



FEED THE FUTURE

The U.S. Government's Global Hunger & Food Security Initiative

Office Hour Discussion

Webinar Transcript

Helen Aufderheide

Okay, great!

So, thank you all for joining us for this Office Hours discussion. We are really lucky to have two representatives from the Feed the Future Hingawese team joining us today to speak a little bit about their experience using the Nutrition Sensitive Agricultural Design guide. So, if you might remember I shared some posts where we worked with Hingawese back in 2019 to help them prepare to deliver and facilitate the design guide workshop for their team when they were going into their third year of work planning. So, we have two speakers from Hingawese joining us today. First off is Jeanne d'Arc Nyirajyambere. I think I am pronouncing that correctly; I apologize Jeanne if I butchered but she is the nutrition director for Hingawese and leads the integration of their nutrition, gender and social behavior change in this activity, to increase the dietary diversity and improve nutrition status for a woman in reproductive age and children. She has more than 20 years of experience as a nutritionist, nurse, veteran master, trainer and manager, including eight years working with US Aid projects.

Next, we have Margaret Anderson who is the program director for Hingawese who has a decade of experience in development and program management in Africa and the former Soviet Union, and she leads the program implementation strategy and contractual compliance with Washington DC Program Management Unit for CNFA and for a portfolio, that includes Hingawese and some other activities. Those are very condensed versions of their bios but I shared out the full version with the invite for this if you want to check that out.

Today, we are just going to start off with a brief presentation by Jeanne d'Arc, who is going to share about her Hingawese experience, preparing to facilitate the design guide, why they decided to use it, how it impacted their activities and some general reflections about the experience and then we will save the rest of the time for questions and answer. So, I will hand it over to Jeanne to get started.

Jeanne d'Arc

Thank you, Helen, my name is Jeanne d'Arc Nyirajyambere, I am the director of nutrition programs for CNFE Hingawese in Rwanda. So, we chose to use the guide because we were in the fifth year of the project. It was the right time for us to sit with our staff from our component, agriculture team, market team, nutrition team, and see where we are after two years, what challenges do we have, and how can we improve the project to reach our indicators and outcomes. We worked with Advancing Nutrition and the Bureau of Food Security US team to see which nutrition outcomes we will use for the project. We had six and we selected three. And who are the beta team to lead and to facilitate the workshop. We selected six, me as director of nutrition, the deputy chief of party senior agronomist, the director of business and the market, the director of monitoring and evaluation, and the running advisor is the moderator of the session. So, the training took three days but we had around five days, including virtual sessions and in-person sessions, to prepare the workshop. We selected the participants based on three components following the guide like: the people should not be over 20. So, we selected 30 participants from each component. They were 13 in total, plus six facilitators and the team from the US, to do the

workshop during the three days. That is the summary, I think Margaret can add and we will answer the questions you have. Thank you.

Margaret Anderson

Great, thank you so much Jeanne. That is really helpful. You talked about the process of preparing for the design guide workshop and who participated. I am curious because Hingawese is a program that was already in year three of implementation and for everyone who is not already familiar, Hingawese is a five-year “feed the future” initiative with three components focused on improving smallholder farmers productivity, market access and nutrition outcomes in five value chains that are: maize, Irish potato, orange, flesh sweet potato, high iron beans and horticulture. So, Jeanne, maybe you could talk about any challenges that we had using the design guide because we were already in the third year of the program and we were not really in the design stage.

Jeanne d’Arc

Yes, the first challenge we faced was that we already had indicators, we had outcomes, we had the targets for the project, so when we met with Advancing Nutrition and they presented the Nutrition Sensitive Agriculture Outcomes, we were ready to implement all six. But their devices were better to choose three among the six to fit with the project. So, it was a big debate with the team to select the three among the six. That is the first challenge we faced. And the proposed solution was to choose the first one which is improved availability of diverse nutrient rich foods in the local market, the second improve the affordability of diverse nutrient-rich food in the local market, and the third one was increase the income controlled in the equitable opportunity for women. And because we already had indicators, it was to review the strategies, the practices, and align them with the targets we had. We went through that exercise during the workshop. Thank you.

