





## Acknowledgement

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The HoRN network focuses on building resilience in areas of recurrent crisis in the arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs) across the Horn of Africa countries, based on the resilience focus countries of Ethiopia, Kenya, South Sudan, Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia. The objective of the HoRN is to strengthen regional and cross border collaboration and improve evidence-based learning.



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Synthesis Report presents an overview of the various practices used by USAID/BHA partners implementing the Graduation Approach programs within the Sudan’s East Central and Southern Regional Office (SECARO) region of Africa. Pioneered by BRAC in the year 2002, the Graduation Approach (GA) is a multifaceted, time-bound 5-step methodology aimed at transitioning extremely poor households into sustainable livelihoods<sup>1</sup>.

Reducing extreme poverty requires holistic and integrated approaches that address the multiple interrelated and chronic deprivations of hunger, malnutrition, poor health, limited education, marginalization, and/or exclusion. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) is committed to enhancing the resilience of vulnerable populations around the world. The BHA-funded Resilience Food Security Activities (RFSAs) use an integrated multi-sectoral design to strengthen livelihoods and build people’s capacities to better manage stresses and shocks, combat malnutrition, promote economic growth, improve food security, minimize disaster risks, and adapt to climate change. Graduation programming within RFSAs incorporates additional components such as nutrition-sensitive and nutrition-specific interventions as well as capacity strengthening for disaster risk reduction. While graduation programming is a leading methodology to “graduate” vulnerable households from food insecurity and extreme poverty into secure, sustainable, and resilient livelihoods, its application within RFSAs has been limited, with a steady expansion in recent years<sup>2</sup>. The versatility of the Graduation Approach has seen it gain traction across different developing regions of the world and is quickly becoming an important tool for development across different sectors.

This Synthesis Report begins by describing the background of the Graduation Approach, and its origins. In the introduction and methodology section, the report presents how the graduation approach has been adopted through the RFSAs and adapted for addressing acute malnutrition challenges within different contexts in the SECARO region. It then describes the qualitative methodology used to collect information used to develop the report which comprises desk research and key informant interviews.

The body of the report describes the current practices relating to GA used by the implementing partners. Starting with a visual summary of the practices across 4 countries in the region, the table highlights the different GA components deployed and their distribution across partners in respective countries. The report then proceeds to explore 6 thematic areas and under each thematic area, describes the prevailing practices, followed by select project adaptations coupled with the underlying rationale for each adaptation and finally the associated challenges.

A summary of promising practices for GA in the region is then highlighted followed by recommendations and finally references.

<sup>1</sup> Montesquiou et al. (2018, Spring). *From Extreme Poverty to Sustainable Livelihoods: A Technical Guide to the Graduation Approach 2nd Edition*.

<sup>2</sup> Bernagros et al. (2022, October). *Considerations for Integrating the Graduation Approach within Resilience Food Security Activities*.



## GLOSSARY

AN-GM	Adapted Nutrition-Friendly Graduation Model
BHA	Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance
BRAC	Bangladesh Rehabilitation Assistance Committee
CBT	Community-Based Trainer
CLA	Collaborating, Learning and Adapting
CU5	Children under 5 years old
DREAMS	Delivering Resilient Enterprises and Market Systems
FFBS	Farmer Field Business School
G2R	Graduating to Resilience
GA	Graduation Approach
GOE	Government of Ethiopia
GOK	Government of Kenya
KSEIP	Kenya Socio-Economic Inclusion Program
LKM	Learning and Knowledge Management
MEB	Minimum Expenditure Basket
MFI	Microfinance Institution
MSD	Market Systems Development
NAWIRI	Nutrition in ASALs Within Integrated Resilient Institutions
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PWR	Participatory Wealth ranking
RCT	Randomized Control Trial
REAP	Rural Entrepreneur Access Project
RFSA	Resilience Food Security Activity
R4N	REAP for Nutrition
S4T	Savings for Transformation
SECARO	Sudans East Central and Southern Regional Office
SILC	Savings and Internal Lending Communities
SPiR	Strengthen PSNP Institutions and Resilience
SWAP	Savings With A Purpose
UPG	Ultra Poor Graduation
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VESA	Village Economic and Social Associations
VSLA	Voluntary Savings and Loans Association



# BACKGROUND

People living in extreme poverty lack both income and assets and typically suffer from interrelated, chronic deprivations, including hunger, malnutrition, poor health, limited education, and marginalization or exclusion. Women and girls are particularly affected. For a long time, governments, development agencies and individual players have invested resources, time, and effort to sustainably tackle these deprivations across various regions of the world with varying degrees of success. It is becoming clearer that addressing these challenges requires holistic and integrated approaches that tackle the multiple dimensions of poverty, especially for the ultra-poor.

One of the most promising approaches for promoting the social and economic mobility of the ultra-poor has been the “Graduation Approach.” Originally developed in 2002 by BRAC in Bangladesh, the Graduation Approach is a holistic livelihoods program designed to address the multi-dimensional needs of extremely poor households. The Approach consists of 5-core components namely: consumption support; savings and financial inclusion; asset transfer; livelihood skills training (technical & business); and mentoring and coaching on life skills. These components are applied in a recommended sequence over a given time frame.

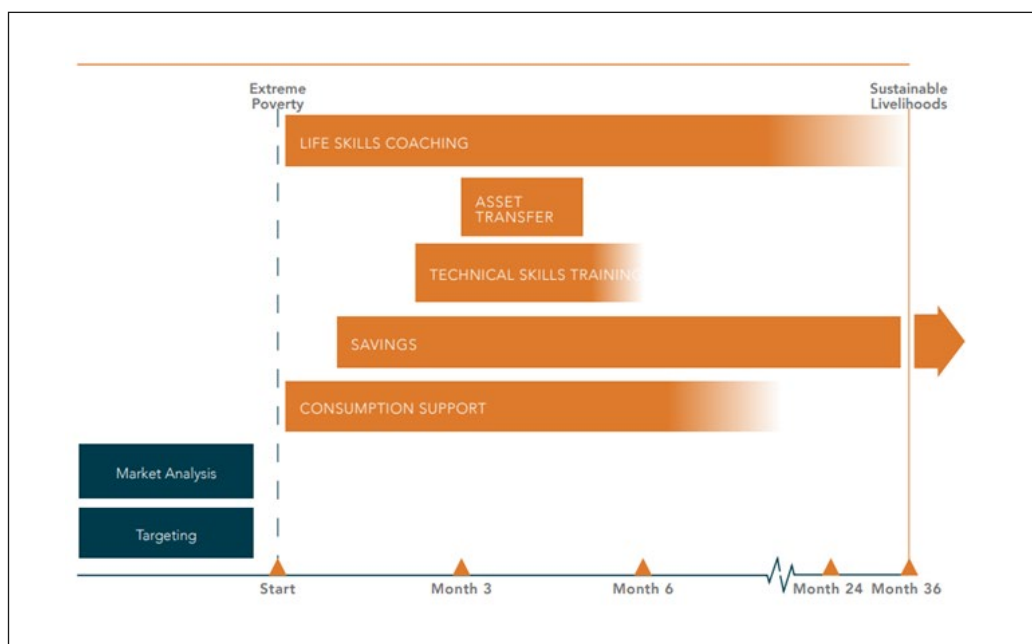


Figure 1: The 5-Core Components of the Graduation Approach  
Source: CGAP/World Bank

The theory of change underlying the model is that this mix of interventions, offered in the appropriate sequence, would help the ultra-poor to “graduate” out of extreme poverty within a defined timeframe, usually 18 to 36 months<sup>3</sup>.

Despite commitments made by governments in response to the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals, around the world, over 900 million people still face severe food insecurity. Food insecurity is deeply tied to conditions of extreme poverty due to both rising costs of food and a lack of access to healthy,

<sup>3</sup> Montesquiou et al. (2018, Spring). *From Extreme Poverty to Sustainable Livelihoods: A Technical Guide to the Graduation Approach 2nd Edition*.



nutritious foods. Worsening economic, climatic and agricultural shocks such as droughts and floods stemming from less predictable rainy seasons disproportionately impact people living in extreme poverty, making it harder for them to consistently feed their families as well as any livestock assets. Smallholder farmers and pastoralists face twin risks of losing their livelihoods through crop failures and death of livestock from these shocks as well as facing reduced ability to access or pay for food due to a loss of income.

Achieving zero hunger will require holistic approaches that recognize and address the deeply intertwined realities of food insecurity and extreme poverty<sup>4</sup>. Various components of the graduation approach are designed to promote food security holistically so that participating households can experience long-term improvements in their household nutritional status. By incorporating chronic food insecurity and malnutrition in its targeting and evaluation criteria parameters and supporting participants to develop diversified on-farm and off-farm income generating activities, the graduation approach enables households to meet their basic needs while improving resilience to climate and market stressors. Training on managing livelihoods, health and hygiene practices, and nutrition education all equip participants with tools needed to maximize their food security status and maintain resilience to shocks.

Supported by multi-lateral and donor agencies, the graduation approach has gained traction across the developing world as a last-mile methodology to help alleviate poverty and build resilience. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) has been working to enhance the resilience of vulnerable populations around the world. Within the Sudans East Central and Southern Regional Office (SECARO) region, the BHA-funded Resilience Food Security Activities (RFSAs) have used an integrated multi-sectoral approach to strengthen livelihoods, build people's capacities to better manage shocks and stresses, combat malnutrition, promote economic growth, improve food security, minimize disaster risks, and adapt to climate change<sup>5</sup>.

Though graduation programming has emerged as a leading methodology for “graduating” vulnerable households from food insecurity and extreme poverty into secure, sustainable, and resilient livelihoods, its application within RFSAs has been limited, with a steady expansion in recent years. A growing body of evidence has been unfolding from different parts of the world where GA programs (including some USAID-funded ones) were being implemented in different contexts under careful study. These study findings have continued to mention increased consumption, increased incomes and savings, increased assets and increased confidence levels and agency of participants as notable outcomes sustained across participating households for several years. Alive to this growing and compelling evidence base, USAID has begun using the graduation approach within its resilience and food security programming, including several resilience food security activities (RFSAs) funded by the Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) in Uganda, Kenya, South Sudan, Somalia and Ethiopia. Implemented within a wide range of contexts ranging from the arid and semi-arid lands (ASAL) to refugee settlements to internally displaced persons (IDPs) in fragile and conflict-prone regions, different components of the GA have been modified and adapted to specific contexts yielding some distinct and notable practices.

This report summarizes the information and data obtained through a literature review and key informant interviews for 8 RFSAs projects across 4 countries - Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia and Somalia – in the SECARO region.

<sup>4</sup> BRAC. *Graduation and Food security Brief*.

<sup>5</sup> Bernagros et al. (2022, October). *Considerations for Integrating the Graduation Approach within Resilience Food Security Activities*.



## 8 Current Practices in Graduation Approach: A Synthesis Report

This report therefore presents the various practices adopted by implementing partners applying the graduation approach within their RFSAs in the SECARO region. The report;

- a) Describes briefly the practices of the projects around various GA related themes;
- b) Points out similar practices across projects as well as notable variations in practice (due to adaptation) with the attendant underlying reasons;
- c) Highlights challenges encountered and lessons learned by partners implementing GA in various contexts; and
- d) Lists the emerging promising practices in GA and suggested recommendations.







## INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

This Synthesis Report gives an overview of the practices relating to GA adopted by implementing partners in the SECARO region. It highlights similarities to the “classical GA model” as well as variations from the model resulting from context-specific adaptations. The report explains the rationale underlying each adaptation and the challenges related to each practice.

The report begins with a visual summary of key programmatic features applied in GA by implementing partners in each country. (NB: An overview of some notable parameters of the 8 reviewed projects is captured in a table in Annex 3). The report then highlights some emerging adaptations to GA practices within the region and the rationale behind each modification as well as challenges encountered. A summary of promising practices around GA is presented followed by recommendations for practitioners and USAID/BHA to consider in the designing and implementation of future GA programs.

