



Balancing Quick Wins with Sustainability: Feed the Future's NAFKA Project in Tanzania

Q & A Transcript

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Presenter:

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Female: -- open the floor to questions. As we come around with the microphone, please state your name and affiliation before asking your question.

Question: My name is Emily _____. I just have two questions really. One is you said the way we trade off sustainability and quick wins is we just make sure that we do both because we can't sacrifice the results so we just make sure we do both.

What about places where you have to make a trade off and you say we have to build this partner or we're not going to be able to in the first year or we won't be able to have sustainability.

The second question is related to that. How can we build sustainability so that it is one of the results so we are in some way measuring we are achieving results by investing in sustainability? Is that something you guys have done _____? _____?

Lee Rosner: Well I think in the latter part of your question and I'd invite others to respond to this also, that we're going to get the results. This is a five-year program. We don't have any reason to say that after five years they're not going to get the results.

The issue is more the quick wins and getting some quick results so that they can be reported up the line. The question is when they come on board, when those results come on board. Do they come on quickly or do they come on later on in the project. That's something we're going to have to deal with.

Look, we've got a sympathetic mission. The mission knows what we're facing. We're in situations like you described all the time where these things take time to develop. Look, we don't want to use it as an excuse not to achieve the results, but if results get delayed, well, we'll just have to make the case for why that happened. This is tough stuff. We're doing difficult work here.

Question:

Steve McCarthy from ACDI VOCA. I think one of the things we're looking at here is the implementation of a facilitation approach basically places the ownership of activities and implementation in the hands of the value chain actors themselves and the timetable, the ownership of the timetable in effect becomes theirs and, therefore, there is this trade off in balance between the quick wins and the pressure as you talked about it.

I think it requires the donors basically, donors and implementers, need to start taking a different look at impact indicators and what they're really measuring because it's going to require a different approach to indicators and impact indicators that actually look at the relationships that are being established and what those relationships are. How are those happening?

So I think that as we move through this and facilitation becomes the bedrock of value chain implementation, it will require – there are trade offs and the trade offs have to be looked at very, very carefully because I think that indicators that signal that these relationships among and between value chain actors are taking place, is something that is one of the key underlying indicators, if you will, of this process taking place and not reverting back to input/output mode of project implementation.

Question:

I'm Don Braun from Chemonics International. I'm wondering to what extent you've been able to get the mission to accept milestones as part of the quick win since much of this facilitation issue is really a process issue and where there are steps going along the way that links back to your monitoring evaluation system where you can begin to show that you are making progress on certain elements and to what extent would the mission find that acceptable as the quick wins or publicity, the success stories that they need to get their support back in Washington and so forth.

Lee Rosner:

I think the short answer to that is yes, the mission has been very accommodating in terms of accepting what we've presented as quick wins.

I think the last quarterly report that was really the first time we reported any. We just completed the baseline study so we just got baseline values, but it was

really the first time we reported any results, which are still obviously pretty small.

The pressure for quick wins from the mission has actually declined since we were able to get off with such a fast start. I think there are quick wins they can point to.

Female:

I also wanted to speak to that. I think one thing, if we're going to do facilitation, we're probably going to need to train contract officers. It's not enough just to have implementers doing facilitation.

For example, these milestones. Typically for those milestones to be effective, they need to be written into the contract. They need to be written into the contract in a way that allows the implementer the flexibility they need to do facilitation.

So I think PPL is discussing this as well. PPL is supporting facilitation. I've heard from implementers, a number of implementers, how we need to get contract officers on board. Not just private sector officers and ag officers.

I think another thing is, one question I have. I know Rod is here. Our office wrote a paper on a project in Honduras. It was a Pintreck project. That project was a post-disaster project. It was a hurricane in Honduras. What Pintreck did is it invested in large infrastructure sorts of things; irrigation, et cetera, cold chain storage and then exited from that.