Margaret Anderson

Thank you, Jeanne. I think this is a great example of ways that the design guide is still useful for programs that are mid-implementation. It is not too late to take the lessons of the design guide even once a program is a couple years into the life of project. I know that for Hingawese Jeanne, you described that there were some activities and approaches, you mentioned some new outcomes that we aligned with Hingawese activities and some of our activities even changed a little bit or tweaked not only in the nutrition component. Could you give a couple of examples of some activities that we changed or aligned differently to match with the design guide principles?

Jeanne d’Arc

Yes. For example, to increase the time and the energy saving for women, we distributed bicycles to 140 women in the east province, for women to transport the harvest. And we also offered a grant; a processing juice making equipment to a woman in the south province, to increase the desirability of nutritious food among the consumers, especially for poor women. We linked the farmers to agrodealers, that is the activity which was included in year three: to link the farmers to agrodealers, so that they can access the vegetables, high iron beans seed in affordable small packaging and also Hingawese also offered a grant to Kady group so that they can produce nutritious bread and cookies with office products. That is an example.

Another one is the poultry program. We designed the poultry program in three components: like looking at production of chickens, feeds, drugs and also looking at the market for eggs and meat, looking at the consumption of those products. The poultry program was designed following the three components after this design guide workshop. Thank you.

Margaret Anderson

Thanks very much for these examples Jeanne. I am not sure if everyone is aware, Hingawese is a fairly large program with a 32 million dollar budget and more than 130 staff in 11 offices throughout Rwanda.

And Jeanne, you had mentioned that the design guide workshop had just barely more than 20 participants. Maybe you could talk about the ways that after the design guide workshop was completed, our team ensured that the whole Hingawese staff throughout I I offices also absorbed the lessons that were drawn from the workshop. Thank you.

Jeanne d'Arc

Thank you. The facilitators, the participants for the workshop and the advisors of the three components, we developed the three year work plan based on the needs, the challenges and they proposed the solution from the feed staff. So we met with them to review the strategies, the practices, the activities we planned to reach our targets. And we also conducted different sessions with the stakeholders like other partners involved in nutrition, USAID is a donor, and MINAGRI [...] the government people and also the mayors of district to review the work plan so that we align the nutrition activities with the government priorities to reduce malnutrition in Rwanda, and also to validate the work plan for year three. But we did the same exercise also with EF4, Thank you.

Margaret Anderson

Great, thank you Jeanne for describing the way that we consulted with and communicated other stakeholders on the program. I wonder, after implementing the design guide this time, is there anything that you would have done differently looking back on the process? Over.

Jeanne d'Arc

Yes, if I look at the workshop we did, it was a three days full workshop and Hingawese is a large project where we had to train an agriculture team on nutrition so that they are aware of nutrition, background nutrition, how to integrate nutrition in an agricultural program. So, if I have to repeat the workshop for a project like Hingawese, I will do five days so that it allows more time for the team, for practical examples and also to go through the practices, the strategies. I will do five days. Thank you.

Margaret Anderson

Great, thank you. It is important to allow enough time for these processes especially with a big program. I think we have gone through a couple of high-level questions about the design guide. Helen, maybe we could open up for questions from the group. I wanted to be sure that there is enough time for discussion with everyone who is here.

Helen Aufderheide

Yeah, that sounds great. So, if you have any questions you can feel free to post them in the chat or just unmute yourself and speak - and verbalize your question.

Pride Ebile

Hi, I am Ebile Pride at the University of Hurlingham here in Germany. I would like to ask, what are the principal changes, since your program has been ongoing before you started using the guide. So, what are the principal changes that, after the workshop, with the implementation of the guide, that you people experienced that might have actually facilitated how things are being done right now. Thank you.

Helen Aufderheide

Jeanne or Margaret, do you want to take that question?

Jeanne d'Arc

Yes, what I can say is that currently, the staff understands the word nutrition and they prioritize to make sure most of the interventions are nutrition sensitive. I gave some examples and also the way we are working with local authorities, with the government of Rwanda, with other partners, they really recognize Hingawese as the pioneer of the nutrition sensitive agriculture and we will also discord review the nutrition sensitive strategy so that we make sure it is really nutrition sensitive. Thank you.

Margaret Anderson

I will just chip in here. Ebile thank you for the question. I think the design guide was a great way for Hingawese to ensure that, as Jeanne said, nutrition was not only a part of the nutrition component, but mainstreamed into the other activities. Nutrition became a part of market access, nutrition became a part of the productivity mandate of the program as well. Over.