A qualitative methodology was used to gather the information presented in the report. This comprised extensive desk research of relevant project documents including project implementation guidelines and reports, project assessment findings, project evaluation reports, technical and learning briefs, and other



secondary literature on GA, among others. A total of 8 activities applying GA and spanning 4 countries (Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, and Somalia) were reviewed through desk research. These activities included:

Country	Activities Applying GA that were Reviewed	GA Lead Partner
Kenya	Nawiri Project Cluster 1 (Marsabit & Isiolo counties) Nawiri Project Cluster 2 (Turkana & Samburu counties) KSEIP (Makueni, Taita Taveta, Muranga & Kisumu counties)	Village Enterprise BOMA Project Village Enterprise
Uganda	Graduating to Resilience (Kamwenge district) Nuyok (4 districts in Karamoja Region)	AVSI Uganda CRS Uganda
Ethiopia	RFSA-Pre-SERVE Project (Amhara region) SPIR II Project (Amhara, Oromia & Tigray regions)	FH Ethiopia WV Ethiopia
Somalia	UPG Project (Baidoa region)	WV Somalia

Besides the literature review, key informant interviews were held with expert staff from partner organizations implementing GA in 6 different activities in the region. The majority of these 6 activities were multi-year USAID/BHA-funded activities implemented in diverse contexts (including Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL), refugee settlement areas, fragile and conflict-prone areas) but focused on food and nutrition security and livelihoods. All 6 activities reviewed were implemented by 6 different consortia. Some partners such as BOMA and Village Enterprise were leading GA implementation in more than one consortia, albeit with different variations to the classical GA model. Some other partners interviewed were also implementing GA in other projects funded by other donors (i.e. not USAID) in the region and graciously provided non-classified information on GA for cross-learning purposes. Key informant interviews with select dedicated staff from the six activities were set up and held virtually over one week in April 2024.

The information collected through the desk research and the key informant interviews was collated, analyzed and triangulated to identify emerging patterns and trends in GA practices across the projects, before being synthesized into this report. The report was presented in the USAID missions and partners learning event held in Uganda from May 12, 2024, to May 17, 2024, for discussion and cross-learning purposes. Notes from these discussion sessions captured key adaptations, challenges encountered and lessons learned, and the DO's & DON'T's in GA programming. These notes were consolidated and used in developing several documents:

- **USAID Graduation Approach Implementation Field Guide for the Horn of Africa region.** Based on practical relatable experience from the Horn of Africa, this Field Guide is a good resource to trigger critical thinking for partners and practitioners whilst designing and implementing GA programs, as well as for the USAID mission-based supervisors overseeing these programs.
- **The Graduation Approach Simplified.** This Guide illustrates the basic concepts of the graduation approach using practical examples from the Horn of Africa. It is a good starting point for USAID staff who want to know more about the graduation approach as they engage with design teams, partners, and the rest of the Mission.



# CURRENT GA PRACTICES USED BY IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

This section provides an overview of the current practices of implementing partners applying GA in their programming, focusing on 6 key thematic areas to highlight notable context-specific adaptations made. The practices captured in the study go beyond the five core components of GA to include targeting, linkages and referrals. The report also attempts to harmonize the names and definitions of the 5-core components of classical GA used by different partners to facilitate more objective comparisons and contrasting of the practices across projects and avoid ambiguity.

## Visual Summary of the GA Practices of Partners in the SECARO Region

Key Features of the GA	Kenya 1	Kenya 2	Kenya 3	Uganda 1	Uganda 2	Ethiopia 1	Ethiopia 2	Somalia 1
Targeting	√	√√	√√	√	√	√√	√√	√
Mentoring and Coaching on Life Skills	√	√	√	√√	√	√	√	√
Linkages and Referrals	√	√	√√	√	√	√√	√√	
Savings and Financial Inclusion	√√	√	√√	√	√	√	√	√
Consumption Support	√	√	√	√	√	√√	√	√
Livelihood Skills Training & Support	√	√	√	√√	√	√	√	√
Livelihoods Selection & Asset Transfer	√	√√	√	√	√	√√	√	√
	Nawiri AN-GM	Nawiri R4N	KSEIP VE	G2R	Nuyok (Pilot)	Pre-SERVE	SPIR 2	UPG Baidoa

NB: (√) .... Indicates projects that apply the listed feature of GA.

(√√) ... Indicates where notable adaptation has been made to the classical GA practice.  
Business coaching was considered a part of Livelihood Skills Training and Support.



## I. Targeting and Graduation Criteria

All projects followed traditional practices related to targeting and graduation criteria. The majority of projects targeted women and youth within poor and vulnerable households as primary graduation participants. All projects adapted the classical selection criteria and incorporated inclusion/exclusion criteria that helped them target and select participants/households affected by food and nutrition insecurity, in alignment with USAID/BHA's goal to sustainably address the challenge of acute malnutrition and food insecurity.

To do so, the majority of projects applied the classical 4-step targeting strategy that combines four distinct methodologies to identify and validate the deserving households. First, they identified the right communities through geographical targeting. They then engaged each community through participatory rural appraisal (PRA) and participatory wealth ranking (PWR) followed by household surveys using simple poverty metric tools such as Poverty Probability Index (PPI) to identify the households. Finally, they engaged the community to verify the deserving households before enrolment into the GA project.

With regards to graduation criteria, each project selected a set of indicators and defined parameters for each indicator to come up with its own graduation criteria with clear and measurable indicators. The graduation criteria, developed during the project inception phase, described the state of the households based on a given set of indicators, that warranted the household to exit the program through a graduation process, once attained.

Since each graduation project set its own “yardstick” based on its priority goal and objectives which were aligned with the donor’s goals, every project had unique graduation criteria, though the indicators tended to focus on similar parameters such as the household’s food and nutrition status, asset base, income-generating streams, savings, health outcomes, social wellbeing, etc.

### Notable Project Adaptations

- **Malnutrition Targeting - AN-GM:** To address the USAID Nawiri project’s key goal of sustainably reducing the levels of persistent acute malnutrition faced within Kenya’s drylands, the project modified Village Enterprise’s inclusion criteria to come up with the Adapted Nutrition-Friendly Graduation Model (AN-GM). In addition to the normal ultra-poor selection criteria, AN-GM prioritized inclusion of ultra-poor households that had: a) children under 5 years (CU5) malnourished or have a relapse history or at risk [less than 13.5 cm on MUAC readings], and b) pregnant or lactating women. This ensured that participating graduation households were exclusively those suffering from acute malnutrition, rather than just poverty.

The project used a participatory community mapping approach to identify all households in any given village. A poverty probability index survey was conducted (with the inclusion questions) to all the households and the most vulnerable were identified through the scores generated. The qualified households were verified against health facility data for children under 5 with conditions of acute malnutrition and finally validated by the community before being enrolled into the program.

- **Blended Targeting for More Sustainable Group Businesses - R4N Mode:** USAID Nawiri C-2 adapted REAP<sup>6</sup> to form REAP for Nutrition (R4N) model that aligned with its vision of

<sup>6</sup> BOMA’s standard graduation model is known as REAP (Rural Entrepreneurship Access Project)





sustainable reduction of persistent acute malnutrition. USAID Nawiri applies the R4N model in its graduation programming. The R4N integrates a blended group-based approach that enables qualified and selected ultra-poor women to form blended groups to operate businesses of their choice that meet Nawiri's environmental screening criteria. Studies done by the project highlighted that women's life cycle strongly correlated with specific skill sets regarding management of roles responsibilities. Each 3-person business group formed by R4N consisted of one older woman, one middle-aged woman, and one younger woman raising a young family. By targeting and grouping women into blended business groups, R4N aimed to support groups to operate more sustainable businesses, and achieve better nutritional outcomes at the households.

- **Targeting using the Government Registry – KSEIP in Kenya:** Rather than utilize the classic 4-step community participatory targeting process, Village Enterprise leveraged the Government of Kenya's (GoK) Enhanced Single Registry to target KSEIP participants. The program used the government-generated household-level registry and database to identify a preliminary list of households that met the government threshold of being extremely poor. Village Enterprise then validated the listed participants through household visits done together with the village elders involved in the government-supported Nyumba Kumi Initiative. This approach was relatively more time- and cost-effective than the classical 4-step participatory processes. It is notable that various targeting methods are available for use, each with its pros and cons. Selecting to use one method over another always involves trade-offs and should be carefully analyzed before the decision is

## Challenges

- From the targeting process, projects normally ended up having the number of households that qualified to be enrolled in the project far exceeding the number of slots (resources) available for project support. Part enrolment of only some participants from the identified list must be managed well, otherwise, it could create a perception of unfairness, injustice, or even corruption – all of which can easily erode the goodwill that the projects had gained from the target communities.
- A few isolated households get tempted to engage in unethical and detrimental practices of limiting household food consumption in days preceding program enrolment, with a hope of qualifying for enrolment in the project. However, the project intensified its community behavior change activities and succeeded in reducing this harmful practice to the barest minimum if at all.
- Lack of formal identification documents for participants especially in some of the fragile and conflict-prone regions made it very difficult to target deserving participants effectively.
- In fragile and conflict-prone contexts, unstable and oftentimes unscrupulous community gatekeepers such as camp leaders often feel threatened by the way the project activities are conducted. For example, program field staff who visit and mobilize participants may be viewed as a direct challenge to the authority and influence of the camp leader. Projects must be tactful and deliberate in the way they manage them, as they cannot be ignored.





A USAID Grading to Resilience Activity trainer during a group therapy session with participants, Nkoma, southwestern Uganda - July 2022 Photo:AVSI Uganda

## 2. Coaching and Mentorship on Life Skills

Projects explored a number of ways to streamline coaching activities, whether as a cost-savings mechanism, or to reach more people more efficiently. Programs especially those operating in the arid and semi-arid lands (ASAL) explored group-based coaching and mentorship, leveraging the VLSA platform to reach participants who were already meeting in a group setting for a variety of reasons: due to low population density distances covered by mentors between households were large, cultural and religious limitations on personal interactions, community acceptability, scarcity of qualified mentors/coaches among others. Some projects reached out to graduation participants for phone-based coaching. Finally, some projects merged coaching and mentorship on life skills with livelihood skills training activities and relied on the same cadre of community resource persons to deliver the two components. The projects reached out to the communities to identify and select suitable resource persons who were then hired/contracted by the projects to deliver this service to participants subject to community acceptability (a critical factor in many ASAL regions).



### Notable Project Adaptations

- **Group-based Coaching and Mentoring on Life Skills** – Nawiri C-1, Nawiri C-2, Nuyok, KSEIP and G2R adopted the VSLA platform to offer group-based coaching and mentoring on life skills. Rather than traveling long distances to provide individual household-level coaching, which was costly and inefficient, especially for programs operating at scale, coaches were enabled to reach 15-30 households at once through group-based. Partners cited some of the benefits of coaching in a group setting to include: participants learning from one another as they shared experiences, participants supporting one another and complementing one another's strengths and weaknesses.
- **Nawiri C-1 provided Phone mentoring:** Referred to in the project as Phone Nudges, this practice was done 4 times within the Business Coaching and Mentoring process. It was a 10-minute call to one of the 3-person business groups with all BG members listening in. It was used to strengthen goals and actions agreed upon during in-person group sessions; as well as remind the group of business best practices and the importance of savings.
- **Coaching Participants on Digital Skills - G2R:** To support graduation participants in the effective use of the mobile phones distributed by the G2R Activity, coaches and community-based trainers (CBTs) trained all participants on the EQUAL digital literacy curriculum. By coaching participants and equipping them with digital skills, G2R sought to empower them to access and use any services that the project or any other service provider would deliver through digital platforms, as a way of enhancing efficiency and reducing costs. Besides mobile money services offered by the project to participants, digital skills empowered them to access important information on weather forecasts, competitive market prices for their farm produce as well as farm inputs, and other agricultural or business promotion information from service providers.

### Challenges

- Some communities did not trust organizations. Study findings in some remote ASAL regions showed that majority of people trusted people more than organizations. Such communities listened to the people they related with more than those they perceived to represent an organization. Some projects faced the challenge of getting the adequate number of people within each remote village to hire as coaches and mentors – who were not only qualified, but also acceptable to the community.
- Vast distances covered by mentors to designated training/meeting points created an overwhelming workload for mentors with too many mentees leading to fatigue and neglect of some groups.
- Identifying and hiring the right calibre of workforce with the requisite capacity and in adequate numbers to deliver this service to participants in large-scale projects was difficult.





