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Livelihoods & Food Security
Technical Assistance

ABSTRACT: LIFT Ethiopia Assessment

Main Objectives:

- Examine current state of USAID/PEPFAR ES programming in Ethiopia
- Identify leading challenges, constraints, and opportunities
- Make recommendations to improve the quality and impact of ES programs

The Livelihoods and Food Security Technical Assistance (LIFT) program is a 5-year cooperative agreement awarded by the USAID Office of HIV/AIDS to FHI 360 through the FIELD-Support LWA. Find out more at <http://theliftproject.org>

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The goal of LIFT's Ethiopia assessment was to help mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS in Ethiopia by providing recommendations to USAID/PEPFAR to improve the quality and impact of USAID/PEPFAR's economic strengthening (ES) interventions for HIV-affected populations. The assessment team examined the current state of ES programming in Ethiopia and identified challenges and opportunities for improvement.

The assessment was conducted from August - September 2010. During that time, the LIFT assessment team visited and reviewed 24 programs run by PEPFAR's implementing partners, federal and regional Government of Ethiopia ministries, and Global Fund partners. The team conducted interviews with program staff and facilitated focus group discussions with program beneficiaries to assess the impact of these programs.

Context:

Ethiopia, the second largest country in Africa, has a population of more than 82 million and continues to grow (2.6% growth rate per year from 2004 – 2008). Sixty-six million Ethiopians (82 percent) live in rural areas, and 44 percent of the population lives below the poverty line. The average per capita annual income is USD 330.

With an estimated 1.1 million people living with HIV/AIDS (PLHIV), Ethiopia has one of the largest populations of HIV/AIDS-infected people in the world. However, HIV/AIDS prevalence among the adult population is lower than in many sub-Saharan African countries. In Ethiopia, the adult HIV/AIDS prevalence in 2009 was estimated to be between 1.4 and 2.8 percent. Ethiopia is home to 4 million orphans, or 12 percent of all children, of which more than half a million were orphaned as a direct result of HIV/AIDS.

In Ethiopia, the predominant mode of HIV transmission is heterosexual contact, which accounts for 87 percent of infections. Specific behavioral factors that contribute to the transmission of HIV include multiple concurrent sexual partners and unprotected intercourse. Subpopulations with a higher risk of contracting HIV are:

- Female youth (ages 15 – 19);
- Women who have never been married;
- Women with secondary or higher education;
- Women who are wealthy;
- Female sex workers and their clients;
- Discordant couples;
- Truckers and other mobile workers; and
- Military and other uniformed personnel.

Some harmful effects on PLHIV and their households include reduced quantity and quality of food, reduced consumption of medicine, depletion of productive and nonproductive assets, withdrawal of children from school, transactional sex, prostitution, and household dissolution. Common coping strategies include:

- Increasing non-farm activities (brewing, distilling, pottery, weaving, silver smithing, and grain trading);
- Migrating to towns;
- Sharecropping;
- Asking relatives/friends/neighbors to help with farming activities, and hiring out children for farm work; and
- Borrowing money or food from relatives/friends/neighbors, or begging.

Key Assessment Findings:

USAID/PEPFAR's efforts are primarily focused where HIV prevalence is highest, including urban and peri-urban centers and along the major transportation corridors. Most projects are awarded to international NGOs who provide funding and technical assistance to local NGOs. Those NGOs may implement projects directly or may, in turn, provide funding to local community based organizations (CBOs) and PLHIV associations to implement project activities.

Implementing partners use a variety of economic strengthening approaches within PEPFAR programs, including savings and loan groups, vocational and skills training, and the promotion of both group and individually operated micro and small enterprises (MSEs). Some MSEs receive start-up capital, while others are linked to microfinance institutions or programs. Overall, the assessment found that these programs lacked standards, frameworks, and guidelines for ES activities, which were often considered of secondary importance to other HIV/AIDS interventions. In addition, most activities were not market driven or sustainable, nor founded on an understanding of household economies and vulnerability. The return on investment was difficult to estimate because there was little information about budgets allocated to ES programs, and no consistent measure of outcomes or impact at the household level.

At the same time, the Ethiopian Government's efforts to promote enterprise development put a strong emphasis on forming group businesses. Groups often do not run business activities effectively, and many of the new enterprises replicate business activities that are already widely undertaken. This tends to lead to small incomes, limited sustainability, and over saturation of the market with the same goods and services.

Priority Opportunities & Recommendations:

The final assessment report provided core recommendations for improving the quality and impact of ES activities funded by PEPFAR. The main recommendation was to develop a set of Standards of Practice for ES programs in Ethiopia, in cooperation with USAID and implementing partners, to be accompanied by detailed guidelines, expectations, and reporting requirements. USAID and partner staff should be trained on the Standards, and they would be incorporated into the design, monitoring, and evaluation of future programs. Recommended Standards included Situation Analysis, Market Analysis, Feasibility Analysis, Enabling Approaches, Strategic Partnerships, M&E and Impact Assessment, Communications and Learning, and Linkages to Other HIV/AIDS Services.

The assessment report provides a variety of specific technical recommendations to improve and leverage the specific ES activities currently found in the USAID portfolio, such as microenterprise development, market-linked urban agriculture, value chain development, financial services, and vocational training.