

Research, Network and Support Facility (RNSF)

“Support to enhance livelihoods per people dependent on informal economy
and improve social inclusion of marginalised and vulnerable persons”

Good Practices and Lessons Learned

RESEARCH QUESTION	4-Innovative approaches to enhance livelihoods, equity and inclusion of people dependent on the informal economy
SUB-TOPICS (Research matrix)	<u>Improving food security through enhancing livelihoods with attention to social inclusion (4.5)</u>
REGION - COUNTRY OF IMPLEMENTATION	South East Asia - Myanmar
RESUME OF LESSONS LEARNED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) targeting on women and a robust gender analysis; b) greater integration between implementing partners; c) continue and realistic M&E activities; d) a better understanding of local cultural, socio-economic and environmental contexts; e) the need of initial feasibility studies when introducing Income Generating Activities and/or home gardening to assess which type of IGAs and/or vegetables is realistic to be promoted and which ones can have positive impact.
PROJECT NAME	<i>Innovative and ‘nutrition-sensitive’ Food Security intervention for Improved Nutrition</i>
YEAR	2012 – 2015
FUNDING AGENCY	European Commission
IMPLEMENTING AGENCY	Action Contre la Faim
KEY TARGET GROUPS	<p>5,300 households (26,500 individuals) coming from vulnerable communities with specific attention for women of reproductive age, pregnant and lactating women, and children under two.</p> <p>The socio-economic vulnerability criterion was set as the entry point for targeting communities and individuals. Vulnerable communities from different ethnic groups have been involved. These were farmers with no or restricted land access, former poppy producers, victims of forced migration, households with limited access to income, chronic food insecurity.</p>
SUMMARY OF THE ACTION	The SUSTAIN ¹ program aimed to sustainably improve the nutritional status of the most vulnerable population through the introduction of innovative ‘Nutrition-sensitive’ interventions to address food insecurity in Myanmar. This 46-month programme tackled nutrition from several angles, and aimed to establish synergies

¹Sustainable Approaches for Improved Nutrition

	<p>between agriculture, food security, nutrition and health activities. The action was implemented in five agro-ecological and culturally distinct regions of Myanmar, by a consortium formed by Action Contre la Faim (ACF), Groupe de Recherche et d'Echanges Technologiques (GRET), and Welthungerhilfe (WHH). The consortium piloted three innovative approaches (MAIN², Nutridev³, LANN⁴), including nutritious food production, natural resources management (NRM), market linkages, income generation, nutrition and care practices.</p> <p>ACF field-tested the guidance to maximise the nutritional impact (MAIN) of food security and livelihoods in vulnerable communities of Kayah State. GRET supported a local private company to develop and commercialize a high quality and affordable complementary food product for children 6-23 months old. A communication component for improved knowledge related to nutrition and care was also implemented by GRET in Sagaing and Yangon Divisions. WHH adapted a pioneering, community-based training on LANN approach in the Northern Shan State and the Ayeyarwaddy Delta.</p> <p>As argued by the Final Evaluation, the SUSTAIN programme broadly achieved most of its objectives, although there were some areas in which the programme could have been improved.</p> <p>In terms of design of the programme, each of the three partners employed different strategies to improve the nutritional status of the most vulnerable populations. The needs of the beneficiaries were well identified through a participatory approach. The cause-effect logic behind the interventions was clear and, at the time, realistic. However, several problems were encountered during the implementation that could have been avoided with better programme design, for example, with regard to the integration between Partners, which was quite limited during Programme duration, and the M&E system, not adequately implemented. With regard to implemented activities, Income Generating Activities (IGAs) were identified as the least successful, due to the lack of specific skills among programme staff that could have informed the design phase, thus supporting the Programme effectiveness. Further involvement of the villagers in the design of IGAs was also cited as a possible solution to this as well as the consideration of several aspects never formally considered in the design process -with the exception of one geographic area involved (Demoso) - and affecting the effectiveness and sustainability of this component (rate of consumption, potential buyers, production possibilities, consumer's preferences, local context features such as seasonal migration of labour force).</p> <p>The evaluation argued that the needs of the target population were well identified</p>
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2 Maximising Impact on Nutrition

3 The Nutridev programme has been implemented since 1994 by the GRET and the IRD (Institut de Recherche pour le Développement). Further information at <http://www.nutridev.org/>

4 Linking Agriculture, Natural Resource Management and Nutrition (LANN) is an innovative community-driven training approach to nutrition (in particular for remote areas with low access to public services) which has been developed by Welthungerhilfe and six other non-health oriented NGOs in Laos.