### 3. Consumption Support and Asset Transfer

All projects were intentional in determining the appropriate value and delivery modalities of the consumption support and asset transfer packages offered to graduation participants, though how they did so varied by program. For example, to determine the amount, duration and modalities around consumption support, G2R drew upon the findings of a needs assessment that had been done to inform these decisions. The needs assessment identified the food security and nutrition needs, defined the amount of food necessary to support participants, and determined their minimum food expenditure basket (MEB). Additionally, the presence of other organizations like WFP operating within the area and the willingness to collaborate with G2R was a critical factor in decisions around consumption support. On the other UPG Project in Baidoa Somalia used a recommended MEB to set the amount of consumption support, but other partners operating in the area and were supposed to contribute retracted their commitment leaving UPG to deliver consumption support at just 50% of the MEB. Projects such as RFSA-Pre-SERVE in Ethiopia based their decision on seasonality as the guiding factor in addition to the on-going government funded cash transfer to the target participants.

Given the recent rapid expansion of mobile cash transfer within the SECARO region as a relatively safe, efficient, and cost-effective mechanism for bulk cash transfers, all programs utilized as much as possible direct mobile money transfer as the primary mechanism for both consumption support and asset transfers.

#### Notable Project Adaptations

- **Bank Transfers through designated field agents - G2R:** While G2R relied primarily on mobile money, some participants from the refugee population did not have the identification documents necessary to open an account, rendering them unable to access consumption support or asset transfers. As a workaround, G2R used both direct in-hand cash and bank transfers to designated field agents from whom the participants received their money.
- **Two Modes of Consumption Support – SPIR 2:** SPIR 2 offered consumption support in two forms – first a monthly cash transfer offered by the government through bank transfer and then a food package procured and delivered to participants by the project on a monthly basis to supplement the government cash transfers. This was to supplement the government-supported stipend that was not adequate to address the required minimum food requirements of the households.
- **Conditional Consumption Support - RFSA-PRESERVE:** The project divided participants into 2 categories A). Persons unable to work (e.g. elderly, persons living with disabilities, etc) B). Persons who were able to work. Category A were given unconditional consumption support indefinitely due to their condition. Participants falling under Category B were required to first engage in specific project activities (such as soil conservation activities, environmental regeneration activities, NRM activities, climate-smart farming, etc) under the Food-for-Work arrangement before receiving consumption stipends in line with the government's policy that seeks to discourage its citizens from a mentality of overreliance on handouts.
- **Alternative Pathway to Asset Transfer – RFSA-Pre-SERVE:** The project divided participants into 2 categories 1). Grant Track (20%) comprised of extremely vulnerable and poor households 2). Credit Track (60%) comprised the economically active poor. The participants within the Grants track were provided with an Asset Transfer worth USD300 after actively participating in (VESA) savings groups for 12 months. The participants in the Credit Track were linked with a local MFI or Rural Savings & Credit Cooperative (RUSACCOs) and supported to get Credit of around USD450 after participating actively in VESA savings groups for 12 months.





## Challenges

- Avoiding the risk of continued dependence on humanitarian assistance among the participants. In situations where government provides cash stipends (maybe as a safety net) without clear policy guidelines on the duration, participants may develop a mentality of overreliance on the stipends and this could hamper all efforts to graduate participants. Projects that collaborate with governments need to carefully review this arrangement.
- Diversion of consumption support to other needs other than the intended purpose.
- Logistical challenges in procuring and distributing food items or productive assets. For example, in remote conflict-prone (insecurity) areas with inadequate infrastructure e.g. markets, roads...
- Artificial price hikes in the market caused by traders who take advantage of the periodic upsurge in demand for specific products. Predictability of consumption support is a good practice, but it could inadvertently result in such price hikes, hence projects should actively explore strategies for addressing this challenge for its participants.
- Avoiding the risk of market saturation caused by starting many new and similar IGAs within the same locality. Projects need to be very intentional when supporting participants to start their IGAs – so as not to overlook this risk.



A participant receives her monthly cash for food through an agent using her prepaid card Photo:AVSI Uganda



## 4. Livelihood Skills Training and Support and Business Coaching

While all of the projects placed great emphasis on life skills training and support, and business coaching, many projects were experimenting with diverse modifications aimed at enhancing efficiency in delivery without compromising the quality of training, particularly for those projects implementing at scale. To the extent possible, projects offered short, practical, hands-on, field-based training tailored to the specific needs of the business or IGAs selected. Most projects used the savings and loans group meetings as a platform for delivering these training sessions. However, they used different cadres of trainers, ranging from professional and technical trainers to local community-based trainers to peer-to-peer trainers depending on the level of technicality required. Some projects also linked their participants to technical sales staff or agents for specialized information or knowledge for example on types or varieties of seeds, recommended agronomic practices or veterinary services etc. Some projects provided some modules of this training just before the asset transfer to help the participants prepare for the IGA. Some trainings especially agricultural-based ones, were scheduled to align with particular seasons to give participants the opportunity to practically apply the knowledge obtained through the training to their farms directly. Finally, some trainings were designed and delivered to other members of the household besides the primary participant.

### Notable Project Adaptations

- **Integrated FFBS/VSLA Training Platform - G2R:** Based on assessments that showed that participants including farmers were particularly interested in business, G2R adapted their Farmer Field School (FFS) to incorporate a commercial business component becoming the Farmer Field Business School (FFBS). These FFBS learned from the market assessments that certain nutritious crops were in high demand and fetched better prices, hence they started growing them, promoting nutrition-sensitive agricultural practices.
- For 12 months after the asset transfer, business coaches and CBTs provided business coaching for primary participants plus HH members using a robust livelihoods and financial literacy training curriculum. Business coaching formally began once all technical skills training (FFBS, FL & SPM) was completed. Individual coaching occurred bi-weekly with the coach while group coaching occurred weekly. Coaches held monthly self-reflection (GROW) sessions to track and understand progress towards achieving HH business goals (GROW-Goal, Reality, Options, Way Forward).

### Challenges

- Vast distances covered by trainers and coaches to designated training/meeting points
- Overwhelming workload for coaches with too many participants leading to fatigue and neglect of some groups.



## 5. Complementary Activities and Referrals

None of the projects implemented a stand-alone GA model (i.e. delivering the five “core” graduation components exclusively). Rather, the majority of the projects incorporated complementary activities featuring food and nutrition security, health, gender, youth, climate change adaptation, and disaster risk reduction, among others. These complementary activities were carefully layered onto the “core” GA activities.



*A happy couple shows their retail stock Photo:AVSI Uganda*

Depending on their scope, complementary activities were then delivered in one of three ways: a) internally, through some of the components such as coaching and mentoring or livelihood skills training; b) through linkages with private or public sector providers, particularly for those activities that require a high level of technical proficiency (e.g. agronomic services, veterinary services, financial services, etc.); or c) through referral services to an external entity. Some projects especially those operating in fragile, conflict and violence (FCV) prone areas such as NAWIRI, Pre-SERVE and SPIR 2 supported a wider range of complementary activities aimed at provision of basic services or investment in improving the enabling environment for the benefit of the graduation investment as well as potential benefit to the wider community - yielding conflict sensitivity payoffs as well.

Partnerships for linkages and referrals varied by project and the identified service providers; while most were executed through loose semi-formal agreements, some projects formalized agreements through well-documented Memoranda of Understanding (MoU). Emerging practices indicate a pattern of increasingly formal partnership arrangements among development partners especially through consortia partnerships to ensure quality service delivery through effective linkages and referrals. The increasing number of GA projects being implemented through consortia, especially in remote and marginalized regions attests to this development.

Many scale-up strategies of the graduation approach involved partners collaborating with the government on one hand and with private sector players at the market on the other hand. To collaborate effectively with the government or major private sector players to deliver specific components of the GA takes formalized partnerships backed by clearly documented and binding Memoranda of Understanding or contractual agreements. It is through these formalized partnerships that governments (national and county) can create favourable laws and regulatory frameworks that allow them to budget for and release funds regularly to support specific components of the Graduation approach, hence facilitating scale-up and sustainability.





### Notable Project Adaptations

- Partnering with National and Regional (county) Governments to Scale up GA** – Kenya Socio-Economic Inclusion Program (KSEIP): Directly funded by the Government of Kenya (GoK), through KSEIP, Village Enterprise was tasked with building the capacity of the GoK to implement graduation programming. This technical assistance to the GoK was taking place in steps. Step 1 involved Village Enterprise implementing the GA while a select team of GoK staff team watched and learned what Village Enterprise was doing. Step 2 involved the select team of GoK staff implementing the GA while Village Enterprise observed and supported them. Step 3 involved the select GoK team implementing the GA with just a few Village Enterprise staff embedded within the GoK team to offer assistance remotely. As at the time of the learning workshop in Uganda, Step 1 had been accomplished. Through co-creation with the GoK, Village Enterprise adapted its standard model to make it possible for the government to implement using its existing structures and departments. Part of the adaptation involved modifying its targeting process from the 4-step community-based participatory targeting process to the use of the government-owned Enhanced Single Registry.
- Village Enterprise also partnered with and helped the County Government of West Pokot in Kenya** to develop a Poverty Graduation Program Policy that was ratified into law by the county assembly in the year 2020. The County Government committed to partnering with the national government, private sector, and other development partners to mobilize resources to facilitate the implementation of poverty graduation programs across the county – addressing scale-up and sustainability challenges. Monitoring and evaluation of the programs is done using existing County Government structures and systems managed through an integrated management information system. A County Poverty Graduation Steering Committee was set up to provide leadership and regularly review the programs.
- Partnering with the National Government to Upgrade the Government-run Social Protection Scheme – RFSA-Pre-SERVE and SPIR 2:** Food for the Hungry Ethiopia and World Vision Ethiopia partnered with the Government of Ethiopia (GoE) to strengthen the government-run Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP -5) in Amhara, Oromo and Tigray regions whose population was challenged with persistent acute malnutrition. The projects aimed to build the resilience of the population to enable them to support their own household nutritional needs and hence graduate/exit from the PSNP. The government-run PSNP was struggling with households that were perennially on food support hence straining the safety net program.

### Challenges

- Except under consortium arrangements, many partners still adopt a fairly informal attitude towards partnering with private sector players or the government. This approach results in only partial commitment of the involved parties yielding limited impact.
- For certain “specialized” services, the capacity of the client-facing project workforce limits the



quality of service delivery and consequently the effectiveness/impact of some GA project elements. A number of GA intervention/services, (whether core or complementary) can be considered “specialized” to some extent. A person delivering the service/intervention to participants should have some form of “technical knowledge and skills” to deliver it effectively e.g. a mentor or VSLA community-based trainer (CBT). Budgetary limitations as projects scale up can tempt projects to engage low cadre government workforce or volunteers with limited capacity to deliver some of these services/interventions to participants, greatly compromising the effectiveness and impact of the project.

- Sometimes setting up mechanisms for effective referrals can be complex and difficult to initiate when a GA project is already ongoing.
- Avoiding the risk of work overload for client-facing staff that compromises quality service delivery.

## 6. Savings/Loan Groups, Linkages and Beneficiary Transitions

Within the SECARO region, projects have largely adopted the classical practice to financial resilience/inclusion, with minor variations. Many of the projects promoted savings and lending through semi-formal mechanisms such as VSLAs, SILCs, S4Ts, and VESAs etc. allowing participants to save and receive training in financial literacy. For many projects, participants were mandated to enroll in these savings groups and save regularly as a means of building resilience against shocks and crises.

Projects also employed the strategy of linkages to assist participants access other services critical to their growth, but not offered in-house. They encouraged those participants who had enrolled and participated in savings groups for several cycles to register with, and start making individual savings in, more formal financial services providers, such as microfinance institutions (MFIs), rural savings and credit cooperatives and banks. Projects also linked households that were running active businesses, IGAs or farm activities to markets for inputs and produce. Active establishment of linkages was a good indicator of the re-introduction of formerly marginalized households back into the cash economy and a major milestone towards self-reliance. Another widespread practice among projects in the region was the use of the savings group as a platform for providing training and coaching sessions for other complementary activities.

Beneficiary transition from the project upon graduation could take various forms. Some projects hold regular graduation ceremonies for example annually where all households that have attained the graduation benchmarks within the year are graduated officially from the project with fanfare. Some projects award graduation certificates to graduating participants to mark it as an achievement.

Some projects quietly and without any ceremony transition participants who have attained the graduation benchmarks with or without awarding certificates.

Other projects such as G2R have a different approach. The project enrolls households within a specific cohort and provides interventions and services to all the households in the cohort for a specified period of time (e.g. 24 months). As service provision continues, some households attain the graduation benchmarks earlier before the 24 months elapse. Such household just continue in the program being monitored but not receiving certain services. When the 24 months elapse, the project organizes a grand graduation event for all the



households in that cohort, whether they have all attained the graduation benchmarks or not.

