populations, accounting for potential unintended effects on nutrition status.

It also **reemphasises the needed collaboration amongst sectors, and the search for synergies between projects**: while the methods to do so should remain flexible and adapted to the context, this should be acknowledged as an objective per se, and support and incentives should be provided by management to favour multi-sectoral over silo approaches. Strengthening integration of our interventions and collaboration amongst our teams requires a real will and strategy.

Finally, it seeks to **get out of the artificial dichotomy between undernutrition treatment and prevention** and highlights the fact that in most of the cases, both approaches are needed in order to effectively deliver impact: treatment activities will enhance efficiency and effectiveness of prevention, and vice versa. This has to be strongly considered as part of Action Against Hunger programming.

### What are the main challenges in implementing this approach?

Despite these investments in institutionalisation and operationalisation, a number of challenges and gaps remain, preventing the complete application of a comprehensive nutrition security approach in Action Against Hunger's operations. They include:

**Limited evidence on the most effective and cost-effective nutrition-sensitive interventions and guidance on how to practically implement these**: Lack of evidence on preventive and multi-sectoral approaches limits the definition of interventions aimed to maximise nutritional outcomes.

**Limited capacity for holistic nutrition situation and response analysis**: Causal analysis at a local level is often weak, relying more on assumption than on real situation analysis. Humanitarian stakeholders rarely identify most prevalent pathways to undernutrition and how they interact locally. For too long, programs for the prevention of under-nutrition have been designed as if addressing underlying causes would automatically reduce the risk of under-nutrition.[19] While identification of programme impact pathways is recognised as good practice to support adequate programme design, this analysis is often not undertaken. Additionally, quality, up-to-date, nutrition assessment data availability is still limited in a number of areas affected by undernutrition.

**Complexity to measure interventions' effectiveness on undernutrition**: There is a lack of simple, easy to use methods and indicators to measure nutritional effects and impact of nutrition-sensitive interventions in a systematic way. Monitoring and reporting on project outputs within organisations, the cluster system or for donors remains highly sectoral, preventing an understanding of the benefits and achievements of more integrated interventions.

**Limited time, energy and commitment to foster cross-sectorial dialogue and collaboration**: Engaging in cross-sectoral dialogue and programming is more complex than the traditional siloed approach, common in the humanitarian system. This requires strong leadership and support from management, as well as clear incentives for stakeholders who need to invest in lengthy, and sometime difficult, dialogue and interaction. The time required for multi-sectoral coordination is even more critical in emergency response.

**Lack of funding mechanisms and opportunities for integrated sustainable response to undernutrition**: Funding strategies and mechanisms remain very sector specific and rarely lead to financing multi-sectoral projects and programmes that seek to tackle the multiple factors leading to undernutrition simultaneously and comprehensively. Additionally, funding for nutrition programming is usually too short term to effectively address the issue in a sustainable manner.

### What is the way forward?

The organisation is working to overcome challenges through **research, technical development, capacity building and advocacy**. Action Against Hunger will undertake a global learning review in 2016 to examine in greater depth through a specific monitoring framework, how the Nutrition Security approach has influenced programming and the extent to which this has impacted nutritional status of programmes' participants. It will lead to the publication of a Good Practice review, building on experience and lessons learnt.

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[19] Dangour A, Kennedy E, Taylor A. (2013): Food and Nutrition Bulletin vol. 34, no. 2. Commentary: The changing focus for improving nutrition.

# Embedding Cash-Based Programming into Action Against Hunger Interventions

*By Silke Pietzsch, Technical Director, Action Against Hunger-USA and Amador Gómez, Technical Director, Action Against Hunger-Spain*

Over recent years a growing body of evidence has been gathered proving that **cash-based interventions** can act as a viable and effective alternative tool to in-kind assistance. As a member of the Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP), since 2008 Action Against Hunger has been a reference for cash-based programming and has contributed to influencing global and local policy and practice. The question facing the sector is no longer whether cash is an appropriate way to meet the needs of people immersed in crises, but how organisations such as Action Against Hunger can **use cash transfers** to more **effectively support disaster affected populations** and make cash transfer programming part of its **standard humanitarian response**.

### Cash - opportunities
Today, almost 90% of the world population lives in **cash based economies**: people earn wages, sell goods or services, and buy what they need with both physical and virtual cash in a variety of local, regional and global markets. In these contexts cash transfers are a more effective, efficient, flexible and dignified way of supporting people in response to humanitarian crises and recovery and of stimulating markets, representing value for money compared with in-kind alternatives.

For example refugee families in Lebanon face dire situations where the chaotic nature of their refugee legal status, insecure livelihoods and lack of resources mean that they often cannot access basic goods and services, such as food, shelter and medical treatment. The experiences of Action Against Hunger and others show that the use of **Smartcards** or **ATM cards** to withdraw money or receiving in-kind commodities, are less costly and better adjusted to people's needs and preferences than the distribution of standard, pre-defined commodities in kind. Examples from the Philippines following Typhoon Haiyan report people using their cash grants for food, shelter, agricultural inputs, medicine, clothing, hygiene and transport.

The overall benefits of cash transfer programming are: 1) Households are given a **greater degree of choice** to spend money according to their own priorities; 2) **People's dignity** is maintained, by giving them choice and decision power (Using an ATM or getting cash on a mobile phone is more dignified than queuing for a bag of food); 3) **Economic recovery** is facilitated through local market integration; 4) **Flexibility** is incorporated (cash can be spent on both food and non-food items and is easily invested in livelihood security). Finally, there is evidence that cash transfers enforce a sense of normality and empowerment, positively influencing the mental health and well-being of disaster-affected populations, which in return positively influences the recovery process.

### Cash and Action Against Hunger - the way forward
New technologies and the introduction of **electronic mechanisms for cash transfers** have the potential to detect needs earlier, enable larger and faster responses and enhance the specificity of resources transferred to better match needs and increase accountability while reducing the risks of corruption and diversion of funds to the wrong recipients. E-payments can provide a more efficient and reliable delivery of cash payments than manual systems. However, despite overall positive experiences with e-payments, they are not being adopted systematically

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across the sector due to an ongoing lack of systems and infrastructure. To overcome this Action Against Hunger developed the **KACHE toolkit (Kit for Autonomous Cash transfers in Humanitarian Emergencies)** which enables the organisation to support populations with electronic cash transfers during emergencies in countries where suitable infrastructure is not available. The ultimate aim of the kit is to rapidly set-up electronic payment systems where no other means to deliver assistance, products or services are available. The KACHE toolkit has been integrated into the Action Against Hunger emergency response framework and into the organisation's national emergency contingency plans. The KACHE will be an essential tool for us to provide cash assistance in a timely fashion and at scale.

However, **the use of cash transfers does not mean that we will distance ourselves from the populations we want to support**, or that Action Against Hunger will stop its key roles of accessing crisis affected populations directly and of bearing witness to their suffering. On the contrary, by transforming the delivery of assistance through cash into a more efficient process, these initiatives will protect the time and resources of our teams enabling them to engage with the population we work with and for.

Cash-based interventions risk being regarded as a separate type of response whereas they should be seen as **a tool to use to design a better response**. Action Against Hunger already has cash based intervention guidance materials for program teams. These standard guidelines, policies and operating procedures will facilitate the integration of cash transfers as our preferred choice of response options and help us to apply rigorous markets assessments and define the additional skills and capacities we need. The option of giving people cash needs to be systematically included into needs assessments and trainings, inductions for new teams and contingency planning. It should also be included into preparedness processes and Action Against Hunger's sectoral policies.

At Action Against Hunger, we recognise we need to do more to **develop the capacity to deliver cash and monitor**

**its impact and effectiveness**, including embedding cash responses in contingency planning and disaster preparedness processes. If we as an organisation want to remain relevant in our scope and response modalities in emergencies and throughout the new International Strategic Plan 2016-2020, we must embrace cash-based interventions and continue to actively seek out opportunities for evidence creation and innovation, scale up, and transfer of capacities and partnerships around cash transfers.

Where markets and operational contexts allow, cash-based programming should be the preferred and default method of support, placing beneficiary choice at the centre of Action Against Hunger's humanitarian action.



