Summary of Findings:

SAID Agriculture Evaluation Synthesis

Advancing Resilient, Diversified, and Market-Oriented Livelihoods for Vulnerable Communities: A Synthesis of TSA-Australia's Agriculture Programming in Africa's Climate-Impacted Agri-Food Systems

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Background and Methodology

This Agriculture Evaluation Synthesis examines eight select agricultural projects funded by the Salvation Army Australia International Development Department (SAID), implemented in Kenya (2 projects), Tanzania (1), and Malawi (5) over the past five years. These projects aimed to empower vulnerable communities by integrating agricultural interventions with Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA), children's rights programming, and WASH initiatives. The evaluation assesses their contributions to food and nutrition security, livelihoods, climate resilience, and social inclusion, while drawing lessons to enhance effectiveness of future programming.

Using a qualitative approach, project design, implementation, and evaluation documents were reviewed using Nvivo software. A key limitation was output-oriented reporting and cases of anecdotal outcomes. Desk reviews were complemented by partner consultations and literature analysis to validate findings. Gendered food systems framework guided the analysis, focusing on projects' alignment and contributions to the local food systems' structure (agrifood value chains, food environments, and consumption behavior) as well as resulting outcomes.

Key Findings

Alignment with Food Systems Perspectives

The projects' designs demonstrated strong alignment with gendered food systems framework, prioritizing physical food access and, in some cases, economic access through VSLA-linked business opportunities and surplus produce sales. However, nutrition-sensitive outcomes—such as improved dietary diversity—were explicitly prioritized in only half of the projects (e.g., LIFE, KiWASH, MSETO-R). Contributions to food environments and consumption behavior components were underreported.

Agriculture and Livelihood Outcomes

The projects achieved notable **immediate outcomes**, including:

- Widespread adoption of Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA) practices, such as conservation agriculture, tree planting and agroforestry, and kitchen gardening.
- Acquisition of climate-resilient livestock, particularly goats, to enhance household resilience.

- Strong female participation in VSLAs, underscoring equity focus on rural women.

These immediate outcomes contributed to **intermediate gains**, such as:

- Improved yields, ensuring food sufficiency and occasionally generating marketable surpluses.
- Capitalization of small agri-food businesses for income diversification and often enabling access to nutritious foods like meat and vegetables.
- Shifts toward equitable and positive gender norms enabling joint decisions in agricultural and income management, fairer sharing of labor, and recognition of women's contribution.

However, prospects were tempered by challenges, including climate variability, social norms, inadequate VSLA savings, and project limitations such as short durations, limited focus on nutrition, and sustainability concerns linked to direct delivery of market-based inputs and livestock.

Linkages Between WASH Outcomes and Food Systems

While WASH-specific outcomes were not explicitly designed to track cross-linkages with food systems outcomes, they revealed significant potential to enhance production of nutritious foods and food environments. **Key contributions included:**

- Direct benefits such as irrigation systems supporting vegetable production and livestock watering (e.g., MSETO-R and KiWASH projects).
- Time savings from reduced water collection burdens, which were reinvested in productive activities like farming and small businesses, particularly for women.
- Indirect contributions through access to safe water, improved hygiene, and reduced waterborne illnesses which enhanced food safety—an important SDG indicator for food environments.

These linkages underscore the potential of integrating WASH interventions more intentionally into food systems programming to amplify their impact on food security and resilience.

Food Systems Benefits for the Most Vulnerable Groups

Five projects demonstrated benefits for women, while two projects showed positive impacts for OVCs in Malawi, particularly through agriculture production, economic empowerment, and reduced caregiving burdens. However, in WASH projects, design gaps limited the intentional integration of nutrition benefits for children, framing feeding programs from kitchen gardens as spillovers rather than core outcomes.

Among three projects explicitly tracking disability inclusion in agriculture, only MSETO-R demonstrated a practical pathway by engaging PWDs through improvised kitchen gardens linked to rainwater harvesting tanks, emphasizing the need for on-the-ground innovation.

In the LIFE project, men disproportionately faced climate-induced migration, seeking wage labor in Mozambique during extreme weather events. Conservation Agriculture (CA) aimed to stabilize agricultural outputs and reduce reliance on migration as a coping mechanism.

Environmental Effects and Farmers' Resilience to Climate Variability

Project designs identified soil degradation, water and agrochemicals overuse, and deforestation as key environmental risks tied to agricultural practices. However, these risks were insufficiently monitored, as priority was placed on tracking the adoption of sustainable practices like CA.