So one question I do have is it possible to make some investments that would be quick wins without distorting markets, without undermining what you're trying to achieve with facilitation? For me that's still a question that is outstanding. I don't know.

Female:

[Off microphone]

Maby Palmisano: Thank you. There are a few questions from the web _____. I would like to ask a question that was posted by John Bowman who's joining us from the _____ Bureau of USAID.

John said that you briefly mentioned –

Female: [Off microphone] We can't hear you.

Male: Volume. [Off microphone]

Maby Palmisano: Okay. Sorry. It was a question from John Bowman with the _____ Bureau of USAID. John said that you briefly mentioned farmers have no place to store their grain. This must be a huge problem and he's asking who's working on it. What has been the most promise? Small farmers on farm storage in bags, bins, larger community storages so engaging very large private sector or _____ storages?

Also there is a question from Ben Adam who's joining us from the GBI Bureau of U.S. AID. He's asking, "What do we also do at the same time to bring men back to retain them in agriculture while making gender also being _____?" He said, "The _____ of a value chain approach is the issue of gender bias." Ben continues. "So with women then left in the farming communities, value chain projects can take advantage and build capacity of women to fit into the various stages of the value chain instead of being concentrated on farm _____."

Lee Rosner: So there were three questions there, right? One had to do with storage facilities, the other had to do with what can we do to make sure that men don't migrate to the city and the third is –

Female: [Off microphone]

Lee Rosner:

To train women in all aspects of the value chain. We are in the process of doing an assessment of what storage facilities exist. The Compete Project did an assessment of storage facilities along the May Trade Routes, but we still don't know what storage facilities exist in the rural area. So we're about to conduct a study on that.

Even once we know where those warehouses are, it's almost a sure thing that most of them are going to need help in becoming upgraded so that they can be suitable for storing grain. So that's going to be a major emphasis of ours over the next couple of years. But at this point we don't really know what storage facilities exist in the rural areas because no one has really done any – FAO has been asking this question also.

Female:

I would just add that we're also looking at on farm storage. It's part of the process of the project to see in which areas maybe on farm storage makes more sense than village collection centers or if there is a large buyer and they're offering storage services, whether farmers will actually start to use that.

So it's one of the challenges of our project and something that we're going to be looking a lot at in year two.

Lee Rosner:

As far as training women in skills across the value chain, yes, I didn't mean to leave the impression that we're only going to be looking to train women in agricultural production, but you're right. Women would be involved in all aspects of the value chain, whether it's processing or mechanization or marketing or technical assistance services. We're certainly not limiting that to productivity.

How to stop men from migrating to the cities? I don't know. Maybe the person that asked that question would have some advice and guidance for us. We can post police outside of the farm _____.

Question: Patricia DiVecchio, International Purpose. Thank you so much for the presentation.

Lee, you mentioned a number of challenges to implementation. There were maybe six or so points that you had made. One was developing relationships. I know when I look at what's the core issue and what's the root of the challenge, would you say it's developing relationships? Would you say it's something else?

Lee Rosner: I think they're probably all equally important. The relationships take time. We're only just getting to the point where I think Yara, which is the large European fertilizer company, they have a presence in Tanzania so it was relatively easy to develop a relationship with them because we have somebody there. They had fertilizer there in country that they were able to donate to the project for the demonstration plot. So that was a relationship that we were able to form fairly quickly.

The relationship between Yara and the producer groups that we're working with, that's going to take a longer period of time. It's one thing for us to develop the relationship with them. The other is for them to be doing the demonstration plots. For them to be hiring their own extension agents so that that relationship becomes solidified.

Then with other companies, like Sengenta, which are only now establishing a permanent presence. For agri-chemicals that's going to take a longer period of time.

Question: So do you think it's worth the investment? Is it worth the time in terms of the results?

Lee Rosner: I think if we don't do it, then after the project ends those relationships won't be there and things won't have gotten any better.

Question: Rod Carbahall, Abt Associates. Welcome again, Lee. First of all, congratulations to you and ACDI VOCA for such a good first year and the work you've done.