Photo: Turkey, courtesy Juan José Torres

# Scaling Up Mobile Data Collection in the Action Against Hunger Network

*By Shahzad Ajmal Paracha, Program Quality and Accountability Coordinator, Action Against Hunger- Pakistan; Gohar Ali Shahbaz, Deputy study Manager, REFANI, Action Against Hunger-Pakistan and; Jorge Durand Zurdo, Mobile data collection, Open Data Kit support, Action Against Hunger-Spain*

**Open Data Kit**[20] **is an open source, publicly available software for the collection of data through mobile devices. Since 2013, several of the network's offices have implemented this tool with considerable success. While some technical issues (limited knowledge of information technology, lack of a stable internet connection and unreliable power supply among others) have presented surmountable challenges, these and the much more difficult change from paper to digital have been addressed through trainings across various country offices. The lack of a single infrastructure to manage and share data, however, has prevented the common implementation of this open source software across the organisation. There is also scope for improvement on collaboration and sharing of common experiences and good practices across the network.**

## Open Data Kit in the Action Against Hunger Network

The use of Open Data Kit within the network has grown significantly in recent years. Today, it is regularly used by 11 country offices working under the leadership of Action Against Hunger Spain. Between September 2014 and March 2015, more than 26,000 people answered a total of 72 surveys in the **Philippines**. Surveys using the platform were successfully conducted to collect baseline and monthly information on 2,500 beneficiaries in **Pakistan**[21]. The questionnaires were designed by the country office with an aim to collect nutritional data on households

and mothers with children. Similar experiences were reported by Action Against Hunger Spain in Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal.

Mobile data collection has enabled the **information technology and technical departments** to work in a collaborative manner. An Open Data Kit toolkit and 15 standard surveys were designed for Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene, Disaster Risk Management, Food Security and Livelihoods, nutrition and health. Additionally, ad-hoc surveys can be designed directly by country offices when needed.

## Advantages of Open Data Kit

The potential for Open Data Kit lies in a **clearer and more efficient data collection** that reduces time and simplifies the work of collectors in the field. Pre-coded skip patterns, clearly marking skipped questions in a survey, improve the way in which data is collected and prevent the need to remove irrelevant fields later. The amount of paperwork is greatly reduced by importing survey results directly into a computer or server; collected data is immediately available and aggregated for data visualisation and analysis software.

## Challenges in using Open Data Kit

Handling large databases with thousands of entries may present some **challenges** of a technical nature

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[20]Open Data Kit provides a solution for organisations to manage mobile data collection, by allowing users to build data collection forms for surveys; collect the data on a mobile device and send it to servers or personal computers; and aggregate the collected data on those devices and extract it in a more useful and manageable format. The platform is scalable to different projects, therefore increasing its usability.
[21]Under REFANI Research Project.

(particularly computational capacity) and some skills in data management. An uninterrupted power source is essential to charge the mobile devices overnight during the survey period. The most critical challenge, however, relates to **managing change from paper to mobile based data collection**. The introduction and implementation of mobile data collection is a different and innovative approach. As such, it is important for staff to be trained and ready to use the new software in their everyday work.

These issues have been tackled within the network by **building staff capacity** on the use of Open Data Kit. Trainings have been provided to country staff on the software since 2013, and in 2015, a training was held in Madrid for participants from several country offices. Nigeria's office staff was recently trained on the use of Open Data Kit by Pakistan's office staff. So far, among the different country offices, 118 staff and 20 database administrators have been trained on the use of Open Data Kit. Three regional training workshops are planned by Action Against Hunger Spain for early 2016 in the America, Africa and Middle East regions.

### Moving to a network-wide information system
While these initiatives to share common practices and improve expertise within the network have been growing, **concrete steps to comprehensively harmonise systems and data management across the network** have not followed. Today, the biggest challenge of all seems to be the way in which information is siloed within the organisation. A common server, managed by Action Against Hunger Spain, is currently hosting the survey results of only 25 country offices. None of the data collected by offices through Open Data Kit, however, is accessible at a network level.  Looking ahead, there is a need to agree on common platforms for the systematic management and sharing of this data across the network.

**Scaling up the use of Open Data Kit will need to be supported by a shared system allowing the exchange of data, information and knowledge across the whole of the organisation**. Colleagues contacted for the drafting of this article seem to agree that mobile data collection through Open Data Kit has an important potential towards improving the way information is managed by humanitarian organisations. A network-wide platform integrating with other data management systems, including Action Against Hunger's No Hunger Forum, and linked to open data initiatives across the sector such as the Humanitarian Data Exchange, would strengthen decision-making across the organisation and increase the organisation's visibility as an important and innovative actor in the humanitarian field.



Photo: Colombia, courtesy Susana Vera

# Monitoring and Evaluation: What Have We Learned?

*By Jennifer Majer, M&E Officer, Action Against Hunger-USA and Silke Pietzsch, Technical Director, Action Against Hunger-USA*

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### Why Monitoring and Evaluation in Action Against Hunger International?

Increasing demands from donors and other stakeholders for stronger programme monitoring and transparency have encouraged Action Against Hunger to **strengthen internal capacities in monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems**. The Action Against Hunger International Strategy 2016-2020 calls for a scale up of beneficiary numbers, an objective that will only be met if sufficient resources and expertise for M&E are deployed to ensure greater quality, effectiveness and coverage of Action Against Hunger's interventions. Moreover, the push to demonstrate Action Against Hunger's nutrition security impact requires improved M&E systems at all levels of the organization.

The process of institutionalizing M&E within Action Against Hunger began with the development of the **Food Security & Livelihoods (FSL) M&E Guidelines**, led by Action Against Hunger USA in 2011. The Guidelines were rolled out in the Kenya, Uganda, South Sudan, Pakistan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo country offices by 2012. In mid-2013, Action Against Hunger conducted a comprehensive review of its M&E FSL Guidelines launch and rollout.

### What did we learn through the M&E review?

The exercise revealed that, while the rollout received positive feedback, application of promoted M&E practices was far from optimal. Incoherencies were observed in the application of the core indicators. The review also identified major gaps in staff understanding of the purpose and application of M&E tasks.

The decision was made to address these shortcomings during a revision of the Guidelines in 2014. The new **Multi-Sectoral M&E Guidelines** will be published shortly. These Guidelines will provide a solid basis for program teams in all sectors to better understand the importance of M&E and practical steps needed to implement M&E in the field.

### Recommendations - Rollout and application of M&E in Action Against Hunger International

Based on findings from the previous rollout, the following recommendations have been developed to improve the institutionalization of M&E at Action Against Hunger:

**1. Ensure follow up and accommodate different learning styles**

The FSL M&E Guidelines trainings built knowledge of **concepts, methods, standards and good practices**. However, operationalizing the information contained within the M&E Guidelines or the M&E training requires time, repetition and tailored support. One-off trainings must be combined with ongoing coaching and "boosted" whenever possible: from staff meetings and workshops, to ad hoc procedures that occur throughout the project cycle. Staff in sectoral and M&E advisory positions should be fully aware of their M&E responsibilities, and accommodate different learning styles, expertise and abilities.

**2. Integrate monitoring across departments**

All staff must be sensitized to better **integrate M&E into their departments** and begin to operate more **holistically across sectors**. Project planning, implementation and measurement of results should all be reoriented so that they are more far-sighted, integrative and directed more toward achieving organizational impact than departmental outcomes.

### 3. Cultivate 'buy-in' at all levels

Better monitoring and evaluation requires commitment at all levels of Action Against Hunger —from senior management to field level—and across all technical departments, to both measure and take action on findings. This will only be possible if all staff recognize the importance of and support the prioritization of M&E activities. It is therefore important to foster **commitment** from the entire organization, rather than just the technical teams.

### 4. Allocate human resources dedicated to M&E

While every team member is ultimately responsible for programme quality, **monitoring and evaluation involves a diverse set of tasks and often requires specialized skill sets**. M&E is often of the highest quality and perceived less 'burdensome' when there are skilled staff fully dedicated to this purpose. Field-based M&E experts often support or lead on project-specific M&E plans, data collection, analysis and reporting, and production of capitalization documents. Action Against Hunger's main donors have proven willing and supportive of funding dedicated M&E staff.