Whatever the mode of beneficiary transitions a project adopts, some critical points to ponder include:

- How to handle participants/households that do not attain the graduation benchmarks after the maximum graduation cycle period (36 months) is reached.
- How to handle participants that attain the graduation benchmarks but backslide after a few months.



Money counters in a VSLA group ready themselves Photo:AVSI Uganda

### Notable Project Adaptations

- **Savings With a Purpose (SWAP) – NAWIRI C-1:** The NAWIRI project requires all participants to join a business savings group (BSG) and save regularly. BSGs largely function as traditional VSLAs, but in addition to encouraging participants to save money for regular expenses and emergency funds, the BSG introduced a third type of savings called Savings with a Purpose (SWAP). By introducing SWAP, NAWIRI provided individual

participants with the opportunity and reinforced the need for them to double their efforts at building their own personal income streams. Doing so helped participants more systematically boost their household resilience and self-reliance through the acquisition of additional assets (both productive and non-productive) and diversification of income sources. This was a particular need given the historical malnutrition challenge prevailing in the area and the fact that the project was supporting group-owned businesses rather than individual-owned businesses. SWAP helped the women diversify their businesses alongside the group business and enhance their individual resilience (i.e. have multiple sources of income to rely on when there is a lack) as well as their nutritional outcomes. Through SWAP, some participants were able to buy goats for milk to feed their families and even donkeys to lighten household chores undertaken by the women such as fetching water and accessing markets among others.



- Scaling and Sustainability through Private Sector Partnerships - DREAMS:** Through the DREAMS (Delivering Resilient Enterprises and Market Systems) projects in Uganda and Ethiopia, Village Enterprise and Mercy Corps are applying a joint Graduation Approach-Market Systems Development (MSD) model. Applying the GA model, VE works to push target graduation households up the resilience ladder. To support the households' continued trajectory towards resilience, the Graduation Approach is coupled with an MSD model, that works to prepare and equip households to link up with the market systems developed. The MSD model works by triggering the market players to identify business opportunities in the graduating households and investing in developing products that can help graduating households link up with the market players upon graduation. For example, cooperative societies are sensitized and linked up to VSLAs in a mutually beneficial arrangement that makes business sense to both parties.
- Last Mile Huduma Mashinani Expo Events for financial and social services – NAWIRI C-2:** Targeting the poorest of the poor in hostile and difficult to reach arid lands, Nawiri project reaches remote and far flung communities totally isolated from all government services and development. Having never received services like registration of births, national health insurance fund (NHIF), banking, among others, residents of some of these areas were not even aware of their needs in terms of service delivery. Nawiri project partnered with Huduma Mashinani<sup>7</sup>, and several other public and private sector service providers to convene the Expo Events in various communities. Nawiri project supported a series of these Huduma Mashinani Expo Events to the remotest communities providing nutrition, immunisation, deworming, treatment of diarrhoea, malaria and respiratory illnesses, and antenatal care, while Huduma Mashinani provided government services like NHIF, and KRA, among others. Other partners in the Expo included financial institutions, as well as different government ministries operating under the Huduma Mashinani programme. Stakeholders from across sectors collaborated, innovated, and mobilized resources to drive collective impact and ensure sustained positive nutrition and resilience outcomes.
- Market Event - G2R:** The market event, held once in a cohort created opportunities for direct linkages between the project participants and vetted private sector players in various service realms including agro-inputs, agri-insurance, financial services, and climate smart agri-solutions. Through this platform, participants undertook initiatives that established direct communication links with preferred private sector service providers and developed networks to last beyond the project's lifetime. Cutting out "middleman" and establishing direct and customized relationships with private sector actors ensured price fairness and sustainable buyer-seller relationships.

<sup>7</sup> Huduma Mashinani is a citizen centered mobile outreach program that brings government services closer to the people





### Challenges

- Unstable Savings groups that dash members hopes and lead to disgruntlement and disillusionment of members.
- Risk of destabilizing the otherwise “stable VSLA model” through “arbitrarily” modifying certain key elements of the tested methodology to achieve certain project objectives. For example, injecting large amounts of external funding or grants into a stable VSLA group may cause conflict among members disagreeing on how to distribute the benefits.
- Another principle of VSLA that can be easily violated under GA is that VSLA membership is normally self-selected, whereas under graduation, often the members are only those who have been identified through the graduation selection process and may not have pre-existing social cohesion/trust – leading to group instability.
- Seasonal migration of participants from the ASAL areas due to climate-related shocks (e.g. droughts, floods) made it difficult for members of Group Savings like VSLAs to attend meetings adversely affecting the stability and progress of the groups.
- Insecurity, limited social cohesion, lack of proper personal identification documents, and mobile nature of some participants (e.g. IDPs in fragile & conflict-prone areas significantly increased their risk profile making it difficult for them to establish strong stable savings groups or link up to formal financial institutions.
- Scarcity of strong credible financial service providers (MFIs, SACCOs, banks, etc.) in some remote areas and/or fragile contexts coupled with low liquidity in the institutions hampered the project’s desired trajectory of service delivery to the participants.





# SUMMARY OF PROMISING PRACTICES IN GA PROGRAMS

1. **Use of current data generated through assessments to inform GA program design:** The GA Projects were increasingly relying on findings from formal assessments/studies done to inform program design and interventions. For example, G2R undertook at least 8 assessments/studies whose findings informed the G2R program design. Both Nawiri Cluster 1 and Nawiri Cluster 2 projects undertook more than 40<sup>8</sup> USAID-sponsored programmatic studies/assessments between the years 2020 and 2023 whose findings were used to inform specific GA components of the project and other systemic level interventions. Assessments inform the design of graduation programs by building an understanding of the overarching environment, identifying the causes of vulnerability, and identifying opportunities for improvement and support<sup>9</sup>. The main types of assessments used include:
  - Context Analysis
  - Vulnerability assessment
  - Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Analysis
  - Livelihoods and Market Assessment
  - Stakeholder Mapping

Assessments used by graduation programs must specifically focus on the vulnerabilities faced by the ultra-poor (i.e. use the lens of the ultra-poor). Sufficient time must be set aside for projects to conduct assessments, internalize findings and lessons learnt, and revise proposals before starting implementation.
2. **Use of Randomized Control Trials and Action Research pilots to test the effectiveness of project strategies and interventions and attribute results obtained to interventions (Smart Programming).** Through the RCTs and pilots carried out before the full-time roll-out of the projects, the efficacy and effectiveness of particular interventions were determined helping the project to revise and refine their strategies and interventions to ensure significant impact was achieved and resources were not spent on interventions that had minimal impact on the participants. Adequate time should be built into RFSAs' Request for Applications and design phase to enable implementing partners to undertake contextualization/studies, learn from pilots and initial cohorts in order to adapt design for future cohorts.
3. **Use of Adaptive Project Management and Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA) Practices:** Projects increasingly adopted Adaptive Management practices through the use of Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA) methods in their programming operations. Project teams gradually developed into learning teams becoming increasingly responsive to participant needs as well as donor needs and used their creativity to try out new approaches that could satisfy both categories of clients.
4. **Designing the GA projects to embrace formal multi-sectoral collaboration:** Projects realized that effective multi-sectoral collaboration was a crucial factor if GA programs wanted to maximize impact on target households through effective linkages and referrals. Organizations formed consortia with diverse multi-sectoral partners to bid for projects with GA component. The versatility of the GA model has opened doors and created opportunities for greater multisectoral collaboration among governments,

<sup>8</sup> USAID Nawiri Framework: Helping to Reduce PAM in Kenya's Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (July 2023)

<sup>9</sup> Moqueet et al. (May 2019). Ultra-Poor Graduation Handbook Second Edition. BRAC/World Vision



development partners and market players aimed at achieving greater impact and sustainability through linkages and referrals.

- e) **Developing formal Linkages to Government and Private Sector (Market) players:** Some projects realized that for effective and sustainable scale-up of the GA, partners had to find a model that links up participant households with the government as well as with the private sector (market) players. Formal linkages to the government were required to “push” the government to create a favourable regulatory framework that would allow it to regularly allocate funds to the GA program, thus ensuring sustainability. Formal linkages to identified private sector players were needed to gain commitment from the private sector players to invest in developing present and future business opportunities from the graduating households.
- f) **Documentation and Dissemination of Learning and Knowledge Management Products:** Projects that promoted a culture of Learning and Knowledge Management (LKM) through documentation of successes, challenges, and lessons learned and the development of LKM products such as technical briefs, policy briefs, case studies, human-interest stories, and abstracts helped project teams to internalize project experiences, enhance learning and expand their knowledge boundaries. This emboldened them to explore new ways of programming for greater impact.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

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- Currently, there is much effort and resources directed at tracking and demonstrating the programmatic effectiveness and impact of Graduation Programs implemented across different contexts. This is commendable. Similar efforts and resources need to be directed at capturing and demonstrating the cost-efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the different graduation models (and even different components of the GA model). A possible starting point would be for the GA Community of Practice to develop a minimum set of performance parameters that each Graduation program should strive to measure and report/declare (even if it just starts with self-reporting before clear standards are agreed upon).
- Since formal, professionally managed assessments/research are costly to undertake, organizations and projects operating within the same locality should consider collaborating around investing in specific assessments/research to generate current information that they can then use to inform their respective programs.
- Projects should consider refining and developing the optimal roles of mentors and other cadres of the community workforce such as Community Health Promoters (CHPs) in Kenya used in delivering nutrition results in Graduation households and their communities.
- Projects should explore ways of contributing to and drawing upon the National Government's Enhanced Single Registry in countries where this exists and is comprehensive for targeting and layering of Graduation within the wider Social Protection and Economic Inclusion landscape.
- Though evidence suggests that GA can work in fragile and conflict settings, there seems to be a threshold in terms of infrastructure (markets, regulatory frameworks, social cohesion, etc.) that should exist within an environment/ecosystem before the GA can be introduced and supported to function. Where there is no infrastructure due to under-development or persistent conflict, it is important to consider supporting the development of these critical facilities and systems first.



### Programmatic Level Recommendations

- Projects should consider including post-graduation evaluations in their plans and budgets as a standard practice to understand sustainability, including post-graduation shocks, and assess additional contributions of the graduation transition pathways. At the Programmatic level, recommendations by component area<sup>10</sup> include:
  1. **Targeting:** Targeting for graduation projects at the household or community levels should as much as possible be participatory in nature, engaging the community to determine contextually appropriate definitions of poverty or extreme poverty. Projects should make prior preparations on how to handle disappointment or later accommodate those households that meet the selection criteria but are excluded from enrolling in the graduation program due to resource constraints.
  2. **Mentoring and Coaching:** Graduation Projects should clearly define the calibre and quantity of skilled staff to be used for coaching and mentoring positions. With the goal of coaching and mentoring being primarily to boost confidence and monitor participants' well-being, the interventions should be well thought out and informed by the participants' needs.
  3. **Consumption Support:** The amount, duration and timing of the consumption support should be carefully analyzed and determined to prevent the participants from engaging in negative coping strategies that harm the cause for graduation. Once established, the project should clearly communicate to all participants, staff and stakeholders the terms and conditions of the consumption support to manage expectations and give participants enough time to make plans and preparations for life of self-sustenance.
  4. **Savings and Financial inclusion:** Graduation Projects should ultimately connect graduation participants to suitable formal financial services to help them overcome barriers to financial inclusion and ensure sustainability. In regions without suitable formal financial service providers, projects should support the formation or joining of savings and lending groups as a stop-gap measure until a time when a suitable financial services provider will have made entry.
  5. **Livelihood Skills Training:** Graduation projects should tailor training based on the needs, literacy, and numeracy level of graduation participants – employing adult and applied learning methodologies and adaptable training schedules to suit the participants needs especially those related to gender. Include graduation coaches and mentors to play a supportive role in the training efforts, so that they can reinforce key training messages and the application of new knowledge and skills to promote behaviour change.
  6. **Asset Transfer:** Graduation Projects should conduct market assessments to get current information for use in determining the asset transfer amount, modality to be used, the timing of delivery, and conditions. Participants may prefer a portfolio of assets rather than a single asset, which contributes to diversification of livelihoods. The project should conduct household needs and capacity assessment through its coaches and mentors and help the participants select from a given menu the most appropriate asset package and livelihood pathway that matches the experience, interest, capacities and aspirations of the household. For group-managed assets, care must be taken to let group ownership emerge organically because the approach has an inherent risk when group cohesion is threatened.

