Household Livelihoods and Food Security: Conceptual Framework

Income Growth
- Higher risk threshold potential: Engaging in higher-risk, higher-return income generating activities
- Minimal risk taking threshold: Engaging in low-risk, low-return income generating activities; diversifying income generating activities; building productive assets

Risk Reduction
- Reversible: Selling/liquidating protective assets; seeking wage labor or migrating for work; borrowing; reducing spending and food consumption; drawing on social assets

Loss Management
- Less reversible: Selling productive assets; borrowing at exorbitant rates; further reducing spending and food consumption

Distress
- Asset depletion: Depending on charity; breaking up household; migrating; going without food

LIVELIHOOD PHASE
- COPING MECHANISMS/ LIVELIHOODS STRATEGIES
- LIVELIHOOD OBJECTIVES
- POTENTIAL LIVELIHOOD INTERVENTIONS

LOW
- Income Growth
- Risk Reduction
- Loss Management
- Distress

HIGH
- Expand household income & consumption
- Smooth household income & promote asset growth
- Smooth household consumption & manage household cash flow
- Build self-insurance methods & protect key assets
- Recover, build assets & stabilize household consumption

Workforce development; credit and savings; business development services; micro, small and medium enterprise development; business enabling environment reform
Credit and savings; business development services; facilitate business/social networks; microenterprise development
Strengthen social networks; financial and market literacy; credit and savings
Income-based safety-nets; access to savings; micro insurance; strengthen social safety nets; extend legal protection and reform laws
Transfers; social services
Household Livelihoods and Food Security: *Standards of Practice*

Through field-based research and analysis, LIFT has identified a series of necessary standards of practice in economic strengthening. These standards correspond to specific or ongoing stages of economic strengthening activities: **selection**, **design** and **implementation**. These standards are both discrete steps and ongoing processes.

1. **Livelihoods Analysis**: The livelihoods analysis is to identify and better understand household sources of income, sources of food, and expenditure patterns.

2. **Market Analysis**: A market analysis is a specialized context analysis that focuses on market dynamics that influence the set of livelihood options available to households.

3. **Feasibility Analysis**: The feasibility analysis examines current and potential capacity of the implementing organization, its partners and its clients and beneficiaries, and sets realistic objectives and expectations for what they should plan to accomplish together.

4. **Targeting Beneficiaries**: It is critical to balance the needs for quality of service with increasing the number of beneficiaries. However, how we target or don’t target HIV-affected households is important. In some communities, for example, singling out HIV-affected households can exacerbate stigma, particularly where grants are involved.

5. **Sustainable Approaches**: It is important to design programs that complement and support local services and institutions beyond the life of the program. Sustainable approaches will find ways to involve these in the process and build local ownership, while ensuring an exit plan exists. Engaging the private sector as a means of promoting sustainable economic relationships for clients and beneficiaries is critical for integrating (or re-integrating) people into the market.

6. **Strategic Partnerships and Linkages**: Building partnerships and linkages with organizations and institutions that provide complementary services rather than duplicating or creating parallel process can ensure better integration and clearer lines for beneficiaries. This can include providing referrals to services in other technical areas, such as legal counseling, services that are provided by other actors, such as the state or CBOs, or to other economic strengthening services for when your clients “graduate” from your program or have financial needs you cannot meet (e.g. facilitate access to microfinance for successful entrepreneurs).

7. **Monitoring, Evaluation and Impact Assessment**: A key element of successful programming is establishing a system to monitor and evaluate programs to determine whether activities are: operating efficiently and at a reasonable cost while also having a positive and meaningful impact on beneficiaries, whether that is nutritional, educational, or economic—impacts that are directly related to our objectives.

8. **Communication and Learning**: Programs should encourage information sharing among practitioners that supports collective learning, quality assurance and innovation, and increases the return on donors’ investments. Where possible, organizations should evaluate and refer to existing proven tools or guidelines related to economic strengthening and livelihoods to support quality programming and minimize duplication of effort.

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