### 5. Set clear expectations and integrate M&E into performance appraisal systems

Growth, development, and prioritization of M&E should all be incorporated into staff job descriptions and be appraised as part of performance review systems. It is also important to set **clear expectations for M&E from the beginning of each project**, such as through a set of minimum standards or audit checklists. Regular appraisals of project, country office, and organization-level M&E systems can help ensure accountability for essential tasks.

### 6. Disseminate and utilize findings to get the most out of M&E

One of the main purposes of M&E is to inform programme management decisions based on **evidence**. M&E data should be discussed in regular project meetings and reviews, including the main results of surveys, any unexpected observations, and an analysis of indicator progress against targets. Recommendations and a plan of action to address findings will help projects to capitalize on their M&E systems.

### 7. Be conscious of accountability relationships

Over the years, NGO **accountability relationships** have expanded and become exceedingly complex.[22] If reporting and the need to show quantifiable results becomes too burdensome, it may distract an NGO from both its central mission and the quality of service delivery. It is key to ensure internal reporting is only carried out when it is found to be useful and necessary, but also that it is kept 'light.' Staff must also be given adequate time, resources, and support to fulfil these responsibilities.

### Conclusion

While resources may be stretched thin, **programmes of better quality and efficiency are not possible without good M&E, nor without accountability**. Accountability, a leading international think tank working on promoting new and innovative accountability tools and approaches, stated in its 2005 Ten Year Review that "better accountability means better performance—good intentions do not make NGOs immune from the need to understand and learn."[23] Indeed, good intentions are not sufficient to produce positive results; these intentions must be accompanied by monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that help the organization to continue to grow, learn, and function appropriately to meet the needs of local communities.



Photo: Peru, courtesy Iris Parra

[22]Jacobs, A., & R. Wilford (2010). Listen First: a pilot system for managing downward accountability in NGOs. Development in Practice, 20:7.
[23]Looking Back – Looking Forwards: Reinventing Accountabilitiy for the 21st Century. 1995-2005 Ten Year Review. AccountAbility, 2005. Cited in Nelson, J. (2007). The Operation of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in a World of Corporate and Other Codes of Conduct. Working Paper 34. Corporate Social Responsibility Initiative, Harvard University.

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# How Do Humanitarian Networks Learn?

*By Matthew Kletzing, Head of Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Services, Action Against Hunger-UK*

*Action Against Hunger UK established a new unit to provide Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) services to the broader humanitarian sector. From 2013 to 2015, this MEL Services Unit grew from one to 16 staff spread across the globe, providing £4 million worth of support to humanitarian preparedness and response programme for the Start Network valued at over £90 million. Moving into 2016, these services will expand to include other organisations and networks in order to improve the quality and accountability of humanitarian action.*

### Why does Action Against Hunger UK provide monitoring, evaluation and learning services?

When disasters strike, all people deserve to have their needs met and dignity protected with the best possible humanitarian response. No one would argue with that. Yet, our ability to implement the **"best possible" response** is iterative - it depends on how much we learn from what works and what fails in every context. As a sector, we are getting better at learning and adapting but still need to get better at evidence-based decision-making, which is a gap Action Against Hunger UK is trying to fill with its services.

### Why do we need to provide these services externally?

Combine a sector that can be chronically anachronistic when it comes to learning with a world in which humanitarian crises are increasingly more complex, and suddenly it's even more important to move evidence to action. Humanitarian organisations have been increasingly required to deliver a **coordinated approach**, yet there is more and more competition for resources. In this context,

it is critical to show **added value of collaboration and to evidence the effectiveness and efficiency of this approach**. At the same time, humanitarian crises are becoming more complex, and more complex problems require more collaborative solutions. By offering these services externally, we not only bring external expertise and learning into Action Against Hunger, but also create an on-going dialogue and interface with humanitarian networks about how to improve preparedness and response.

### What do these services look like?

Action Against Hunger UK has designed **monitoring, evaluation and learning** systems to maximise uptake and impact of evidence to enable learning to happen in complex contexts, especially those requiring collaboration. Our approach regulates **data flows** from collection to management and sharing with a strong foundation in knowledge and information management. By providing clear definitions of **processes**, supporting these with the appropriate **technology** and ensuring that all **persons** are actively involved, we support networks and organisations to build and implement evidence systems that are collaborative, simple, light and co-created.

In 2015, we focused on supporting the **Start Network**, a global consortium of international organisations that seeks to connect people in crisis with the best possible solutions. We provided services for the Start Fund,[24] the Disaster and Emergency Preparedness Programme,[25] the Ebola Preparedness Programme in West Africa,[26] the Central African Republic Refugees Programme in

[24] The Start Fund is a multi-donor pooled fund managed by NGOs that enables quick response to 'under the radar' emergencies. It reached over 3 million crisis-affected people by the end of 2015.
[25] The DEPP is a £40 million DfID-funded programme in 10 countries that works through 14 consortium projects to improve humanitarian capacity at three levels: individual, organisational and systemic. It runs for 3 years.
[26] This is a £7 million DfID-funded consortium programme in Senegal, Ivory Coast, Guinea-Bissau and Mali.

Cameroon[27] and the European Refugee Response.[28] In 2016, we will expand beyond the Start Network to support the **Disasters Emergency Committee**[29] and other actors.

### What have we learned from supporting collective humanitarian response?

Perhaps the three most important lessons come from the fact that the stakes are raised in collective response. First, **simplicity** is absolutely key. One small upset in the system affects a lot more people when 24 organisations are involved. To overcome this risk every system must be as simple and accessible as possible.

Second, **if it's not used, it's wasted**. We tend to generate lots of information that we end up not using. In collective response, decision-makers often feel more compelled to act on the basis of concrete evidence because there are often stronger horizontal accountability influences. This is positive, as people are more compelled to justify their decisions with concrete evidence. At the same time, any data collected that is not generating practical insight into how to improve the response has an incredibly limited shelf-life. Judge data by how much potential it has to improve the response, and it will become a lot clearer what needs to be cut!

Third, **the health of the collaboration greatly influences the effectiveness of the response**. There are transaction costs in delivering collective action, but the assumption is that working together will achieve more than working alone. Not only does this assumption need to be interrogated, but so does the interface between healthy relationships and better response. Practicing monitoring, evaluation and learning in this context makes you a partnership broker as much as a technical expert.

### What have we learned about evaluating network intervention?

There is some, but not a lot, of literature about evaluating collaborative action. The evaluation and review processes for network interventions have to be adjusted for different accountability mechanisms, governance structures, timelines and expectations. In the first evaluation we managed, a flexible process created a fluid ecosystem for the evaluator to explore, but this was partly due to the strength of the evaluator. In the second evaluation, this broke down because the process did not allow for deep issues of quality assurance to be confronted at the inception phase. It is incredibly important to define a **clear process, including participation from key stakeholders and quality assurance controls by the evaluation manager** (whether an individual or steering committee)**.**

It's also been important to **diversify evaluation strategies**. When the objective of the evaluation is primarily learning, then an evaluation led by one organisation in the collective, might be the best option to ensure the evaluator understands the complexity of the relationships involved and the evaluation then generates network learning. So we've run real-time evaluations, for example, led by a non-implementing member of the consortium that have come out with more useful insight than we might have gained by contracting an independent consultant.

Other times, we can use the network context to our advantage. For example, we successfully piloted a **Peer Field Review methodology** in Malawi last year using peer review as the key strategy. The monitoring, evaluation and learning team facilitated 6 organisations peer reviewing each others' interventions and convened a learning workshop to further hone the findings. This was cheaper than a traditional evaluation and arguably kept learning more local. Peer review helped generate stronger relationships horizontally, too, which was essential for taking ownership of the findings.

Finally, we've learned to ask **more detailed design and process questions** when assessing collaborative action. The OECD-DAC criteria still form the bedrock, but we must look into the effect that implementing in a consortium has on the action itself. The concept of **collaborative (dis) advantage** (ie the relative advantage or disadvantage a member of the collective gains by being a part of the action apart from the express intent of the intervention itself) has helped a lot, because it allows for interogating with less linear approaches. We've built these questions into our MEL system as well as a large £1 million, 3 year evaluation run by the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative that we're managing for the Disaster Emergency Preparedness Programme (DEPP).