<sup>10</sup> Bernagros et al. (2022, October). *Considerations for Integrating the Graduation Approach within Resilience Food Security Activities.*



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# ANNEXES

## 1. List of Partners and Persons Interviewed

List of Interviewees		
Name of Partner	Project Name	Interviewee
World Vision Somalia	Ultra Poor Graduation Project in Baidoa Somalia	Andrew Mugobo
World Vision Somalia	Ultra Poor Graduation Project in Baidoa Somalia	Asrat Bekele
Food for the Hungry Ethiopia	RFSA - PreSERVE - Ethiopia	Getahun Shibeshi
Food for the Hungry Ethiopia	RFSA – PreSERVE - Ethiopia	Sebsibe Alemu
Village Enterprise Kenya	Kenya Socio-Economic Inclusion Program, Kenya (KSEIP)	Leah Okero
Village Enterprise Kenya	Nawiri Project Marsabit & Isiolo Counties, Kenya	Ibrahim Jarso
BOMA Project Kenya	Nawiri Project Turkana & Samburu Counties, Kenya	Simon Mbuki
BOMA Project Kenya	Nawiri Project Turkana & Samburu Counties, Kenya	Paul Bolo
Mercy Corps Kenya	Nawiri Project Turkana & Samburu Counties, Kenya	Nuala Mendham
Mercy Corps Kenya	Nawiri Project Turkana & Samburu Counties, Kenya	Olga Petryniak
World Vision Ethiopia	Strengthen PSNP Institutions & Resilience II (SPIR II) Ethiopia	Henok Metaferia

## 2. Interview Questionnaire

USAID intends to hold a workshop in May in Uganda to strengthen the SECARO community of practice understanding and the implementation of the graduation approach. Participants will learn about the approach's principles, its implementation across different contexts, especially in Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, and Somalia, and how it promotes food and nutrition security, and self-reliance to reduce costly humanitarian assistance. Objectives are to equip attendees with strategies to address challenges, sustain program impact, and contribute to USAID's body of knowledge about using the Graduation Approach.

We have been tasked with developing a synthesis report on all the USAID and non-USAID funded GA programs in the SECARO region and would greatly appreciate your assistance by participating in our questionnaire process. Our team of Steve, Immaculate and Mara will be calling you to go through the important issues about your program and we appreciate your guiding us to the proper team members and your implementing partners.

Of particular interest to us is determining if there are any interventions or adaptations that you made that expand beyond "traditional" graduation programming, and what key challenges were encountered. Are there any lessons learned? Thank you in advance for your cooperation.



## Questionnaire for Information-Gathering Interview

Graduation Approach Practices of USAID Implementing Partners – Guiding Questions	
<b>Basic Information</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide an overview of each of your graduation components/activities (timing, amount, duration, modality, sector, # of participants). Why?</li> <li>• How did these design and implementation decisions respond to context-specific (project objectives, geographic, population, etc.) considerations?</li> </ul>
<b>Targeting and Selection Criteria</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe the process of how your project targeted the community and selected participants, highlighting the methods, tools, and approaches used. What challenges did you encounter during the process and what lessons were learned?</li> <li>• What inclusion/exclusion criteria do you use to target participants?</li> </ul>
<b>Consumption Support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does your project provide consumption support?</li> <li>• If yes, tell us more about this intervention, highlighting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• which clients are targeted (all or some) for it</li> <li>• what form it takes (cash or in-kind) and which organization delivers it</li> <li>• the amount, frequency, duration, and mode of delivery.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• How do you determine the amount, the frequency, and the duration?</li> <li>• Please share any key challenges encountered. Are there any lessons learned?</li> </ul>
<b>Savings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please tell us about the savings/financial inclusion component of your project (mechanism e.g. savings groups, etc., individual/ group, amount, frequency, etc.).</li> <li>• What complementary non-financial services (financial literacy) are offered? How?</li> <li>• What, if any, linkages to formal financial services does your project offer? To whom? When? How?</li> <li>• What key challenges did your project face? What are your lessons learned?</li> </ul>
<b>Livelihood Selection &amp; Asset Transfer</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe how your project identified viable, appropriate livelihood options for the participant households. What assessments were conducted and how did you use the findings?</li> <li>• Explain how your project implements the asset transfer (amount, timing, modality, number of tranches, etc).</li> <li>• What were the key challenges faced during implementations and how did you overcome them? Any lessons learned?</li> </ul>
<b>Technical/Livelihood Skills Training</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please describe how your project trains clients on technical or livelihood skills required to manage the transferred assets or operate a business. Indicate</li> <li>• When and where the pieces of training are done (timing)? Individual training vs group training.</li> <li>• Who within the beneficiary household is trained &amp; why?</li> <li>• Who provides the training e.g. Professional trainers or Peer-to-peer trainers? How regularly?</li> <li>• Does the project offer employability skills and links to clients who choose employment as their preferred livelihood option?</li> <li>• Are there any key challenges and lessons learned around this component?</li> </ul>
<b>Coaching and Mentorship</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe how your project provides participants with coaching and mentorship (individual/ group/hybrid; frequency; duration; technology; etc.)</li> <li>• What is the objective of your coaching/mentorship (life skills, business skills, other)?</li> <li>• What is the profile of your coaches? How are they trained &amp; supported throughout program implementation?</li> <li>• Please share any key challenges encountered around this activity. Any lessons learned?</li> </ul>
<b>Monitoring &amp; Graduation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please share your graduation criteria and how your project measures and manages household graduation.</li> <li>• How does your project implement household-level monitoring (systems, frequency, etc.)?</li> <li>• What systems are used to monitor program quality (inputs, staff engagement, training, etc.)?</li> <li>• How does your project measure and/or manage premature graduation or backsliding?</li> <li>• Please share any challenges encountered and lessons learned.</li> </ul>



Graduation Approach Practices of USAID Implementing Partners – Guiding Questions	
<b>Partnerships &amp; Collaborations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How many partners do you work with to deliver the GA components?</li> <li>• What strategies did you use to identify and effectively engage your partners?</li> <li>• Please share any challenges encountered and how you addressed them.</li> <li>• Are there any lessons learned that you can share?</li> <li>• How did government policies/regulations including enabling environment help/affect your GA programming?</li> </ul>
<b>Complementary activities and Referrals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please provide information on any complimentary activities and referrals to your local implementing partners or others in the GA space.</li> </ul>
<b>Resource Materials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please can you share with us your project’s guidelines or program outlines</li> <li>• and any other key learning reports</li> </ul>





### 3. Parameters of the Reviewed Projects

	NAWIRI Cluster-1	NAWIRI Cluster-2	KSEIP - VE	G2R	Nuyok (Pilot)	RFS Pre-SERVE	SPIR 2	UPG Somalia
Country	Kenya	Kenya	Kenya	Uganda	Uganda	Ethiopia	Ethiopia	Somalia
Donor Partner	USAID/BHA	USAID/BHA	World Bank	USAID/ BHA	USAID/ BHA	USAID/ BHA	USAID/ BHA	USAID/ BHA
Prime Partner (Consortium)	CRS	Mercy Corps	GDI	AVSI Uganda	CRS Uganda	GOE*	GOE*	WV Somalia
Lead Partner in GA	Village Enterprise	BOMA Project	Village Enterprise	AVSI Uganda	CRS Uganda	FH Ethiopia	WV Ethiopia	WV Somalia
Project duration (Years)	8 (2019-2027)	8 (2019-2027)	5 (2021-2026)	7 (2017-2024)	2 (2018-2019)	5 (2021-2026)	5 (2021-2026)	3 (2021-2024)
Context	ASAL	ASAL		Refugee/Host	ASAL			Fragile, Conflict
# of HHs enrolled in the GA program	16,040 Targeting to reach 24,000		3,456	13,929 (50:50)	1,635	45,000 Targets to graduate 17,100 in Year 5		5,000 (80% IDP 20% host)
Graduation Cycle (months)	24	18	18	24	24	60	60	
# of HHs Graduated (to date)			3,456	6,600 (Cohort 1)	1,335	Yet to "graduate"		
Graduation Rate* (%) (average)	82.5%			73%	76%			
Cost per Household (US\$) (Average)			266	1,460				
<b>Practices Adopted by Projects in Some Thematic Areas</b>								
Targeting & Graduation Criteria	AN-GM Model has inclusion criteria for ultra-poor HHs with malnourished CU5 & Pregnant/ lactating women	R4N Model applies blended targeting to facilitate blended 3-woman groups that run the IGAs or businesses.	Used GOK's Enhanced Single Registry for targeting ultra-poor HHs	Inclusion criteria emphasized FNS indicators for ultra-poor youth & women from host & refugee HHs	Inclusion Criteria emphasized FNS indicators for youth & women from the ASAL area	Supported the GOE PSNP-5. Used Proximity Mean Test (PMT) Score to identify deserving ultra-poor HHs	Supported the GOE's PSNP-5. Promotes the concept of "exit of HHs" instead of "graduation of HHs"	FSN pilot – supported 80% IDP & 20% host HHs in fragile & conflict area



	NAWIRI Cluster-1	NAWIRI Cluster-2	KSEIP - VE	G2R	Nuyok (Pilot)	RFS Pre-SERVE	SPIR 2	UPG Somalia
Consumption Support (C.S.) & Asset Transfer (A.T)	Used Mobile Cash Transfers for both C.S & A.T C.S = Ksh.5,000 PM for 6 months (=25% of July 2022 M.E.B) A.T = Ksh.50,000 in 2 tranches (30K + 20K).	Used Mobile Cash Transfers for both C.S & A.T. A.T of USD375 provided in 2 tranches 6 months apart. 2nd tranche is performance-based.	Used Mobile Cash Transfers for both C.S & A.T	Mobile Cash Transfer for 75% of clients. Bank transfer through agents for 25% of clients for both C.S & A.T.	Layered with FNS, girl-child education,	Govt. Cash Transfer + In-kind Food Items support to the participants Unconditional vs. Conditional C.S Grants Track vs. Credit Track in A.T.	Govt. Cash Transfer + In-kind Food Items support to participants	C.S = Mobile Cash Transfer of \$42.5 pm for 6 months (=50% M.E.B) A.T: Procured & distributed assets mostly livestock.
Complementary Activities & Referrals	Layering of activities in FNS, Health, Hygiene, SBC, Climate-Smart Agric & gender at HH-level	Layering of activities in FNS, Health, Hygiene, SBC, Climate-Smart Agric & gender at HH level	Layering of activities in FNS, Health, Hygiene, SBC, Climate-Smart Agric & gender at HH level	Layering of activities in FNS, Health, SBC, Hygiene, Climate-Smart Agric & gender at HH level	Layered with FNS, girl-child education,	Layering of interventions at HH-level + Systems-Strengthening Interventions	Layering of interventions at HH-level + Systems-Strengthening Interventions	Layering of interventions at the HH level
Livelihood Skills Training & Support and Business Coaching	Group training, coaching & mentoring through BG & BSG Platform + Interactive Voice Recording (IVR) nudges.	Group training, coaching & mentoring through BG & BSG Platform + Interactive Voice Recording (IVR) messages.	Use SILC (VSLA) model supported by field agents & PSPs	Both Individual & group-based. Coaches hold monthly self-reflection GROW sessions with each HH using HH, VSLA & FFBS platforms.	Bi-weekly Individual coaching as well as Monthly Group sessions to cut costs. Used external trainers.	Provided through the VESA savings group platform. Provided by Community animators supervised by development officers at district level.	Provided through the VESA savings group platform. Provided by Community animators supervised by development officers at district level.	Provided by community-based staff identified and hired by the project
Savings & Loan groups, Linkages & Beneficiary Transitions	Use SILC (VSLA) model supported by field agents & PSPs	Use SILC (VSLA) model supported by field agents & PSPs	Use SILC (VSLA) model supported by field agents & PSPs	Use VSLA model	Use the SILC (VSLA) model	Use the VESA group model that links to MFIs & RUSACCOs after 12 months	Use the VESA group model that links to RUSACCOs & MFIs after 12 months	Use S4T (VSLA) model