Helen Aufderheide

Great, did that respond to your question Pride? Did you have any follow-up or was that clear?

Pride Ebile

Yeah, that is really clear. At least, I got certain things but I have a follow-up question. From my experience most often like the beneficiaries, they do not really prioritize nutrition. Nutrition is not a priority to them because most of them do not really understand nutrition to be a problem. So how do you tackle this especially when you are talking about the market aspect and maybe food in itself.

Jeanne d'Arc

Thank you. What we did was to develop a nutrition sensitive capacity package so that it is integrated. We make sure we train the agriculture team; we train the market team, so that they know among the various chains that Hingawese has, which are nutritious, so that they promote those nutritious crops in the district we work with for the beneficiaries. We also cascaded the training to our community-based volunteers and for Hingawese we used both community health workers and we also used farmer promoters. So, they are trained together and they meet with the staff on monthly basis so that they learn then they cascaded the knowledge to the cooperatives and to the nutrition care groups during monthly meetings; beneficiaries meet on monthly basis. So, what we do is to make sure the crops the beneficiaries are consuming, the food they produce, is available in the market to purchase. We also train the beneficiaries on budgeting prioritization so that they know how to prioritize and nutrition is among the household priorities for women of reproductive age and children. Which food they should consume and if they grow them, they prioritize to consume them. If not, they use the money they save to purchase them on the market. Thank you.

Helen Aufderheide

So, I see. If we have another question in the chat from Matema and it says what criteria was used to reduce the outcomes from six to three? And why were six outcomes not achievable?

Jeanne d'Arc

With the Advancing Nutrition team, they advised us according to Hingawese's scope. Yes, we tackle on all six but we prioritize the three following the component, but that does not mean we don't also work on others. But our priorities are the three. So, we did the exercise in groups looking at our indicators, looking at our targets and the outcomes, to select the three priority outcomes we will focus on. Like I said, we already had the scope, we already had the indicators, we would not change and we had the outcomes. So, our flexibility in the year three was to see strategies, practices, activities we are implementing so that they help us. They are more nutrition sensitive and they help us to reach the outcomes we have. Thank you. Margaret you have something to add?

Margaret Anderson

Sure. I would just add to Matema's question that Hingawese began implementing the design guide at the beginning of year three of our program. And as Jeanne said, we already had specific indicators and targets. In a scenario where the design guide was deployed from the beginning of the program or from the design phase in year one, it might be possible to incorporate more of the six outcomes than the three that we did on Hingawese. It was really a question of matching the outcomes to our existing strategies that we already had but, in a scenario, where the design guide was in place earlier, I think it would be possible to get more outcomes woven into the activity design. Thank you.

Helen Aufderheide

Does anyone else want to jump in with another question or do a follow-up Matema?

Matema Imakumbili

No, it was clear. Thank you.

Ashley Aakesson

I have a question. I am just wondering; did participants in the workshop struggle with creating the impact pathways? How challenging was that for folks to kind of tease out the practices especially that were going to be promoted through the strategies and then bundled into interventions, and then all of that to achieve an outcome? Did folks find it challenging to kind of tease out those individual practices being promoted and then build them into an impact pathway or did that go relatively smoothly in the workshop? Thank you.

Jeanne d'Arc

Thank you. We had the guide matrix to follow, we already had outcomes, and we had the indicators. So the way we did the training, we went step by step. First understanding the background of nutrition, understanding the outcomes, then the strategies, then look into the practices and also go to the indicators. So, the process for the strategies was challenging but because we had Advancing Nutrition and the Bureau of Food Security to help us to reformulate the strategies; we had the existing strategy, and think also on the new strategies which will help us get better. It was easy to understand and match with our indicators. Thank you.

Helen Aufderheide

Are there any other questions?

Margaret Anderson

Helen, I have a question actually for the Advancing Nutrition team. I am curious, this design guide is a powerful tool for programs to use and we have talked about the opportunities to apply it with existing programs. How much does the team behind the design guide work with either USA Aid missions or with implementers in the design stage of programs before the programs are awarded and implemented to integrate these outcomes into the program designs before they are tendered?