### How do humanitarian networks learn?

Maybe the question should be, **"Do humanitarian networks learn?"** This is a complex question because accountability lines in networks are often more horizontal than vertical. Both for generating evidence and for putting it into action, **networks require collective mechanisms**. Peer review, frequent dialogue or events, learning platforms, data visualisations, online dashboards all help generate evidence, capture and share lessons. Healthy, participatory governance structures with well-defined roles and responsibilities are incredibly important to enable action. To make learning happen, the monitoring, evaluation and learning has to be structured around the key decision points in the governance structures. Otherwise learning will not only be slow - it just won't happen.

Just like anything, learning requires trial and error, and being honest about what doesn't work and what does. Ultimately, it's our failures that have the best chance, when voiced, of improving humanitarian action the most, for the people who are worst affected by crises.

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[27] This is a £3 million DfID-funded consortium programme.
[28] This is a £16 million DfID-funded programme in Greece, Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia implemented by 17 partners to support over 3 million refugees.
[29] The DEC is an umbrella organization which launches and coordinates responses to major disasters overseas. It brings together 13 leading UK aid agencies to raise money at times of humanitarian crisis in poorer countries.

# PART III    Good Practices

# Introduction
## Going Beyond Centralised Evaluations...

During the review of the Evaluation Policy and Guidelines in 2015, a revised list of clearly defined types of evaluations was identified. As the Evaluation Learning and Accountability team is moving towards collecting more evidence through evaluations across the network, it also distinguishes between centralised and decentralised evaluations. Centralised evaluations are managed by the Evaluation Learning and Accountability team in the UK, whereas decentralised evaluations are managed by HQs or country teams directly. This diversity is also reflected in this year's good practices section.

Every Action Against Hunger evaluation highlights at least one good practice; but many times these are programme or project specific. Three good practices were brought to our attention through centralised evaluation reports this year. Apart from this the illustrated good practices originate from (i) an internal evaluation conducted in Sierra Leone, (ii) a fundraising campaign in an HQ and (iii) a donor letter.

Although having differing origins, these stories portray a number of great ideas and practices that we all can learn from and that have the potential to be replicated or scaled-up across the network. Additionally, they were selected in a participatory manner and expanded upon with the help of staff from various HQs and country offices.

Within this section you will read about the Vives Project; how one tweet started it all; about mothers and care givers self-screening their children; flexible survey support; beneficiary lists that are publicly displayed as well as a new community led approach.

Shortly, you will also be able to access a database of all centralised and decentralised good practices through the Evaluation, Accountability and Learning section of the No Hunger Forum.

## Vives Project - Livelihoods in Urban Areas

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Photo: Tbilisi, Georgia, courtesy ACF Spain

# More Employment, Greater Social Inclusion

**Why is it relevant to talk about livelihoods in urban areas?**

• **The world's population is moving into the major cities, which means that vulnerability is urbanising.**
• **Economic development is a priority in many countries where Action Against Hunger operates, especially in middle income countries where inequality is the biggest component of poverty. This particularly corresponds to the Sustainable Development Goal No. 8.**
• **Action Against Hunger's framework for the fight against malnutrition requires the establishment of mechanisms to improve livelihoods, as this is one of the underlying causes of malnutrition.**

**If Action Against Hunger wants to establish socio-economic protection for vulnerable families, especially in contexts of inequality, the following three factors need to be taken into account: (i) access to services such as education, health, sanitation; (ii) access to social protection systems; (iii) access to secure livelihoods.**

**In order to address these issues the Vives Project was established.**

### The Practice

The **Vives Project** is the social inclusion strategy of Action Against Hunger. It aims to facilitate access to employment or self-employment for people at risk of social and occupational exclusion in mainly urban areas, in order to improve their livelihoods. The intervention methodology includes programmes addressed directly to disadvantaged people, but also to other NGOs and actors that work towards the social and occupational inclusion of vulnerable people.

In particular, it focuses on:

**Employment and Entrepreneurship:** Action Against Hunger works on the employability of groups at risk of exclusion through empowering them to gain access to employment and entrepreneurship opportunities. The project utilises team work, skills training, coaching and mentoring to support and empower people to reach their professional goals. Entrepreneurial support also has a special emphasis on guidance throughout all the phases of establishing a business, from the analysis of the initial idea through to launch and consolidation.

**Skills Approach**: All interventions are based on the assumption that strengthening people's personal, social, and work-related skills will directly lead to an improvement in their employability; this is what Action Against Hunger calls the "skills approach." In general, interventions aim to improve people's competencies by focusing on existing skills as well as the acquisition of new technical skills.

**Urban environment**: The Vives Project takes advantage of the opportunities and resources presented by an urban environment, and makes these opportunities available to beneficiaries in order strengthen their livelihoods, help them to generate income, and push for social and professional integration. For example, the project attempts to increase the inclusion of beneficiaries in urban networks involving local authorities, companies, and local NGOs.

**Triangulation**: The **Vives Project** targets the employability of vulnerable people through a comprehensive intervention involving multiple distinct strategies which ultimately tackle the same goal. Three intervention levels were established, each defined according to the type of beneficiary, but with all levels aiming to improve the employability of people at risk of exclusion and facilitate

access to the labour market:

**A. Vives People.** Aimed at the unemployed and people at risk of exclusion: The aim of this stream is to improve the employability of people at risk of labour exclusion in order to facilitate their access to employment and entrepreneurship. This is done through two pathways. The first is based on the development of necessary skills to improve access to the labour market or further education, and the second is based on providing technical skills training, counselling, and other support for those interested in establishing their own business.

**B. Vives NGOs**. Aimed at social-inclusion NGOs with whom Action Against Hunger partners: This stream aims to create allies with other NGOs in order to reach a greater number of people. This involves helping to provide the tools necessary for NGO staff to deliver successful entrepreneurship training for people who are at risk of exclusion and looking to establish businesses. Under this stream the project also provides support and consultancy in order to strengthen the capability of NGOs to provide entrepreneurship training, technical assistance, mentoring, and access to finance.

**C. Vives Ecosystem**. Aimed at the social organisations, governments, and companies that make up the ecosystem of entrepreneurship in Spain and Europe: The aim of this stream is the creation of networks and knowledge to contribute to the entrepreneurship ecosystem in order to engage and provide opportunities for excluded people. In addition, this stream of the intervention develops transnational projects, such as the "European Network of social innovation for inclusive employment and entrepreneurship" which aims to generate socially innovative projects on inclusive entrepreneurship and employment in many European countries.

## Moving forward

Beyond simply focussing on activities, the **Vives Project** seeks to empower those at risk of employment exclusion. The **Vives Project** coaches help people to discover their own talents, skills and competencies. They are trained to help people discover these skills and abilities, and cultivate them in a manner that allows them to achieve their professional and personal goals.

It is essential to continue to strengthen individual support models combined with group activities. Particularly, group activities promote a sense of belonging along with helping to develop key interpersonal skills.

The multidimensional approach of the project, which uses different streams to involve a variety of stakeholders, is necessary for an ecosystem to develop which will continue generating employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for groups at risk.

This good practices developed by this approach to employability is being and can continue to be replicated in other countries in which Action Against Hunger works. These good practices and new intervention measures for assisting groups at risk include promoting opportunities for employment or self-employment through:
• Results-oriented personal change,
• Increasing personal capacity to improve employability,
• Promoting teamwork and personal empowerment through group work,
• Setting models of collaboration and win-win approach complementarity with other public and private sector organisations,
• Generating a social impact on individuals and the wider employment support system.

If you would like to know more about the Vives Project, please follow this link: www.vivesproyecto.org  or visit our Youtube channel: Vives Proyecto.