My question is regarding you mentioned a couple of keys to sustainability. One was having the extension agents, having them being taken on by the Kilombero, by –

Lee Rosner: KPL.

Question: The Kilombero Plantation Group, that's one. I was hoping you might expand a little bit on the input suppliers and the world. You started talking about them and what you're doing.

I know Jean may remember back in Honduras one of the strategies was working through input suppliers. One of the _____ examples was working through input suppliers and the services and information that they could provide. I was just curious if you can expand a little bit on that.

Lee Rosner: We've actually already started doing some of that. Somebody before the presentation had asked me about one of our subcontractors, Phipps. Was that you?

Phipps' model is to identify progressive farmers who they determine have the capacity to be entrepreneurs. The input suppliers then donate inputs to them and they go out and do demonstration plots with these donated inputs.

The idea is that the farmers that they serve and these entrepreneurs developed a relationship so that there's a steady supply of those inputs to those farmers. The problem then is linking those entrepreneurs back to the input supply companies. That backward link is something we're going to be working to strengthen.

But yeah, the input suppliers, the agri dealer networks, that's key.

Female: So we're going to take one more webinar question and then we're going to close, but feel free to stick around to continue informal discussion after.

Maby Palmisano: This question is from Mike Class and who's joining from Engineers without Border in Ghana, based in Ghana.

Lee Rosner: Engineers without Borders?

Maby Palmisano: Mm-hmm. He's located in Ghana. He said he mentions that we have to have both _____ and short term results and it's hard to argue once it's been written in the contract, but where is the mission getting the benchmark for high levels of farmer level in the first year of the project? Has there been any insight from the AMA Project on timeframes for impact and what that means practically for quarterly level indicators in the early stages of a new project?

Lee Rosner: You want to take a stab at that?

Female: *[Off microphone]*

Lee Rosner: So you're going to let me twist in the wind, huh?

Female: Yeah.

Lee Rosner: Look, we've spent a lot of time developing indicators that we're going to be reporting short-term results, as well as intermediate and long-term results. I'm not hearing anything from the mission at this point yet that we're falling short on delivering on our results. We may get that eventually, but I think everybody

realizes that all the Feed the Future projects, not only us, we're pedaling as fast as we can.

We probably got off to a faster start on this project than any other project I've ever worked on in my 30 years in development. Even then it still doesn't feel like it's fast enough.

We're getting that kind of pressure from the mission, but we're going to be reporting results to the mission. So, I don't know. I'm not sure if that adequately responded to the –

Maby Palmisano: Maybe I can just add that as far as indicators as Steve McCarthy just said, what we are trying really to measure is the relationship, the actual relationship and _____ the value chain _____. So these are some of the indicators that are NAFKA level indicators, in addition to the Feed the Future indicators.

I just spoke with Jean because we still have four years to go. We will certainly make sure that all the learning that came out of the _____ is integrated into the way we do monitoring and evaluation for NAFKA and for the Feed the Future projects that we have in other countries.

Female: Great. Well, thank you, Lee and Maby.

Male: *[Off microphone]* I think quickly, one of the key things here is basically the development and establishment of _____ component within a project that basically is the steering mechanism. That it is very, very dynamic. It's not for the implementer. It's not for the donor. It is for the value chain actors themselves that it's not something you attach to a program. It has to be an integral part of the program. This will change the way that people look at indicators because it's a live, dynamic process.

So I think projects really need to take a very, very hard look at their knowledge management component and how that feeds learning into the program.

Female:

Thank you. Thank you, Lee. Thank you, Maby. We appreciate _____.

[Applause]

Just wanted to let you know, if there were any questions we didn't get to, please feel free to post them to the micro links and we'll get the presenters to respond to them.

The next presentation is June 28. It's going to be Marian _____ with SDCA Asia and Ann _____ with ACDI/ VOCA at the Pathways out of Poverty _____.

Thank you.

[End of Audio]