Helen Aufderheide

So, we have worked to pilot this guide with you and then a previous activity. That was under Spring, it wasn't with our project. But we are working with projects through this community practice. So this community practice is really our mechanism to work with, to kind of share this nutrition-sensitive agriculture design guide with projects and get an idea of how to help them adapt and use it at the design stage and any stage that they are in the activity design process. And then we are planning next year to hopefully host a training of trainers for activities planning to use this guide. So, it would be a small group between 15 and 20 different activities to help them get prepared to facilitate this design guide. Those are kind of the mechanisms we have that are related to this design guide and working with activities. Otherwise, we are not related to this, we are not working directly with USAID missions or implementing partners. I do not know if Kelly or Ashley, if you have anything to add that I am missing.

Ashley Aakesson

I would just say that we do have a nutrition sensitive agriculture training which covers a lot of the same material, which has been adapted for USAID missions and so we have done that training with missions in the hopes that it can inform their designs pre-tender also. But it is a slightly different tool.

Margaret Anderson

Excellent, thank you. That's really interesting to know.

Alexandria Schmall

I actually had a follow-up question to that. I am Alexandria Schmall, the nutrition lead with CNFA HQ. Helen, for the workshop that you mentioned, is it possible that multiple folks from an organization or an activity would be able to attend that or is it something that you would typically just have one representative and then that person would be the trainer for the entire activity?

Helen Aufderheide

That is a really good question. I think we kind of need to figure out those details still. We are still kind of planning that activity out but I think ... we were planning to have a training of trainers before COVID restrictions came into place and back then we were planning to allow two people from an activity to join the workshop. I think that is because as Jeanne mentioned, there is usually more than one facilitator in a workshop. You usually have complementary skill sets from a team come together; so you might have somebody who has a stronger nutrition background, maybe somebody who is more focused on the markets team and they kind of come together to facilitate this workshop and so including more than one person makes sense. I think it will depend on how much interest we have and that might determine how many people we can include from one activity team.

Alexandria Schmall

That is great to know. Just as a follow-up. The design guide being focused on nutrition sensitive agriculture, there is a movement within the space to look at food systems more broadly and thinking about how food systems can be strengthened across different areas of supply chains food environments among others. So is there an intention to adapt the guide to be more food systems focused or you are just planning on using it and then having people adapt it as necessary to address different areas of food systems.

Helen Aufderheide

Yeah, I think that is a really interesting point. There are no plans at the moment to make any adoptions to the guide. And I think the way that it is currently structured, there is a lot of flexibility to adapt content based on the activities that an activity is implementing. I think there is space to make those adoptions even with the content that we currently have, but there are no plans to add in another module or change the language that is currently in the guide.

Pride Ebile

Yeah, I have a question. It is still in line with what Alexandria was just saying. I actually intend to write a post-doc proposal and I am intending to use this guide, not in Africa but here in Germany, because we see that we have a lot of refugees that have been moving to Europe, that they still have this problem of nutrition. So, I was thinking, is it possible that I could get your assistance in designing using the guide to actually facilitate a program for like refugees; a lot of them coming from Afghanistan so when they come here, it is very difficult for them to adopt or to adapt to the nutritional system in Germany, because most of their traditional food they are used to, they don't really find it in the supermarkets. So, is it possible that students can also work with you guys to see that we can make this in such a way that people can easily use it to adopt it into different food systems?

Helen Aufderheide

Yeah, I think that is a really interesting question. I think there are limitations to how much time we can spend working with just specific teams using the guide. But the community of practice is a forum that we really hope to use to answer questions and help people that are planning to use the guide. So, if you kind of post your questions to the community practice page, I think that is a space where people from our team are active and could help respond to questions, as well as there are other people that are part of the community of practice that have expertise in nutrition sensitive agriculture, and also experience

using the guide, that can help answer your questions. So, we really encourage you to use that as a kind of a platform to get some of that support. Does that answer your question?

Pride Ebile

Yes, it does.

Helen Aufderheide

So, it looks like we just had a question in the chat. How many times did the project train the same implementers on the nutrition design guide? A colleague and I used the guide to facilitate two trainings in March in Nigeria, and the participants' agriculture program officers appeared unable to fully grasp the concepts and complete the matrix in three days. I definitely agree that a five-day training will be better but I was wondering whether you had any experience with the refresher trainings timing in relation to initial training frequency of refresher trainings. So, the main question is how many times did the project train the same implementers on the nutrition design guide?