For more information on this practice, please contact Luis Gonzalez: lgonzalez@accioncontraelhambre.org

Photo: ACF Spain, courtesy Susana Vera
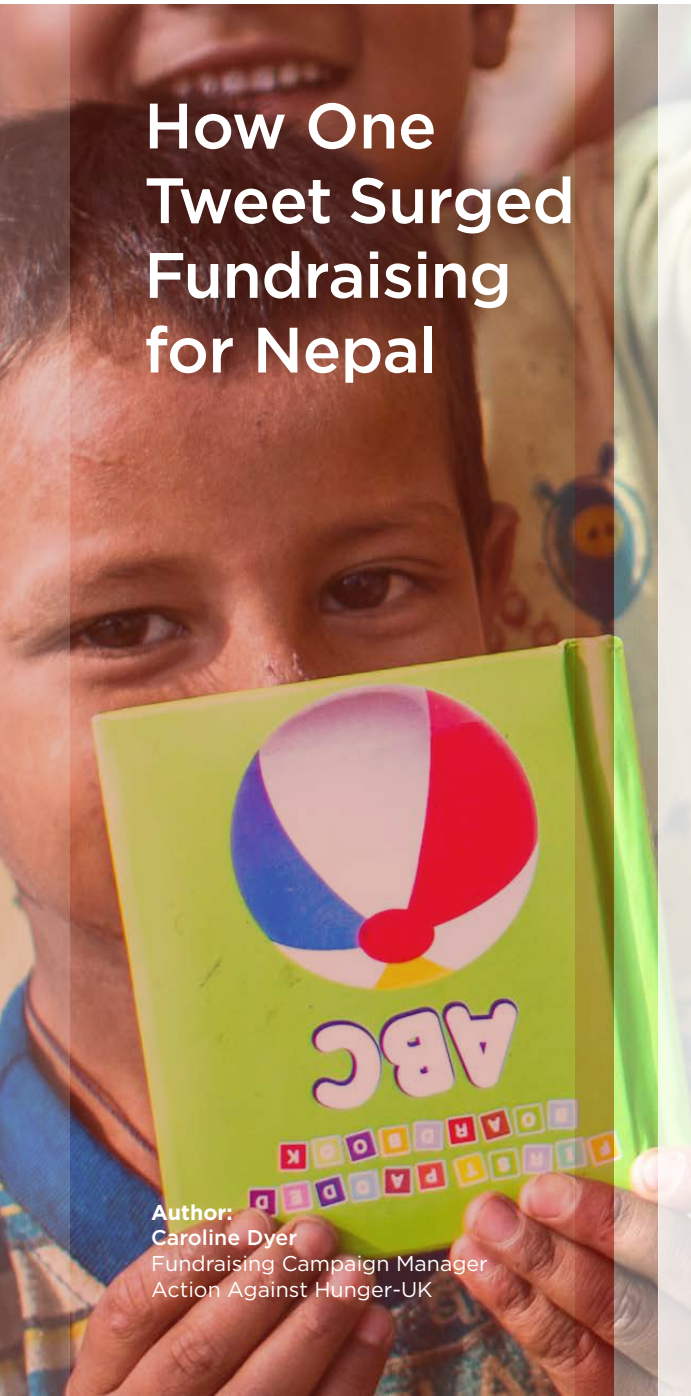
# How One Tweet Surged Fundraising for Nepal

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# #RestaurantsUniteForNepal

**When the earthquake hit Nepal in April 2015, Action Against Hunger UK raised £50,000 through the support of its connections within the UK restaurant industry. What made this appeal unique though, is that this surge of activity and support all happened entirely through word of mouth on social media.**

**Social media is now the primary tool for restaurants and chefs to market their business, promoting their latest dishes, chatting to fellow chefs and significantly for us, shouting about their charity of choice on Twitter and Instagram. An endorsement for Action Against Hunger can now be perfectly constructed in 140 characters and seen and shared by millions.**

### The Practice

Action Against Hunger UK has been building a network of restaurant and chef supporters - ranging from top Michelin starred chefs to street food vendors - for over 17 years. Their dedicated team of fundraisers makes it their business to be on the pulse of all things on trend in the UK food industry. By being at the heart of the industry they are able to fend off competition from other charities. Their main tool behind this is networking; whether that be face-to-face at industry evenings or simply through social media. Each staff member in the team works hard to build a profile and rapport with their target audience - chefs, restaurateurs, food critics, bloggers, and food public relations companies among others, who know the team individually.

When the Nepal Earthquake struck, NGOs' emergency response teams were not the only ones to mobilise, fundraising teams did too. With the general public primed to donate, competition between NGO fundraising teams is at a peak with one aim: to make sure their charity is the one of choice. The Food Related Fundraising Department at Action Against Hunger UK realised that this could be a moment to capitalise on and reach out to their very unique supporter base - instead of going through traditional methods, so they did via their social media channels.

The team approached one of their prominent chef supporters, both well respected in his profession and trusted by the industry on social media. In short, when Gary Usher, owner of restaurant Sticky Walnut and voice of @StickyWalnut asked his Twitter community of over 12,000 followers "Can any restaurants help fundraise for Action Against Hunger in Nepal?" the UK food industry listened.

Within seconds of this tweet, restaurants up and down the country, many with whom Action Against Hunger UK had never worked or spoken before, were getting in touch - over Twitter, directly to the team's individuals personal Twitter accounts - to say they wanted to fundraise for Action Against Hunger. Every tweet contributed to a domino effect, snowballing to thousands of requests at all times of day, which the fundraising team tracked, organised and answered individually and personally. The team understood the power of Twitter - and how to capitalize on this momentum. For 3 weeks they worked 18 hour days on the #RestaurantsUniteForNepal Twitter campaign alone. Every offer to fundraise was given the same attention that the team would normally give to any new restaurant supporter. Knowing that there could be potential for support beyond Nepal fundraising, they designed bespoke fundraising packs and tailor made each one to each request. Fundraising methods included: raffles, gala dinners, one-off fundraising evenings, putting a donation on a table bill, discretionary collection envelopes.

The Hashtag #RestaurantsUniteForNepal started to trend and national news outlets picked up on the campaign, and for a few weeks if you were fundraising for Nepal and you were a restaurant, the only charity to donate to was Action Against Hunger.

224 restaurants actively fundraised for Action Against Hunger during a period of 4 weeks; this is similar to the number of restaurants Action Against Hunger UK recruits for its annual fundraiser 'Love Food Give Food' which takes approximately 3 months to sign restaurants up to.

## Moving forward

The reasons for the success of this campaign came down to several factors. Firstly, instrumental to its success was having pre-existing relationships with a few key influential individuals who are happy to speak out on Action Against Hunger's behalf and advocate for it on a 'peer to peer' basis. The Food Related Fundraising team cannot rely on existing supporters to have the money to donate whenever they need it, however they can rely on them to advocate to potential new supporters who do. This campaign was made up of 75% new supporters propelled by 25% existing influential supporters. Another important factor was responding immediately and personally to each restaurant on social media. By doing this the team not only kept the momentum going, but they were also being visible to other twitter users who may also be looking to fundraise. Lastly, it was important to treat each supporter as an individual, to respond to their needs. Each supporter is different and knows how they are best placed to fundraise. The Food Related Fundraising team has this knowledge from previous experiences of trying to push restaurants to all do one thing - in doing so, you are more likely to drive potential supporters away.

With the right amount of social media and networking there is no reason that other HQs or country office - and the teams and individuals within - could not replicate this same fundraising method. Look at your supporter base - do you have a specific industry or audience you could tap into? How can you really understand your fundraising supporter base? Do you have influential voices that will speak on your behalf to their peers?

Finally, each employee for Action Against Hunger can be an important voice and point of contact to the supporters. Using social media is a wonderful way of interacting with them on a more personal level and enables spreading the word, pictures, and updates without needing to read emails, website or articles. If you do one thing today, make it: getting your teams online and interacting with communities, because you never know what voices are listening at the pivotal moment to create the perfect storm.