	<p>and the Programme was consistent with the Governments long-term food security goals, although a different approach from the Project and the Institutions has to be mentioned. With regard to effectiveness, there has been a high level of beneficiary participation in the programme implementation. The evaluation found that overall 82% of respondents felt that their knowledge of food and nutrition had been largely improved as a result of the programme. Although this type of subjective answers must be taken with caution without means of verification, it could be observed that the prevalence of positive nutrition habits have become more widespread during the program implementation (“nutrition sensitive” home gardening through multiple crops; women eating more during pregnancy and lactation).</p> <p>With regard to IGAs, it has to be mentioned that successful ones included those that sold the popular breakfast meal ‘mohinga’ or fruits. Moreover, successful IGA beneficiaries had book-keeping skills and tracked all revenues and expenses, sold their goods at good locations (e.g. by a main road), or had prior experience. Although this seems positive it does not give a full indication of their future sustainability and many IGA beneficiaries reported recent problems due to the increasing costs of raw materials and lack of demand. In addition, internal programme documents mention lack of time amongst beneficiaries and insufficient capital as limiting factors to the success of IGAs.</p> <p>Evaluation argued that, in general, the Programme has good chances for sustainability and impact.</p>
<p>LESSONS LEARNED</p>	<p>The following lessons learnt of potential interest for IESNF Project were highlighted by the evaluators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater integration between implementing partners. The implementing partners (IPs) had a distinct approach to the issues tackled based on their previous experience in other countries. This should have requested a higher level of integration supporting the knowledge and expertise sharing of the innovative approaches introduced. IPs have shown an unwillingness to adopt certain activities that were not familiar or not traditionally associated with the particular implementing partner, even when these could have been appropriate to the needs of the local communities. • Better targeting of women. The evaluators stated that one of the strengths of the programme was the high level of participation amongst women. External evidence suggests that, given their closer affiliation with the household and their role as child caretaker, behaviour change targeted at women is likely to have a greater general positive impact. In addition to this, the role played by women in the programmes implementation contributed to their empowerment in their communities. During programme’s implementation women reported that their role in decision making grew significantly at community level. Thus, it can be argued that this aspect of the programme likely contributed to its effectiveness and impact. • Continue realistic monitoring and evaluation (M&E) activities to measure

	<p>sustainability of expected behaviour change. Overall the evaluation identified that monitoring and evaluation was generally considered to be a weakness of the programme. The low level of spending on M&E activities suggests that it was not considered a priority and it was implemented only by the Project Coordinator while it would have been positive to have an M&E responsible. Moreover, given the difficulties measuring behaviour changes, expected outcomes within the limited time-frame of the programme should be as much realistic as possible. Such M&E activities could also be implemented as part of other future projects, or from other development actors working in the same geographic area and in a similar sector.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure a better understanding of local cultural, socio-economic and environmental context. An understanding of the local contexts was accomplished to an adequate degree, but the evaluation argued that it should be improved for the future. For example, many women involved felt that some form of male involvement would make it easier for them to implement the activities, highlighting the need for more robust gender analysis in the design phase of the programme. A greater inclusion of male participants would have promoted their understanding of the programme. An understanding of the local economic context is particularly important for future IGA programmes. The potential wider impact of the introduction of IGAs at the wider level of village economy is unknown, due to the absence of previous feasibility studies and market surveys. The evaluators considered this essential in order to inform how future IGA initiatives should be designed and implemented to maximise their benefits. • Properly assess the environmental suitability of programme activities. Within the Project, paddy wish was used. This, while innovative, was undermined by the fact that during the dry season the paddies have little, or any, water. Ensure a stable, continuous water supply throughout the year is recommended for future similar initiatives.
<p>CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</p>	<p>Given the nature of the Programme, the recommendations are partially relevant also for the Informal Economy context. However, some of the above mentioned observations could be of interest for IESF Project. Since the main focus of the activities was based on linking agriculture, natural resource management and nutrition, we found interesting the approach to consider nutrition as a focal point. By increasing availability of and access to nutritious foods from own production, collection in the wild, or purchase and knowledge, the targeted beneficiaries will improve their food/nutrient intake and reduce their vulnerability to seasonal changes. This will lead to improved health of workers included those in the Informal Economy thus limiting their vulnerability and enhancing their livelihoods. This will contribute to an improved job capacity thus suggesting to include in some form the nutritional component into the Projects/Programmes tackling the informal economy.</p>

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FURTHER TAGS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Social inclusion promotion (4.3) ▪ Women and children (4.6, 4.7) ▪ Production management (improved production techniques) training for informal economy entrepreneurs (3.6) ▪ Social and behaviour change (3.1) ▪ Entrepreneurship: capacity strengthening on starting, improving, growing economic activities (3.2) ▪ Life skills and empowerment training (3.4) ▪ Vocational training (3.6) ▪ Environmental and sustainable informal economy enterprises (green jobs, reducing impact on the environment of the IE) (2.4)
SOURCE	RNSF Research Volume 4.3: https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/iesf/documents/rnsf-research-volume-43-gp-ii-15-ec-funded-projects
REFERENCE(s)	EuropeAid project page: https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/projects/innovative-and-nutrition-sensitive-food-security-intervention-improved-nutrition_en