Jeanne d'Arc

We used two days for the field officers, we had three days with advisors. We used the two days for the field officers because for them, it was necessary to focus only on the strategy and the practices. We did not need to go into the whole process of the guide, this is why we used two days for the field officers. But for the advisors, it was three days and like I said, it was because they are the ones to develop the work plan. If you are developing the work plan, it is better to do the five-days training so that you include the practices and the lessons learned sharing. They have time to share the field experiences. Thank you.

Helen Aufderheide

Olutayo, was that clear in response to your question? I do not know if you had any follow-up.

Olutayo Adeyemi

Hello!

Helen Aufderheide

Yes, I can hear you.

Olutayo Adeyemi

It does answer the question in relation to that. So five days would be more useful if they are going to be the ones who design the program, but it doesn't answer the question about the refresher because for the training I did here, the organization is considering having another training with the same participants and ... it is difficult to use the guide all over again because it will seem like it's the same thing we are training them on, but it doesn't seem like they fully grasped the concept and they have not been able to complete the activity matrix; like the full matrix with the practice and the indicators and everything. Over.

Jeanne d'Arc

Thank you. Really, we did not need to do a refresher training for year four, like repeat the whole process. What we did was to take the matrix we had for year three and present. This is why I said we had two days. Present and see which strategy we will change, which practice, what were the challenges, so that we can make a full work plan. And due to COVID, we did not need to do physical trainings or refresher trainings. This was virtual training. So, we did not need to do door guide training again because people were the same. We took the matrix and review, and adjust the strategy practices to reach our year four targets. Thank you.

Helen Aufderheide

I know ... there are sections highlighted where it suggests maybe your team might need more nutrition background at the beginning. This section is kind of flagged for the team and it does not provide that content but it is kind of the expectation that the facilitator knows their activity team best and what kind of context they need in order to complete the matrix. And so, some of that material is not included in the design guide but some of those areas are flagged at the beginning that you might need to do a little bit more ... provide more background on nutrition concepts or use the nutrition context where your activity is working before moving on to going through the different steps of creating the activity matrix. So, I am glad that answers your questions all the same. So I see that there is one last question from Matema, I do not know, it is 8:45. Would you be willing, one more question before we close out Jeanne.

I am just going to ask the question and we will close out afterwards. So Matema says "is it easier to do now with the alignment of the project according to the design guide?" I do not know if that is clear to me Matema, I do not know if you could speak to your question if you are still on.

Matema Imakumbili

Okay, hello! Well, I am just asking, what is easier for the project to do now after aligning, is it their strategies or their outcomes according to the nutrition design guide?

Jeanne d'Arc

Sorry, I do not know if I understand the question. You are asking if now it is easy to do the alignment of the project after the training.

Matema Imakumbili

No, can I just repeat it? Sorry! I am just asking how you are finding your work easier now after aligning things according to the guide. Are things clearer now?

Jeanne d'Arc

Yeah, I would say it is clearer now because when I started, it was not easy to convince the market people or agriculture people that nutrition is important, and we need to work together to reach penetration outcomes. Now it is easy and when you are reading the report, you see that everyone is interested in working towards nutrition. So, when we trained them, explained and showed it, it was easy. Now I would say it is easier for us to work together to reach the nutrition outcomes.

Helen Aufderheide

I think that was a great closing question actually. I really appreciate you asking that. Well, thank you so much for joining us, Jeanne d'Arc and Margaret. That was extremely interesting and very helpful. If you have any other questions, please continue to ask questions on the community of practice as well and we can help respond to those. And I think we should probably close out because we are three minutes over and I want to give back everyone their morning and afternoon. So, thank you again for joining us and have a good rest of your day or evening.

Jeanne d'Arc

I think Annie had a question. I do not know. She raised her hand. I do not know if she is okay to ask the question or but she did raise her hand.

Ann Miceli

Yeah, I apologize for interrupting. No, I will go ahead and hold my question. Thank you very much Jeanne.

Helen Aufderheide

Thank you everyone for joining,

Margaret Anderson

Thank you for organizing Helen.

Jeanne d'Arc

Thank you, bye.

Pride Ebile

Thank you. Goodbye.

Helen Aufderheide

Thank you, bye.



USAID ADVANCING NUTRITION

Implemented by:
JSI Research & Training Institute, Inc.
2733 Crystal Drive
4th Floor
Arlington, VA 22202

Phone: 703-528-7474
Email: info@advancingnutrition.org
Web: advancingnutrition.org

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