### 4. Matrix of GA Practices used by USAID Implementing Partners

Consumption Support	Savings	Livelihood Selection & Asset Transfer	Technical/Livelihoods Skills Training	Life skills Coaching	Monitoring & Graduation Pathways
<b>Graduating to Resilience (G2R): AVSI Uganda</b>					
Layered C.S. within a donor-led activity. All GA HHs got a monthly Cash Transfer of US\$25 for the host community (G2R) & US\$30 for refugees (WFP) for the 1st year (i.e. 12 months). C.S. offered through mobile money. G2R provided each HH with a mobile phone + SIM card. Challenges: 25% of participants had inadequate identification documents & could not register for mobile money accounts. Had to be given a pre-paid agent card to use instead.	Graduation HHs established savings groups as one of the initial program components. Groups were trained extensively on financial literacy & linked to formal FSP, MFIs & local cooperatives. HHs were registered for mobile money accounts to facilitate consumption support & asset transfer. Challenges: Though savings were effective, the COVID-19 pandemic posed challenges to this model. G2R piloted the digitization of VSLAs & record-keeping	Transferred cash to HHs in 6 months upon a) enrollment in VSLA b) completion of SPM technical training c) selection of suitable IGA with help of TAs, POs & CBTs. G2R randomized the receipt of an A.T. Two RCT arms received a one-off A.T. of US\$300 thru mobile money after the technical training. The 3rd arm received no A.T. and instead utilized loans from their savings groups. Results showed increases in the value of productive assets, income, consumption, food security & subjective well-being among both refugee &	Business coaching was done for primary participants plus HH members by business coaches & CBTs who provided robust livelihoods training supplemented with coaching curriculum & financial literacy training. Business coaching formally begins once all technical skills training (FFBS, SPM, FL & SPM) are completed. Individual coaching occurred bi-weekly with the coach, while group coaching occurred weekly. Coaches held monthly self-reflection (GROW) sessions to track & understand progress towards achieving HH business goals. [Goal, Reality, Operations, & Way Forward]	Offered bi-weekly individual mentoring & coaching sessions throughout the duration of the graduation intervention. Started offering weekly or monthly Group coaching leveraging on VSLAs to manage costs. Coaches facilitated VSLA & led Entrepreneurship Literacy training (ELT). G2R trained Coaches integrated sessions on nutrition, WASH, MCHN into the curriculum & incorporated specific malnutrition & referral mechanisms as well. RCT results for G2R showed both individual & Group coaching were effective. Coaches & CBTs in Cohort 2 received training to help participants develop digital skills. The EQUAL digital literacy curriculum was adapted and scaled to all participants.	Developed graduation criteria measuring participants' livelihood, assets, food security, savings, as well as social, nutrition, and disaster preparedness indicators. Participation in program was time-bound rather than defined by reaching graduation status. Graduation interventions continued even if HHs met graduation criteria prior to program end. Also HHs could no longer receive graduation interventions if the program ended before the HH met graduation criteria. Engaged external partners to conduct comprehensive HH-level evaluations that captured data on child nutrition, women's nutrition, and anthropometry.



Consumption Support	Savings	Livelihood Selection & Asset Transfer	Technical/Livelihoods Skills Training	Life skills Coaching	Monitoring & Graduation Pathways
		<p>host treatment groups with the A. T. compared to those without. G2R found that providing technical training significantly influenced the IGA the HH chose to invest in. G2R engaged IMPAQ &amp; Trickle Up to market analysis &amp; VCA to understand current &amp; future livelihood opportunities for host &amp; refugee HHs living in target communities and identify suitable technical skills &amp; VCs with potential for raising HH incomes. G2R used results to adapt their interventions to different group needs to promote greater resilience &amp; impact.</p>	<p>Incorporated nutrition-sensitive and nutrition-specific interventions in their coaching and training curricula. Provided Farmer Field Business Schools (FFBS) to engage in nutrition-sensitive agricultural practices e.g. climate-smart &amp; eco-friendly farming techniques. Sessions were aligned to a full planting season. (Adapted FFS based on Market assessment findings) Business coaching takes 12 months after Asset Transfer, thereafter any additional support is provided by the private or public sector depending on the HH's business needs.</p>		<p>Conducted regular (weekly, bi-weekly or monthly HH-level monitoring to assess participant progress against the graduation criteria &amp; VSLA performance. Measured progress across specific food security &amp; nutrition indicators including minimum acceptable diets for children and dietary diversity for women.</p>
<p><b>Additional Remarks:</b>                      Targeting: Used PRA processes to target Graduation HHs based on poverty status, customizing the methodology to the local context, and prioritizing women-headed HHs. Excluded participants who could not engage in IGAs e.g. extremely old, with severe disabilities, etc. Used social mapping &amp; PVR to develop a poverty scorecard based on locally conceptualized poverty classifications – then used the scorecard to target youth and women from extremely poor refugee and host community HHs. Key challenge: No. who qualified for graduation programming exceeded the # the program could support.                      Partnerships with Government, Other NGOs (donor-funded), and Private Sector: G2R linked with government agricultural &amp; veterinary extension services for training as well as to government Village health teams to address cases of acute malnutrition. Collaboration with other donor-funded programs was generally limited, but G2R linked with the USAID Power Africa program on energy-related interventions for solar power in targeted communities.                      G2R engaged the private sector to supply participants with quality, affordable agricultural inputs for climate-smart agriculture (drought-resistant seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, etc.): Held an event that connected larger buyers with small-holder farmers: Linked HHs with Financial Service Providers – MFIs, etc.                      Assessments Done &amp; Findings Used to Refine the Program Design: 1). Labour Market Assessment 2). VSLA Assessment 3). Financial Services Provider Assessment 4). Gender Analysis 5). Environmental Risk Assessment 6). Value Chain Assessment 7). Service Providers Mapping 8). Nutrition &amp; WASH Knowledge, Attitudes &amp; Practices Assessment</p>					



Consumption Support	Savings	Livelihood Selection & Asset Transfer	Technical/Livelihoods Skills Training	Life skills Coaching	Monitoring & Graduation Pathways
<p><b>The Nuyok Resilience Food Security Activity (Pilot) CRS Uganda</b></p> <p>HHs received US\$20 per month for 4 months through mobile money transfers.</p> <p>Originally designed not to include Consumption Support as it was provided through government transfers, but the donor later asked for its inclusion.</p> <p>Challenges: Faced challenges in aligning C.S. to the lean season &amp; in securing the use &amp; adaptability of technology.</p>	<p>Graduation HHs established savings groups as one of the initial program components</p> <p>Groups were trained extensively on financial literacy &amp; linked to formal FSP, MFIs &amp; local cooperatives</p> <p>HHs were registered for mobile money accounts to facilitate consumption support &amp; asset transfer</p> <p>Challenges: Though savings were effective, the COVID-19 pandemic coupled with insecurity posed challenges to this model. Nuyok struggled with the seasonal migration of participants that made difficult for them to attend VSLA groups due to climate-related shocks.</p>	<p>Nuyok provided C.T. through 3-person business group model (BOMA project model). BOMA mentors assembled business groups each of 3 qualified women to help them launch their businesses.</p> <p>Each of the 545 business groups received US\$200 in start-up capital and then an additional performance-based 2nd grant of US\$100 – benefiting 445 groups. This group approach aimed to maintain the A.T. while reducing the cost per person. It also helped the women to share business responsibilities, reducing the time burden per participant.</p>	<p>Provided robust livelihoods training supplemented with coaching curriculum &amp; financial literacy training.</p> <p>Separately hired CBTs &amp; business coaches to train REAP business groups on basic business skills.</p> <p>Delivered monthly training on life skills, girl-child education, &amp; financial literacy.</p> <p>Identified external partnerships with local government, private sector, &amp; other NGOs &amp; CBOs to provide more specialized livelihoods training.</p> <p>Incorporated nutrition-sensitive and nutrition-specific interventions in their coaching and training curricula.</p>	<p>Mentors offered bi-weekly individual coaching sessions throughout the duration of the graduation intervention.</p> <p>To cut costs, mentors started offering monthly Group-level coaching due to geographically dispersed communities, &amp; creating a peer support system among participants leveraging on savings groups &amp; business groups.</p> <p>Mentors facilitated VSLA &amp; led Entrepreneurship Literacy training (ELT).</p> <p>Mentors visited each REAP business group at least monthly to provide in-person support, monitor progress, and problem-solve issues.</p>	<p>Graduation criteria measured participants' livelihood, assets, food security, savings, as well as social, nutrition, and disaster preparedness indicators.</p> <p>Participation in program was time-bound rather than defined by reaching graduation status.</p> <p>Graduation interventions continued even if HHs met graduation criteria prior to program end.</p> <p>Also HHs could no longer receive graduation interventions if the program ended before the HH met graduation criteria.</p> <p>Engaged external partners to conduct comprehensive HH-level evaluations that captured data on food consumption scores.</p> <p>Conducted regular (weekly, bi-weekly or monthly HH-level monitoring to assess participant progress against the graduation criteria &amp; VSLA performance.</p> <p>Measured progress across specific food security &amp; nutrition indicators including HH Dietary Diversity Scores and prevalence of healthy weight for women and children</p>





Consumption Support	Savings	Livelihood Selection & Asset Transfer	Technical/Livelihoods Skills Training	Life skills Coaching	Monitoring & Graduation Pathways
<p><b>Additional Remarks:</b>                      Targeting: Used PRA processes to target Graduation HHs based on poverty status customizing the methodology to the local context, and prioritizing women-headed HHs. Excluded participants who could not engage in IGAs e.g. extremely old, with severe disabilities etc. Used PWR to target 10% of the most vulnerable women in the community through Mother Care Groups in consultation with Lead Mothers &amp; Village health teams. Key challenge: No. who qualified for graduation programming exceeded the # the program could support.                      Partnerships with Government, Other NGOs (donor-funded), Private Sector: Nuyok linked HHs to government extension services. They linked business groups to government development departments like Commercial Office to ensure they gained access to market information and business opportunities.                      Nuyok targeted mature/graduate business groups and explored linking them to FSPs, MFIs and banks                      Lessons Learnt:                      The disbursement of a start-up grant (asset transfer) combined with a consumption stipend (during the lean season) was an important aspect of the REAP model that should be replicated in the design of future poverty graduation programs. The second performance-based grant enabled the program team to assess the progress of the new business, and target investments to those business groups that were most motivated and likely to succeed.                      Male engagement was critical to the success of women's empowerment programming.                      In unstable contexts, it was critical to integrate conflict sensitivity in the design and adaptation of livelihood interventions.                      Collaboration with local institutions and private sector actors was key to sustainability.                      Additional financial support may be needed to address persistent food consumption gaps in some households.                      Further investigation of barriers to school attendance was needed</p>					
<p><b>NAWIRI Project – Cluster 1: (Marsabit &amp; Isiolo Counties): Village Enterprise &amp; CRS Kenya</b></p>					
<p>Started by piloting Ksh.7500 bi-monthly instalments for a 12-month duration. From ongoing assessments, the project gradually realized the 2 months between successive cash transfers (C.S) had an impact on the nutritional progress of the HH, and has since modified C.S cash transfers to Ksh.5,000 monthly for a duration of 6 months.                      NB: VE Standard Graduation model does not have a C.S component.                      Because Nawiri Project was undertaken in a volatile &amp; hostile context with a lot of crises, it was important to smoothen HH consumption patterns.</p>	<p>In the 3rd month, the project supports HHs to form business saving groups (BSG).                      NB: 3 women form 1 business group (BG) and 10 BGs form 1 BSG.                      The BSG uses the VSLA approach to inculcate a savings culture to the HHs and financial literacy.                      The project encourages participants to save through the BSG that uses the VSLA approach that has been slightly modified to promote 3 types of savings – regular savings, emergency savings, and Savings with a Purpose (SWAP) to help them build resilience by buying both productive and</p>	<p>Targeting using the AN-GM helps the project to identify Ultra Poor people who are affected by acute malnutrition. The project puts them into groups of 3's and then hires business mentors from the village/community who can be able to train the target HHs in their own language. 1 business mentor works with 15 businesses (i.e. 45 HHs).                      Seed capital provision: Given in the 5th and 10th month. The project gives Ksh.30,000 to a group of 3 women entrepreneurs working together in a group set-up to run a single IGA. The project later gives them progressive</p>	<p>The BSG also provides a good avenue for providing business training and health messaging to the groups. Even before getting seed capital, these BSGs provide a platform for the provision of other services through this group.                      Mentoring and coaching happen here at the BSGs. The business mentor does the mentoring on the BSG platform but also does additional coaching by phone (Phone nudges).                      In NAWIRI project, 1 business mentor works with 15 businesses (i.e. 45 HHs) due to geographical dispersion of HHs in the area. (In the traditional VE model, 1 business mentor works with 60-180 HHs).</p>	<p>Mentoring and coaching happens at the BSGs. The business mentor does the mentoring on the BSG platform but also does additional coaching by phone (Phone nudges).                      In NAWIRI project, 1 business mentor works with 15 businesses (i.e. 45 HHs) due to geographical dispersion of HHs in the area. (In the traditional VE model, 1 business mentor works with 60-180 HHs).</p>	<p>Using Case management, the project mentors/handholds HHs supporting them make appropriate personal &amp; business decisions after asset transfer.                      Monitoring is done at various levels: business, household, community, child, and at the pregnant and lactating woman levels using case management approach.                      Uses dashboards that capture the progress &amp; health of the businesses, savings, etc. The businesses are ranked as Red, Yellow and Green Businesses – and this is what informs mentoring. When a business mentor goes online and</p>