Photo: Nepal, courtesy Daniel Burgui

For more information on this practice, please contact Caroline Dyer: c.dyer@actionagainsthunger.org.uk or @cazdyer_ACF

# Mid-Upper Arm Circumference Screening by Mothers and Care Givers

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# An Ebola Emergency Measure Turned into a Life Saver

**In Sierra Leone, community health workers are usually in charge of screening children under five years old to monitor their nutritional status. However, the onset of the Ebola virus disease outbreak disrupted this practice. The infection of many health workers at the beginning of the outbreak led to the Ministry of Health and Sanitation (MoHS) and its partners designing a "no-touch policy" aimed at reducing the risk of infections in the country. This policy greatly affected the regular screening carried out by community health workers, thus leading to the identification of an alternative screening strategy by the MoHS and its partners. Highlighted in the Learning Review 2014, in an independent evaluation of an Action Against Hunger programme in the West African region in 2015 and drawn from experience gained in Niger, one alternative strategy was actually training mothers and care givers to themselves use Mid-Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC)[30] tapes to screen their child's nutritional status as part of an effort to reinforce community healthcare activities in many countries. Action Against Hunger in Sierra Leone adapted its programme strategies accordingly and has started training mothers and care givers on how to measure their child's MUAC and provided them with MUAC tapes to enable them to screen their children and detect signs of malnutrition and seek appropriate treatment in a timely manner.**

## The Practice

During the Ebola virus disease outbreak in Sierra Leone, community health workers were only allowed to diagnose children under-five for signs of malnutrition visually, as a result of the no-touch policy. This approach proved ineffective, especially in detecting cases of Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM), and as a result many children were misdiagnosed and consequently not admitted to the treatment programme once they arrived at the health facility. Furthermore, as the level of trust in the health system continued to drop, mothers refused to take their children to the health facilities for their routine growth monitoring and check-ups, leaving the MUAC screening by mothers and care givers as the only option for nutritional status checks in the communities. Prior to the roll-out of this method, a field test was carried out on the information, education and communication material developed on use of the MUAC tape by mothers and care givers. The results of this field test revealed that 67% of mothers were able to correctly measure their child's MUAC, and 76% were able to correctly perform an examination of oedema.[31] Action Against Hunger were of critical support to the MoHS and UNICEF in the development of the information, education and communication material as well as the preliminary field test and analysis.

As the strategy was rolled-out nation-wide, Action Against Hunger trained 'Lead Mothers'[32] of 'Mother Support

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[30] "Mid-upper arm circumference (MUAC) measures the muscle mass of the upper arm. A flexible measuring tape is wrapped around the mid-upper arm (between the shoulder and elbow) to measure its circumference. MUAC should be measured to the nearest 0.1cm. MUAC is a rapid and effective predictor of risk of death in children aged 6 to 59 months and is increasingly being used to assess adult nutritional status". Source: http://www.unicef.org/nutrition/training/2.3/13.html.

[31] Oedema is the retention of water and sodium in the extra-cellular spaces, generally it accounts for 10–30% of bodyweight, but in the most severe cases of oedema the proportion can reach 50%." Source adapted: http://www.unicef.org/nutrition/training/3.1/20.html

[32] The Lead Mothers (LM) are identified on the basis of the experience, suitability for the role, their charisma and the understanding about nutrition. The LM are trained on Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF), hygiene practices and counseling techniques by Action Against Hunger and representatives of the MoHS to ensure they have the knowledge and capacities to cascade the information to other mothers in the communities, part of the Mother Support Groups (MSGs).

Groups'[33] in the west of Sierra Leone on the correct use of the MUAC tapes; and supported and supervised them in conducting cascade trainings in their communities. Trainings were followed by the distribution of MUAC tapes to parents or care givers of children under-five. Action Against Hunger distributed over 55,000 MUAC tapes in the western region of the country and Moyamba Districts. Throughout the process 'Lead Mothers' played a vital role in ensuring all mothers were enrolled in the process and were able to measure the MUAC of their children and check for oedema correctly, independently and regularly. Community health workers continued to monitor the referral of children to the health facilities when a child was identified to be in need of treatment.

The data disclosed the rate of Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) and MAM were similar to one of the latest national SMART[34] surveys conducted in June 2014. The SMART survey showed a SAM rate of 0.1% (0%-0.9%, 95% C.I.) in urban areas, 0.8% (0.4%-1.6%, 95% C.I.) in the slums, and 0.7% (0.3%-1.8%, 95% C.I.) in rural areas. The maternal and child health week data showed SAM rates in western area were 0.2% in rural area and 0.3% in urban. This revealed a potentially limited immediate effect of Ebola virus disease on the nutritional status of children under-five and highlighted the strong capacities of mothers to correctly monitor the nutritional status of their children.

The strategy proved to be simple, effective, of low cost (about US$ 0.5 per tape) and easy to roll-out. In April 2015, data was collected and showed that 80% of children referred were admitted for treatment, indicating the efficiency and validity of the measurement taken at community level. The strategy therefore has the potential to support communities overcoming barriers such as long distances to health centres and delays in referral given mothers wait for community health workers to carry out assessments. The strategy of mother and care givers conducting MUAC screening requires substantial training and supervision of mothers and community health workers to avoid incorrect referral and consequently rejection at health facility level, which could prevent mothers from bringing their children again. Furthermore, the strategy needs to be accompanied by proper information on the use of ready-to-use-therapeutic-food to avoid the misuse at community level as self-medication as the product can be wrongly found in the market.

### Moving forward

The MUAC screening by mothers and care givers for the detection of early signs of malnutrition introduced in Sierra Leone during the Ebola outbreak has proven to be effective and Action Against Hunger in Sierra Leone recommends that it is further developed and integrated in the national protocol. In order to move forward however, the practice must be further developed.

As the strategy started as an emergency measure, not all mothers and care givers were reached. Therefore, MoHS and partners should ensure every mother is reached, trained and monitored on the correct usage of the MUAC tapes. This would need more MUAC tapes to be procured and distributed at community level. Lead mothers and members of the mother support groups should be further trained and supported in cascading the training to their peers. Furthermore, supervision with community health workers should be strengthened. At community level this strategy should be coupled with other activities aiming at preventive malnutrition such as Infant and young child feeding counselling, support in vegetable gardening and income generating activities which could help to improve the dietary diversity of their children. In addition, malnutrition screening should be included in all maternal and child health week campaigns in Sierra Leone which will help identify malnourished children in the communities and refer them for treatment. Lastly, a proper monitoring system on the strategy should be put in place to evaluate the quality of the implementation, the quality of the referral and the follow up at community level.

For more information on this practice, please contact Fabienne Rousseau: frousseau@actioncontrelafaim.org

Photo: Mauritania, courtesy Francois Lenoir

[33]The MSG is a group encompassing ten (10) to fifteen (15) pregnant women, lactating mothers with children under-two, teenage mothers, elderly experienced mothers and male representatives; led by one mother, the lead mother. The lead mother are being attached to the closest Peripheral Health Unit (PHU) ensuring the link between the communities and the health facility.
[34] Standardized Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transitions.

## Bringing Transparency by Publicly Displaying Selected Beneficiary Lists in Communities

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# Check It Out

**Traditionally, organisations select beneficiaries through rapid assessments of the village with the help of committees formed by different local and international organisations. This approach can exclude households or individuals, either inadvertently or deliberately, who should be included. To minimise the likelihood of this negative outcome, the Action Against Hunger team in Pakistan has started to share beneficiary lists with targeted communities. During an independent evaluation in 2015, this good practice emerged and requires further investigation.**

### The Practice

To ensure a transparent beneficiary selection process, Action Against Hunger first identifies smart selection criteria[35] during the project design phase for both the household and village levels. The team then engages with the relevant communities for the beneficiary selection. First, communities are asked to form a committee which is tasked with identifying a preliminary list of beneficiaries based on the selection criteria. This is followed by a verification process of ten per cent of the selected beneficiaries by the Action Against Hunger Programme Quality and Accountability (PQA) team. This produces a provisional beneficiary list which the team takes to the target community and displays publicly.

At this stage everybody in the community is asked and encouraged to comment on it. It gives the wider community another chance to object to any name that is regarded as unsuitable and which should not be targeted in the intervention.

Nevertheless, while implementing this method the beneficiary privacy and confidentiality should not be forgotten. If there are specific requests from a beneficiary that his/her name should not be included due to a valid reason, such requests should be granted and maybe alternative ways could be considered.

In November 2014, the Action Against Hunger Bannu team followed this procedure and publicly displayed the beneficiary list in the target area. It was displayed for two weeks in order to allow ample time for the community to respond. The communities better understood who was selected as a beneficiary for certain activities and at the same time it enhanced transparency and accountability of Action Against Hunger's work. If community members feel they have been unjustifiably excluded from a programme they can cause disruption during implementation but publicly displaying beneficiary lists can avoid this.

Their complaints are properly registered, independently verified and investigated by the PQA unit. A total of 153 complaints were registered with the unit during this project life time and all project activities were carried out smoothly and without the risk of disruption from non-beneficiaries.