Despite implementing CSA practices, farmers' resilience to increasing extreme climate events remained limited. This highlights the need for inclusive enhanced adaptation mechanisms, including:

- Tailored and timely climate information and agro-advisories, and scalable irrigation systems
- Crop/livestock insurance and social protection programs, and
- Livelihood diversification into off-farm and non-farm activities

Strengthening these measures can help bridge the gap between promoting sustainable practices and building climate-resilient livelihoods.

Sustainability

The projects demonstrated strong sustainability strategies, emphasizing public-sector integration and community-driven approaches, which fostered local ownership and embedded interventions within institutional frameworks. However, limited engagement with agri-based private-sector partnerships and farmer collective action highlighted gaps in sustaining agriculture and livestock interventions. Adopting a Market Systems Development (MSD) approach as an alternative to direct delivery of market-based solutions offers an opportunity to long-term sustainability and scalability.

Conclusions

Projects' baseline data indicates that most participant households were categorized as subsistence to pre-commercialization typologies. Pre-commercial households engaged with output markets only during surplus harvests. To facilitate transitions to commercialized agriculture, SAID programming should benchmark successful models while including off-farm diversification to mitigate climate-induced risks.

Comparative programs targeting pre-commercialization households align strongly with projects' strategies, including: pass-on programs like Heifer International's Passing-on-the-Gift, which fosters resource sharing (e.g., livestock, seeds, and knowledge); market systems approaches like USAID's AVCD project in Kenya, which bundled animal breeding and health services with value chain linkages to scale improved dairy breeds; and lead farmer models, such as the Village-Based Advisor model, used by FIPS-Africa and AGRA, to disseminate information and link farmers to markets.

Key features of these programs include increasing productivity through access to improved inputs, building business orientation via collective action and market linkages, addressing systemic barriers through multi-stakeholder platforms, and improving nutrition by promoting nutrient-dense foods.

Recommendations for Enhancing Effectiveness

1) **Strengthen Project Design Frameworks:** Develop robust, outcome-focused project designs, prioritizing nutrition-sensitive agriculture (NSA) outcomes, WASH-agriculture/food systems linkages, and consider a 6-month inception phase for contextualization interventions based on baseline findings.

2) **Adopt Targeted Segmentation for Tailored Models:** Use tools like opportunity space analysis and farmer typologies to design context-specific programming. Focus on value chain development in commercialization hotspots (e.g., ACE, SALP) and introduce graduation models with timelines (e.g., 10-year transitions) to support transitions into commercialization.

3) **Enhance Evaluation Quality and Theories of Change:** Improve evaluation methodologies by aligning farmer surveys with qualitative techniques like outcome mapping. Incorporate longitudinal indicators to track resilience, stability, and programming cross-linkages. Regularly refine Theories of Change (ToC) with visual illustrations to enhance understanding and implementation.

4) **Integrate Market Systems Development (MSD):** Transition from direct delivery approaches to MSD models, fostering systemic changes by partnering with market-based providers of inputs and services.

5) **Promote Diversified Livelihood Strategies:** Broaden programming to include off-farm and non-farm activities, such as agri-food systems-linked entrepreneurship, emphasizing inclusion of marginalized groups. This dual approach enhances resilience and creates pathways for food systems transformation.

6) **Operationalize Rights-Based Approach (RBA) and Disability Inclusion:** Strengthen the application of RBA and disability inclusion by articulating their connection to food security and climate justice. Design interventions that address the specific needs and opportunities of PWDs.

7) **Leverage Collective Action for Systemic Change:** Integrate collective action into theories of change, supporting the evolution of market-oriented farmer groups into cooperatives or producer groups. Strengthen VSLA structures to scale business engagement and market linkages.

8) **Embed Environmental Resilience Strategies:** Incorporate climate adaptation measures, including agro-advisories, crop/livestock insurance, and social protection mechanisms, while monitoring environmental risks throughout project design and implementation.

9) **Facilitate Peer-to-Peer Learning among implementing partners and supporting territories:**

10) **Strengthen Gender and Social Inclusion:** Disaggregate data by sex, age, PWD status, and household types, and move beyond tracking participation to measure economic benefits, empowerment, and shifts in social norms. Use tools like WEAI/WELI to assess impacts comprehensively.