Consumption Support	Savings	Livelihood Selection & Asset Transfer	Technical/Livelihoods Skills Training	Life skills Coaching	Monitoring & Graduation Pathways
	<p>non-productive assets. This helps them diversify their businesses besides the group business and enhance their resilience (multiple sources of income when there is a lack) as well as their nutritional outcomes. (Buy goats and even donkeys through the SWAP).                      After BSG runs for 12 months, SILC groups are introduced for inter-nal support that is less intense. The SILC groups receive support from Field agents.                      After running for another 12 months, the BSGs are then linked up with Private Service Providers (PSP) who support the group at a fee that the group itself pays.</p>	<p>grants of Ksh.20,000 per business based on the business performance. The project piloted with 600 HHs in the first 2 years of implementation and realized its initial grant of Ksh.20,000 was too little &amp; needed to be increased. Hence the current amount Initially gave ksh.30,000 (20,000 + 10,000) but realized it was inadequate for the establishment and growth of the businesses. Business Saturation: In the initial targeting process, the project does a village participatory targeting process that involves transect walks before doing a participatory village mapping to identify the HHs, facilities, infrastructure, existing businesses etc together with the numbers. Before in-taking the next cycle, the project ensures that businesses that are already flooded/saturated are limited.</p>	<p>mentoring at HH level, at Business saving group level. 10 BG form a single business saving group (BSG). These BSG form a platform for training the business. A lot of interventions are layered on this BSG platform. The project uses dashboards that capture the progress &amp; health of the businesses, the savings, etc. The businesses are ranked as Red, Yellow and Green Businesses – and this is what informs mentoring. If a business mentor goes online and sees a Red or Yellow business, he/she will focus efforts on these businesses to help them recover and grow.</p> <p>The project uses digital training where their curriculum is turned into visual video presentations that are used in the training. Business Mentors: The project targets people who have gone to school, can read and write and have attained a certificate or diploma in a related field such as community development, teaching, health, etc.</p>		<p>sees a Red or Yellow business, he/she will focus efforts on these businesses to help them recover and grow. There are also failed businesses (&lt;2%). The project uses digital training where the curriculum is turned into visual video presentations and used in training.                      e, the groups are linked to private service providers (PSP) who support them further at the groups' cost.                      Quarterly progress reporting.                      The project has Graduation Metrics that assess key HH indicators touching on a). nutrition of children &amp; feeding within the HH b) business growth c) asset building within the HHs. There are 6 metrics and if the HH meets 4 out of 6 of these, they are deemed ready to graduate.                      Each cycle, the project targets 60 HHs within the targeted village. The targeting tool used per HH asks 3 sets of questions                      a). malnutrition questions                      b). economic issues c). general poverty probability index PPI.</p>



Consumption Support	Savings	Livelihood Selection & Asset Transfer	Technical/Livelihoods Skills Training	Life skills Coaching	Monitoring & Graduation Pathways
			Areas closer to town have more qualified people than far-flung areas - the project uses people with primary education.		The project has a very robust targeting and monitoring system. Average graduation rate was 82.5%. Those who graduate are transitioned to SILC groups where Field Agents support them further. Those who do not graduate are linked to social safety nets supported by the government. Beyond the SILC phase, the groups are linked to private service providers (PSP) who support them further at the groups' cost.
<b>NAWIRI Project – Cluster 2: (Turkana &amp; Samburu Counties) BOMA &amp; Mercy Corps Kenya</b>					
The project introduces Consumption Smoothing support immediately after the asset transfer has been effected. The aim is to safeguard the asset grant from being consumed by the HHs. Consumption support is provided through mobile money transfers.	The project supports the formation of blended 3-woman business groups (BG) each having 3 poor women of different age sets to provide complementary skill sets to run an enterprise. Each blended group (1 older woman + 1 middle-aged woman + 1 young woman) is hypothesized to be able to manage a group business more effectively and sustainably. This group is then allowed to select and establish a business of their choice – that aligns with the environmental safeguarding requirements set by the project.	Each business is linked to a mentor to support the business and HHs. Much (90%) of the layering of other project activities is done through mentoring sessions. The mentor visits the BG to train, coach and monitor the growth of the business -with an eye on profitability and businesses that offer nutritious foods. The mentor a). coaches and trains the ultra-poor women to grow profitable businesses b). connects the businesses to market opportunities c). supports the businesses to form umbrella business groups for bulk			





Consumption Support	Savings	Livelihood Selection & Asset Transfer	Technical/Livelihoods Skills Training	Life skills Coaching	Monitoring & Graduation Pathways
		An Asset Transfer of USD375 is provided to the business through mobile cash transfer. The asset grant is divided into two tranches with the 2nd tranche disbursed 6 months later based on set performance milestones.	ordering & buying of stock to save costs d). ensure the businesses are working within the local business council, especially in Turkana.		
<p><b>Additional Remarks:</b>                      Targeting &amp; Selection Criteria                      Spent the first 3-6 months on the targeting process. For the 1st cohort, the project did a light-touch targeting, but with continuous learning the project refined its targeting to enable it to identify and select the deserving HHs that were experiencing nutritional challenges. The targeting used by the project goes beyond considering just the economic vulnerability, to focusing on nutritional vulnerabilities within the households. It involves categorizing the villages into 4 categories a). b). Protect villages – with limited opportunities for poverty graduation of HHs because of lack of infrastructure and enabling environment c). Catalyze Villages – Despite providing enabling opportunities for HH graduation, are not considered for GA. HH level targeting – the project uses PWR as well as HH vulnerability assessment tools plus MOH 5 3 tools are integrated to form a joint database that provides the socio-economic criteria and the nutritional vulnerability criteria that are then used to identify the most suitable participants to be enrolled in the project.                      The targeting process is designed to identify the a). Most suitable village with the enabling factors to support the graduation of HHs b). most suitable HHs that provide unique opportunities to mentor and coach.</p>					
<p><b>Kenya Socio-Economic Inclusion Program (KSEIP) Village Enterprise Kenya</b></p>					
Receive the consumption stipend from the government whereas the traditional VE model does not offer this component.	The project encourages participants to save through the VSLA approach that has been slightly modified to promote 3 types of savings – regular savings, emergency savings, and Savings with a Purpose (SWAP) to help them build resilience by buying both productive and non-productive assets. This helps them diversify their businesses besides their main business and enhance their resilience as well as their nutritional outcomes.	Adapted the model to start a 1-person business rather than the traditional 3-person businesses promoted by VE. This was because the government does not disburse funds through MPESA (mobile money transfer) but through bank transfer. Therefore, VE had to adjust the model to have a single-person business rather than a 3-person group business.			Worked with Makueni and Taita Taveta Counties on KSEIP. Though the 2 governments were very happy with the work, VE realized there were gaps around the counties not having a proper MIS system. The Community Development Management Information System (CDMIS). Government realized there were many Kenyans who did not have Id documents hence could not get Cash transfers.



Consumption Support	Savings	Livelihood Selection & Asset Transfer	Technical/Livelihoods Skills Training	Life skills Coaching	Monitoring & Graduation Pathways
	<p>After the VSLA runs for 12 months, SILC groups are introduced for internal support that is less intense. The SILC groups receive support from Field agents.</p> <p>After running for another 12 months, the VSLAs are then linked up with Private Service Providers (PSP) who support the group at a fee that the group itself pays.</p>	<p>(Advantages of 3-person business include a). if one person falls sick, the business still continues run by the 2 partners, whereas a 1-person business will be forced to close. B). leverages on social capital and skill sets that each partner brings</p>			<p>VE is helping the county governments of Makueni, Taita Taveta and West Pokot to develop an integrated system that puts all this data together for improved service delivery. In West Pokot VE helped county government develop a Poverty Graduation Program Policy and the Government committed to funding it – thus ensuring its sustainability.</p>
<p><b>Additional Remarks:</b></p> <p>Background                      In 2021, VE embarked on a journey to start the KSEIP program which is a World Bank-funded program to the government of Kenya. The GoK then funded VE through a consortium led by Global Development Initiatives (GDI) – where VE was the partner in the consortium implementing this Poverty Graduation Program. There were 2 things VE was supposed to do                      a). Teach the government how to do it – because for the government to take it up, they needed to learn how to do it before investing in it. VE has been teaching the government how to implement this model from 2021 until November 2023 through the Directorate of Social Development housed within the Social Protection Secretariat. NB: A similar program is being done by VE in Rwanda funded by USAID's Department of Innovation Ventures. VE's model is gaining traction among governments as a potentially viable model that can be applied to Through co-creation with the GoK, VE made a few adaptations to their standard model to make sure that it is easy for the government to implement. The adaptations centered around Targeting, consumption support, and livelihood selection and asset transfer.                      Targeting &amp; Selection criteria                      The traditional VE Graduation model involves VE staff (business mentors) doing a transect walk across the targeted villages together with the village chief and 7 to 9 village elders to understand the boundaries and socio-economic aspects of the village while holding conversations to build relationships – employing the Nyumba Kumi structures. They then do the participatory community mapping exercise. After that VE executes a country and county-specific Poverty Probability Index (PPI) survey across all households physically but documented digitally using TARO Works platform on a tablet. The county-specific PPI is customized further to add inclusion or exclusion questions. The data is then transferred to another platform called Salesforce. In KSEIP, VE does not have to go through this standard targeting process because the government already has this household-level data collected through the national census (the Enhanced Single Registry). VE therefore using this data, but subjects each HH to a deviation through a legitimacy tool that validates the data with regard to 2 main requirements a) willingness for the HH to participate in the program and b). the ability of the primary HH member to do business (e.g. exclude severely disabled people).                      Partnerships &amp; Collaborations                      Scaling &amp; Sustainability: VE works with Mercy Corps in Uganda on an approach called DREAMS (Delivering Resilient Enterprises and Market Systems) funded by private donors and in Ethiopia we are funded by the Hilton Foundation and IKEA Foundation. We are able to apply GA and push Households up to a certain extent, beyond which we cannot go. But after that point, the households need to be pulled to continue in that trajectory and go even further so that they can become even more resilient to shocks and stresses. Mercy Corps implements Market Systems Development while VE implements GA. We know that these people work within a system, but this system has its constraints. We are exploring how to scale this GA work and build the capacity of the HHs so that the HHs that graduate can link up with players in the market system who are driven by profits.                      Cost to scale: It is different across different contexts. But for VE the cost in our mainstream projects is USD.266. It is cost-effective and can be scaled easily.</p>					