Example of a complaint and how it was resolved:
During a field visit in the Bannu district, the PQA team was contacted by a person from the North Waziristan Agency through the accountability hotline. He was a resident of the village 'Mirbaz barakzai' and was an Internally Displaced Person (IDP) there. He made a serious complaint with regards to a cash grant distribution in their village, stating:

*"We (nine) beneficiaries still haven't received the first tranche of conditional cash grant. Our names where registered by the Action Against Hunger field teams during the process and we were confirmed to be on the list. The bank staff shared with us that payments were released from the bank under our names and said they did not have any pending beneficiaries. Kindly look into this matter and provide us our remaining cash assistance".*

A detailed investigation was conducted by Action Against

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[35] This criteria is set by consulting the provincial and national clusters group i.e. UNFAO, WFP, WASH cluster groups, who already designed it - keeping in view the country's vulnerability.

Hunger PQA department. An initial visit was paid to the complainant community and the data which was shared through the accountability hotline was confirmed in the beneficiaries' registration database. Community members were found to have replaced the deserving registered beneficiaries in the list with fake records. The PQA team corrected the records and provided the cash grants to the intended beneficiaries.

This good practice provides communities with a level of project ownership allowing them to express their opinion openly regarding inclusion and exclusion of selectees. This initiative is also in line with the Core Humanitarian Standards, which emphasises to adopt greater transparency and accountability mechanisms.

## Moving forward

It is recommended that other Action Against Hunger teams consider publicly displaying beneficiary lists in their programmes. The lists should be made available in more than one public place and not only in the implementation area. This will certainly bring more transparency and more accountability in making beneficiaries lists before starting formal implementation of other project activities. This good practice seems to be easily replicated elsewhere and also fits into other countries, if backed-up by the commitment from management and tailored to cultural sensitivities.



Photo: ACF Pakistan

For more information on this practice, please contact Shahzad Ajmal Paracha: pqaco.pk@acf-international.org

# Planning for the Unexpected
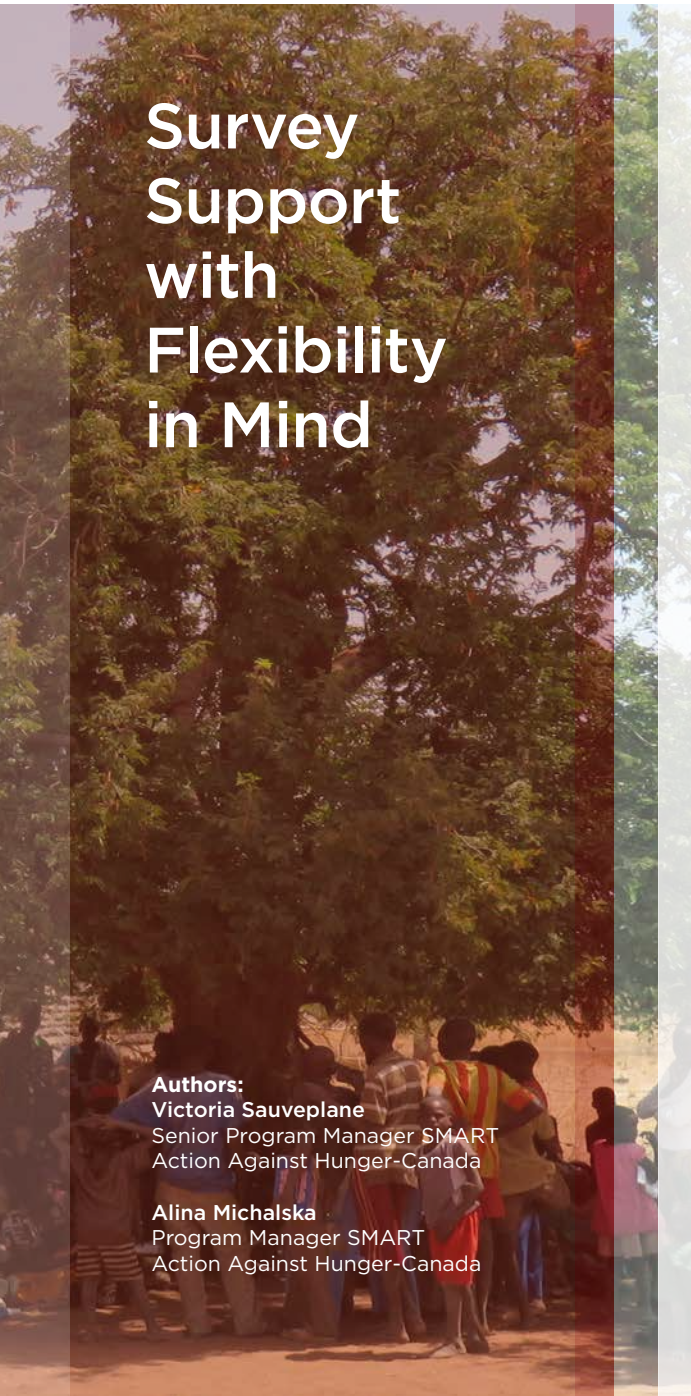
## Survey Support with Flexibility in Mind

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During humanitarian crises, the response capacity of governments, UN agencies, and international NGOs may be compromised as they struggle to find adequate technical and human resources to meet urgent survey needs. In order to respond to these inter-agency survey challenges, a process for surge technical expertise and human resource support - known as Emergency Survey Support (ESS) - was developed by the SMART team at Action Against Hunger Canada. A memorandum of understanding was signed in 2014 between the Global Nutrition Cluster and Action Against Hunger Canada, as SMART project convener, which outlines the criteria and activation processes for ESS.

Given the neutral and inter-agency mandate of the SMART global project, ESS support can include any of the following:
• Guidance on implementation of mid- to large-scale surveys, including the coordination, planning, technical guidance, training and supervision of inter-agency personnel.
• Technical expertise for national-level clusters for the coordination, implementation and management of nutrition surveys.
• Technical advice and capacity building to national information working groups on how to improve survey management, data collection, analysis and validation.
• Leadership on the design and piloting of contextualized methodological approaches.

Under ESS[36], the SMART team contributes short-term technical expertise for survey needs during humanitarian crises, or high-risk nutrition situations with an absence of reliable data. Prior to the development of the ESS, there was no existing nutrition survey surge support for nutrition partners.

### The Practice

In times of humanitarian crises or high-risk nutrition situations, a partner agency would first contact Action Against Hunger Canada's SMART team with their needs. Regular communication allows the SMART team to better understand survey context, needs and goals. In-country cluster partners, if relevant, are kept abreast of ESS deployments from the SMART team. As common understanding is reached, a detailed Terms of Reference (ToR) is drafted and negotiated between the SMART team and in-country partner(s), outlining responsibilities of all involved parties. The scope of responsibilities largely depends on survey needs and resources available. ESS is a collaborative initiative between the SMART team and the in-country partner(s), and the division of responsibilities is subject to rearrangement depending on the specific context. **Table 1** details an example of how responsibilities can be divided between the SMART team and partner(s).

| Partner | SMART Team at Action Against Hunger |
|---|---|
| • Financial resources to cover survey costs (staffing, training, transport, supplies etc.). <br><br> • Administrative support for the survey, recruitment, training, standardisation test and demographic information. <br><br> • Logistical and security support for SMART team ESS staff (i.e., transportation, accommodation if necessary). <br><br> • Coordination with relevant local stakeholders (e.g. MoH, local organisations). | • Technical survey support either in-country or remotely with regards to planning and implementing a survey (survey protocol, sample size calculation, field visits, etc.) <br><br> • Training of in-country staff to lead SMART survey <br><br> • Sensitisation events for local government staff & partners on the importance of nutrition data for decision-making. <br><br> • Assist partners with framework to build capacity and national data quality review |

Table 1: Example division of responsibilities for Emergency Survey Support

[36] Based on a large number of lessons learnt from different ESS deployments, the importance of having partners' contributing costs to this surge support was stressed. It is on a case-by-case basis, but generally the team covers all costs for the SMART specialist to be deployed and then the partners cover the additional costs, whether it is the planning of surveys, training of survey teams for the implementation of a survey, training of survey managers, organization of a technical workshop- to name a few of the activities that have been supported in the past with ESS.

The ideal timing for ESS deployment is 2 weeks after initial communications with the SMART Team. In 2015, the SMART team provided emergency survey support to Malawi, Syria and South Sudan. Two of these deployments were triggered by humanitarian crises as a result of violence or natural disaster, and one deployment (South Sudan) occurred in a high risk nutrition situation. The main objectives of each of these deployments differed in their context-specific needs (Table 2).