Consumption Support	Savings	Livelihood Selection & Asset Transfer	Technical/Livelihoods Skills Training	Life skills Coaching	Monitoring & Graduation Pathways
<b>ULTRA POOR GRADUATION (UPG) PROJECT in BAIDOA: World Vision Somalia</b>					
<p>Provided C.S. for 6 months. The amount given was \$42.5 per month i.e. 50% of the Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB) recommended by BHA. Other agencies were supposed to fund the remaining 50% but they did not – This posed a big challenge to the project. Challenges: Identification &amp; validation of deserving participants without ID documents. Aid diversion is a trending practice in the community. Limited Inter-agency sharing of HH lists due to confidentiality requirements.</p>	<p>Applied the VSLA model (S4T) which was mandatory for all the participants. About 80% of participants were women and there are not many challenges around this. Amounts were small and meager due to their contexts. They rushed to buy basic goods and prioritized food especially since they got just 50% of the intended consumption support. Challenges: Linkages were difficult due to the lack of ID cards - banks &amp; MFIs could not support them. IDPs are very mobile increasing their risk profile even more. In this community, people have a way of linking up with people they trust – mainly based on clan systems. Many participants are illiterate &amp; semi-illiterate and the project had to be careful when linking them to ensure you protect them (i.e. don't expose them to harm inadvertently while trying to link them to services.) The informal economy is the prevalent system in the area.</p>	<p>Livelihood restoration: Pastoralists/farmers had come to "peri-urban" settings (i.e. IDP camps). Project focused on livelihood restoration for these farmers &amp; pastoralists and promoted new livelihoods for especially the youths. Local TVET institutions were used to build their capacities. The asset transfers done were mainly livestock. Used staff to support them and train them on critical agronomic practices and livestock husbandry (despite capacity challenges). The context was critical - Giving the participants cash to buy the assets was very risky due to the gatekeepers' influence. The project consulted the participants first to select their preferred livelihood pathway, then used the program system to procure and distribute the livestock.</p>	<p>Privately owned TVET centres (community lacked government-owned TVETs or institutions) were used to train the students and the project made monthly payments for them. Ministry of Labour &amp; Social Affairs oversees short trainings (&lt;6 months), while Ministry of Education oversees longer term training (&gt; 6 months). Challenges: Private TVETs lack the capacity to provide the required training to the right standards. Hygienic conditions in the facilities are not good – this is particularly disadvantageous to women and girls. Inadequate tools and machinery. Lack of staff who are qualified teachers – technical capacity is compromised greatly. For the majority participants who selected livestock and agriculture-based livelihoods, the project partnered with MoA to train them accordingly despite the capacity limitations of ministry officials &amp; the fact that this was close to a town setting (camp context).</p>	<p>The project recruited and used community members (young persons who could read and write - the aim was to use them to do some data collection within the process of coaching). It was risky to take a person from another community to do coaching due to acceptance &amp; security issues. The project trained them but the level of understanding was questionable. However, the project learned the advantage of using someone from the community (though not as an employee) – They could continue working even when and where formal staff are unable to work due to insecurity or other issues. Getting accurate information from the community is difficult unless they accept you and trust you. Looking at coaches as a challenge to the gatekeepers' (camp leaders) authority. Lessons Learnt: Have started involving the gatekeepers (camp leaders) in some of the activities, especially mobilization activities.</p>	



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	No kind of SACCO. Anyone who agrees to stand as surety for a vulnerable person can easily take advantage of the person, so the linkage can become a double-edged sword.				
<p><b>Additional Remarks:</b>                      Targeting &amp; Selection Criteria:                      At least 80% of target participants are IDP. Has research component (RCT) to see if GA can be applicable in a fragile context &amp; ascertain whether the outcomes did result from the project interventions? Did a census registration and applied vulnerability assessment based on certain demographic characteristics that were determined through participatory methods within the community. About 90% were moderately and severely vulnerable and only 10% were less vulnerable. Using RCT, the project assigned the HHS into experiment and control groups.                      Challenges – As the project was doing the census registration, people were moving between the camps with the intention of registering multiple times so as to get as many benefits as possible. It took the project a lot of time to validate the participants and clean up the database. In the end, the project could not support the 6500 people identified because verification took such a lot of time. In Somalia people do not have ID cards, so verification &amp; identification was very difficult and many people tend to take advantage. Companies providing network are not inter-linked so unable to verify who is who using particular phone numbers for example. Gatekeepers (camp leaders) tend to take advantage of these vulnerable person to generate some money for personal gain (corruption) and they tend to assist the people in cheating the systems. Security threats to project staff was real putting them under pressure to comply to the demands of different groups at the expense of project interests.                      Without biometric registration, accountability was a challenge as project operations could not be carried out efficiently, effectively and transparently. Took more time to do even the baseline.                      Partnerships with Government, Other NGOs (donor-funded), Private Sector:</p>					
<p><b>RFSA – Pre-SERVE Project Food for the Hungry Ethiopia</b></p>					
C-S provided is to all 247,090 participants but in two forms a) Unconditional Consumption Support – given to the elderly, persons living with disabilities and very vulnerable persons, etc, and b) Conditional Consumption Support – given to participants only after they participate in other project activities such as soil conservation, NRM activities.	FH uses the VESA groups to help participants access savings and loan services from other Financial institutions such as MFI and Rural Savings and Credit Cooperatives. These VESA groups also act as a platform for participants to access financial literacy training as well as other important training. Challenges: Low financial liquidity of Rural Savings and Credit Cooperatives (RUSCOs).	HHs in the Livelihoods Track, after participating in savings and other project activities, were then allowed to choose livelihood options based on their experience as well as the potential of their operating areas. Specific livelihood options were presented to the participants to choose from. The Woreda development agents and community animators hired by FH supported the participants in selecting their livelihood option and	Is a Key pillar of the implementation process. Community animators supervised and supported by government development agents are responsible for providing coaching and mentoring to participants.		Project plans to conduct HH surveys in the last year of implementation based on series of graduation benchmarks – aiming to graduate/exit the targeted 17,100 HHs. Community animators monitor the target HHs once in 3 months and quarterly basis by the livelihood officers at the district office. Field visits by technical advisors and officers are also made regularly. Mini surveys are also held regularly as well as evaluations.





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<p>The Govt. delivers Cash Support while the Project delivers In-kind food Items support to the participants.</p> <p>The amount and duration are determined by the GoE.</p> <p>Challenges: Targeting. Initially, the project used a “group scooping” approach to deliver food but had to resort to “individual scooping” after realizing that sharing out among the participants was causing problems.</p>		<p>developing business plans for their selected livelihood before they were given USD300 to their accounts for starting the livelihood activity. HHs in the Credit track were linked to and given access to the RUSCOs that provided them with loans averaging USD 450.</p> <p>Challenges: Movement restrictions in some areas due to insecurity arising from conflict. Low liquidity in RUSCOs and local banks leading to delays in disbursement.</p>	<p>The aim is to improve the business knowledge and technical skills of the participants to run their livelihood options and achieve the desired results. The community animators are 1st degree holders and they receive on-job training from the project on specific topics of relevance to help them do their work effectively.</p>		
<p><b>Additional Remarks</b></p> <p>Basic Information &amp; Context:                      A 5-year USAID-funded project from 2021 to 2026 and was one of the 3 RFSAs in Ethiopia. The goal of the Project is “improve food security to contribute to poverty reduction”. It supports the Government of Ethiopia’s USAID-sponsored Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP) which started 19 years ago- there have been several phases of this PSNP and the current one is PSNP-5. FH-led consortia won the award and have supported it for 19 years so far. The project supports 45,000 HHs (247,090 participants) in 11 (out of 77) woredas and is multisectoral – covering the sectors of food transfer, NRM, value chains, markets, livelihoods, mental health, health, WASH, etc.</p> <p>FH committed to graduating 17,100 HHs in 4 Woredas (one-third of the targeted PSNP HHs) by the end of the project. The consortium of 7 partners involved in project implementation including academia and research institutions e.g. RTI. The Project follows the Ultra-poor Graduation model (focuses on HH-level interventions) but is modified to include community and system-level interventions such as NRM, and watershed development. Also involves system-strengthening interventions at the grassroots level.</p> <p>Context: Mixed - some areas are high pop. density areas with threatened environments (hence NRM, CS Agric. interventions); some are highland areas and some are drought-prone areas (Productive Safety Net – means People should work to produce food, hence the “Food for work” arrangement in C.S)</p> <p>Targeting &amp; Selection Criteria:                      The project’s livelihood sector targets to promote livelihood activities for 2 categories of participants a). Grants Track (bottom 20% of the participants HHs) – b). Credit Track (60%) that have the potential to graduate. A Targeting/Selection survey tool was developed through operations research. After its development, the project found that it was easy for people to manipulate this tool by answering the question falsely. Targeting was initially done by a committee and was time- and resource-intensive and subject to manipulation.</p> <p>The government of Ethiopia has a policy document (Project Implementation Manual) for the PSNP that gives direction on how the program is to be implemented for quality control purposes. The project’s Graduation criteria is derived from this PIM. The project did a Proximity Mean Test (PMT) that considers 10 traditional food security indicators that help to identify the specific poor person through the PMT-Score obtained.</p>					



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<b>Strengthen PSNP Institutions and Resilience - SPIR II World Vision Ethiopia</b>					
<p>Was provided to all participants in the form of both in cash and in-kind. The government provided cash transfers to an individual's bank account while SPIR 2 procured and distributed food items - 15 kg wheat, 1.5 kg cereals, 0.45 kg vegetable oil per person per month for 6 months. Amounts depended on the area and were determined by the government based on the person's caloric requirement as recommended by the WHO.</p> <p>Challenges: Logistical challenges as the areas are very remote. Inflation. Insecurity</p>	<p>Integrated financial literacy training in its activities as a complementary non-financial activity.</p> <p>VESA (Village Economic and Social Association) Groups were the entry point for livelihood interventions. The participants saved and got loans through these VESA groups.</p> <p>The program connected participants to MFIs and Rural Savings and Co-operative Organizations (RUSACCO).</p> <p>The amounts saved were based on VESA bylaws and were made weekly or bi-weekly. VESA participants could borrow 3 times their savings. MFIs could lend annually. Participants who demonstrated progress in their IGAs and the potential to manage loans effectively were linked to MFIs or RUSACCOs usually after 1 year of participation in VESAs. The project established partnerships with MFI &amp; RUSACCOs to provide special products with interest rate waivers to the participants as a form of their CSR.</p>	<p>Value Chain analysis (VCA) as well as market assessments were done at the start of the program. The interests and skills and local market opportunities were used to match participants with the livelihood options.</p> <p>The VCA was also used to inform the training prepared for participants. A.T was done through Cash transfer (\$300) to the participants account.</p> <p>Challenges: Inflation was a key challenge.</p>	<p>Skill based training was designed to help the participants manage the IGA or business or asset transferred.</p> <p>Group Training was done in centralized location easily accessible by the participants.</p> <p>The person receiving the training was meant to maximize the productivity of the asset transferred.</p> <p>Trainings were facilitated by SPIR's Livelihood technical teams and Woreda Agricultural Office experts.</p> <p>SPIR was more focused on self-employment, hence did not provide any employability skills training.</p>	<p>Provided individual mentorship by pairing participants with community facilitator who met regularly to provide training tailored to the participants' individual needs.</p> <p>VESA organized group coaching sessions where facilitators chaired the sessions and participants learned from each other and shared experiences.</p> <p>Mentorship sessions occurred weekly, bi-weekly or monthly and lasted throughout their project cycle.</p> <p>Most mentors were community facilitators who were trained and supervised by Woreda officers to prepare them to be trainers.</p> <p>Challenge: Mentors had busy schedules. Participants were sometimes shy to participate in sessions.</p>	<p>Graduation was not a current priority in the current project. Govt. instead supported the exit of households.</p> <p>Project had a MEL system for tracking every individual.</p>



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	<p>The government Woreda officers wrote support letters to facilitate the loan applications of the participants.                      Challenges: Small amounts saved by participants, especially in the beginning. Participants initially did not trust the process.                      Liquidity challenges for the MFI &amp; RUSACOs delayed loan disbursements.</p>				
<p><b>Additional Remarks</b>                      Basic Information &amp; Context                      5-year USAID-funded project. Works with the Government and it promotes the exit of HHs from the program rather than graduation. The GoE decided to promote the concept of Exit rather than Graduation in the PSNP 5 strategy – so the projects are designed according to the GA strategy but they follow the government’s direction of using the term Exit.                      Worked in Rural Ethiopia of Amhara Oromia and Tigray Region of Ethiopia which was mixed nature – some areas were drought-prone, others were highlands with threatened environmental conditions etc. 4 Key Pillars/sectors of this project are a). Nutrition b). Livelihoods c). Natural Resource Management d). Gender: Other                      Cross-cutting pillars were Environment &amp; compliance and, CLA framework among others.                      Targeting                      The project collaborated with local government authorities to identify HHs that are extremely poor and suffering from food insecurity. Do not use the PWR mechanism but use the government mechanism to identify the deserving HHs.                      Challenges: Too many HHs are needy compared to the amount of resources available.                      Inclusion Criteria included Poverty level determined through PWR; Vulnerability of HHs; Location with limited access to resources; and Willingness of HH to participate in the program.                      International Food &amp; Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), World Vision – Nutrition and NRM, CARE-livelihoods, ODA-Partnerships                      Challenge: Balancing the interests and priorities of different partners. Managing communication</p>					