Following the 2015 Syria strategic response plan, which included better understanding and monitoring of the nutrition situation, the SMART team at Action Against Hunger Canada was requested to provide technical support for the planning, training and data quality assessment of nutrition surveys in two governorates of Syria. The primary aim was to provide support for the NGOs participating in the two surveys and build on previously existing capacity for potential SMART surveys in the region. The SMART team provided face-to-face field supervisor and training of trainers training to 20 Syrian participants, in addition to remote support to enumerator trainings held in Syria and throughout data collection in the field. Direct supervision of survey teams during data collection was not always possible because of security risks. Constant communication between enumerators and survey managers included mobile sharing of images to verify potential cases of malnutrition in the field. The successful SMART surveys completed in two governorates of Syria indicate that with proper training and logistics, high quality SMART[37] surveys are feasible inside conflict zones. Nevertheless, capacity building in SMART surveys are not always the main objective of an ESS deployment. In December, the primary activity of ESS in South Sudan was technical support to the in-country integrated food security phase classification process.

| Country | Date | Rationale | Main Objective |
|---------|------|-----------|----------------|
| Malawi | April | Natural disaster | Capacity building in SMART to support surveys in flood-affected areas |
| Syria | June | Conflict/Violence | Capacity building in SMART to support surveys in two governorates |
| South Sudan | December | High-risk nutrition situation | Supporting Integrated Food Security Phase Classification process |

Table 2: Emergency Survey Support in 2015

## Moving forward

It is vital that ESS remains a flexible survey support function to successfully address urgent and emerging field challenges in order to obtain valuable information for better decision-making during emergencies. Nonetheless, a negotiated ToR is essential to understand the division of tasks and responsibilities for involved parties. Continuous accountability for the required tasks and responsibilities by partners with respect to an agreed upon timeline is critical to ensure smooth operationalisation of ESS.

It is recommended that the following be completed prior to ESS deployment for effectiveness and efficiency:
• Established coordinator/supervisory hierarchy of in-country partner(s),
• Emphasised roles and responsibilities of partner(s) following data collection for timely release of survey reports,
• Additional efforts by in-country partner(s) to obtain demographic and population data, and
• Prepared and translated support and training documents, if applicable.

Since the development of ESS, a similar mechanism called the Technical Rapid Response Team (TRRT) has been created to respond to inter-agency challenges and provide partners with emergency response technical expertise and human resource support. The TRRT aims to improve overall emergency nutrition response by deploying technical surge advisors in major and complex humanitarian crisis and by providing remote support and building the capacity of stakeholders involved in humanitarian responses. The TRRT, convened by Action Against Hunger, International Medical Corps, and Save the Children, consists of high capacity technical skills and expertise in assessment, infant and young children feeding in emergencies, Community-Based Management of Acute Malnutrition (CMAM) and social behaviour change. It is important to note that both ESS and TRRT are not gap filling resources, but they provide a technical support that should be used for the benefits of the wider collective humanitarian community intervening in a given country. The involvement and coordination of other stakeholders, besides implementing partners for example staff from local Ministries of Health and Institutes of Statistics, is important for the sustainability and future of mechanisms like ESS to deliver both remote and in-country technical support following rapid-onset emergencies, protracted crises and areas lacking up-to-date nutrition information.



For more information on this practice, please contact the SMART team at Action Against Hunger-Canada: info@smartmethodology.org

[37]As evaluated by the Emergency Nutrition Assessment software, plausibility check scored 1 and 8 penalty points for each survey, respectively.

# Community Led Ebola Management and Eradication (CLEME)

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# In the Lead...

**Throughout the 2014 - 2015 Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) outbreak in West Africa, over 28,600 cases and 11,300 deaths were reported**[38] **in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea.**

As highlighted in the Learning Review 2014 article on the EVD Outbreak, the continued spread of the virus has revealed that case management activities were not sufficient to control the disease, and that social mobilisation and community engagement were essential at all levels of the Ebola response for preventing human to human transmission.

Social mobilisation in the form of mass public campaigning played a major role during the first stage of the response, and the first "Knowledge, Attitude, Practices" (KAP) study conducted in Sierra Leone in August 2014 revealed that more than 90% of those interviewed were aware of Ebola, its signs and symptoms, and the method of transmission. Despite this, however, the KAP also revealed the poor rate of change in safe behaviours and practices by the population to prevent Ebola transmission.

In October 2014 Action Against Hunger Sierra Leone initiated an innovative approach to enable the shift from a one way communication approach to a participatory approach aiming at behavioural change, which was identified as a good practice in an internal evaluation in 2015.

## The Practice

The Community Led Ebola Management and Eradication (CLEME) approach **aims at triggering the behavioural change needed by communities to strengthen community resilience to the outbreak and prevent further resurgence by ensuring real and sustainable improvements** through:
• Providing the communities with the means to conduct their own appraisal and analysis of the Ebola outbreak, their safety regarding the disease and its consequence if nothing is done;
• Instilling a feeling of urgency in engaging in community actions that will prevent the community experiencing infections;
• Providing technical support to the communities in the implementation of the identified solutions and actions adopted.

The CLEME approach is a 5 step process adapted from the community-led total sanitation approach. It is based on interactive, often visual tools that enable the participation of all members of the community, regardless of their literacy level. The 5 steps to the approach are:
1) **Pre-triggering**; 2) **Triggering**; 3) **Community action plan**; 4) **Training of key stakeholders**; and 5) **Monitoring and follow up**.

**1) Pre-triggering:** This step addresses the selection of the communities. It focuses primarily on building trust within the community and raising awareness on Ebola.

**2) Triggering:** Triggering is based on emulating a collective sense of risk among the community members as they assess their level of preparedness about the spread of Ebola and its negative effect on the entire community. This includes community mapping and identifying existing practices related to Ebola transmission, including treating the sick, burying the dead, and hand washing.

**3) Community action plan:** The role of the community action plan (CAP) is to identify necessary disease prevention activities that should be implemented by

[38]Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) case counts as of January 17, 2016.

the community, such as building a village isolation unit, establishing a Community Support Group, and ensuring that there are hand washing facilities at the household level.

**4) Training of key stakeholders within the Community Support Group:** The Community Support Group is a group (usually 7-8 members) created in the community following the triggering phase of the CLEME process. The training session for this group ensures that the community members have appropriate tools and sufficient knowledge to make decisions, understand key responsibilities and take on their role successfully.

**5) Monitoring and follow up:** The triggering point is the stage at which members of a community either decide to act together to stop Ebola, or express doubts, hesitations, or disagreements. Follow-up after this point is critical. Building on action taken during the community action plan is crucial to encourage the community to implement what they have collectively decided.

## Moving forward

Even though it is a complex matter to evaluate the effective impact of the CLEME approach in the overall Ebola response, the CLEME approach as implemented by Action Against Hunger in 400 villages in the districts of Kambia and Moyamba has revealed its unique strength in creating a greater sense of ownership and engagement in the communities towards limiting and controlling the spread of the disease. Main achievements include: community action plans and community support groups have been developed in all targeted villages, in 80% of the villages isolation rooms were identified and constructed as a crucial move to take care of suspected cases while waiting for referral, tippy tap handwashing stations were rolled out, and a no-touch policy and by-laws have been decided and adopted by all communities.

The following key aspects were identified in the internal evaluation of the CLEME approach in March 2015 to move this good practice forward:
• Integrating the CLEME program in the National Community Event Based Surveillance (CEBS) strategy,
• Reinforcing the participation of Action Against Hunger in the main national and district level coordination groups,
• Learning from the CLEME approach how to improve Action Against Hunger's quality response to public health emergencies,
• Increasing visibility of the CLEME approach at internal and external levels,
• Developing Action Against Hunger's international capacity to implement behaviour change programmes in a public health emergency context,
• Strengthening Action Against Hunger's operational capacity to scale-up the CLEME programme,
• Monitoring the community action plan and ensuring ongoing analysis,
• Mainstreaming gender,
• Establishing feedback mechanisms.

Photo: South Sudan, courtesy Ben Allen

For more information on this practice, please contact Dr Jean Lapègue: jlapegue@actioncontrelafaim.org

# Credits

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Photo: Nepal, courtesy Daniel Burgui