USAID Graduation Approach

LEARNING ACTIVITY

Event Report

MAY 13TH - 17TH 2024

KAMPALA, UGANDA

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AVSI Foundation	Association of Volunteers in International Service
BHA	Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance
CBTs	Community-Based Trainers
CoP	Community of Practice
DA	Development Assistance
GA	Graduation Approach
HA	Humanitarian Assistance
HATO	Humanitarian Assistance and Transition Office
HH	Households
HORN	Horn of Africa Resilience Network
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration (original context)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization (original context)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization (original context)
OEC	Office of the Chief Economist

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Background

At USAID, the Graduation Approach (GA) targets families living in extreme poverty, specifically families that live on less than a dollar a day. They are often marginalized within their communities, lacking access to services that could help them. In a bid to consolidate lessons learned, best practices, and recommendations for GA implementation across the region and in line with the growing regional community of practice around the graduation approach, USAID/Uganda's Humanitarian Assistance and Transition Office (HATO), in partnership with the USAID Horn of Africa Resilience Network (HoRN) held a workshop in Uganda. This workshop was designed in close collaboration with USAID/Uganda's Graduating to Resilience Activity, which has been funded by BHA for the past seven years and is in the final year of implementation. The workshop gathered regional implementing partners and participants from Missions across the region, USAID specialists from Washington, the Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance (BHA), the Bureau of Resilience, Environment, and Food Security (REFS). This collaborative effort will yield a concise USAID Practitioner's Guide, distilling practical insights for effective GA implementation in the region.

Purpose and Objective

The purpose was for participants to learn about implementation strategies, lessons learned, and discuss contextual elements that affect adoption of the graduation approach in countries across the region. Specifically, the objectives were:

- Package and share the latest GA practices within the region;
- Extract key lessons learnt in the process of implementing GA; and
- Identify contextual factors influencing implementation across the region.

Expected Outputs

The following outputs were expected from the workshop:

1. GA Practitioners Field Guide – A compilation of key lessons, including both good practices and challenges, gathered from USAID Implementing Partners (IPs) across the Horn of Africa [from both Humanitarian Assistance (HA) and Development Assistance (DA) partners].

2. Workshop report.

Workshop Structure

The USAID Graduation Approach workshop was organized through different structures including:

*   Workshop PowerPoint Presentations;
*   Field Visit;
*   Group Work; and
*   Plenaries

Workshop agenda is attached as Annex 1.

Workshop Participants

The workshop was attended by over 60 delegates representing various organizations including:

*   USAID Field BHA RFSA/MYE (Multi-Year Emergency) Activity Managers/REFS mission staff
*   REFS/ BHA DC
*   USAID GA Implementing Partners including and RLA - Resilience Learning partner; and
*   International experts

A list of participants is attached as Annex 2.

OPENING REMARKS

Chip Bury, USAID Uganda, Deputy Office Director

Mr Chip Bury welcomed everyone to Uganda for the workshop and invited all to remain active. He noted that USAID has been working on the graduation program and supporting the WFP and other actors in their interventions in the field of humanitarian assistance and resilience. USAID's Graduating to Resilience Activity has been implemented by AVSI Foundation Foundation and is in its last stages.

Who is here?

- Implementing Partners – Graduating to Resilience teams
- Regional Group – Resilience Learning Activity – Have done the logistics and learning and support the HoRN of Africa Resilience Network.
- RFSA Community of Practice – Emily and Chege led the formation of the RFSA Community of Practice.
- Washington team – Policy formulation and design of interventions from the headquarters.

Why are we here?

- Impressive statistics of how programs can work with vulnerable communities and bring them to a place where they are resilient. There is evidence of what works. We are here to figure out what is working, how to adapt these activities to make them context specific. Show impact.
- Contribute to the greater policy of USAID – Administration about the GA approach that we thinks should be taken up
- What have we learned and what do we think should be taken up for scaling? What is this approach? Why are people talking about it
- Document and share what is working and make them replicable
- We are also here to network – make friends and come up with lessons and learning that we can share

Kasey Chanell, BHA Office of Africa Director

Kasey remarked that she was delighted to be part of the team convening to share lessons learnt around implementation of the Graduation Approach with an aim to come out with a prototype that could work for USAID Implementing Partners. She noted that being very new to GA, her main aim for the workshop was to learn of what is being done, by who, where, and how. Her main goal is to become a better advocate for all the participants at the workshop in Washington with regards to GA.

Kasey noted that the agency is facing a resource constrained environment and the humanitarian portfolio has also been affected yet the needs from the field and communities being served keep increasing. The increase in reliance on supplementary funding for resilience accounts has also grown immensely. With this realization, the need for prioritization has tripled triggering an increased pressure to spend resources on immediate lifesaving activities. However, it is hard to get resources for early recovery or transition recovery. Hence the reason GA and the CoP is so important. In the context of USAID, the challenge is to make sure that we can prove this can work.

In Washington, she noted, there is a growing consensus within the Bureau for Resilience Environment and Food Security and the African Bureau that GA is the way forward and the willingness at the policy level to push for this agenda. She challenged everyone that the workshop should elicit ideas that can be used to bring GA to scale and in a cost-effective manner. Defining crucial components of GA and how to better talk about it to address the emerging questions on GA would be some of the important issues the workshop should delve in on. There is a need to also document and share experiences across the region as this would support leveraging of experiences and making more programs successful.

On the policy notes from Washington, she noted that the GA is an example of the USAID Administrator's call for progress beyond programs. There is an incredible body of work being done in GA that demonstrates the move beyond programs to progress. She acknowledged and thanked Soledad Rodgers and the team that brought GA to Uganda many years ago. She also thanked AVSI Foundation Foundation.

She thanked Joseph and Emily for setting up the Community of Practice. Thanked USAID Uganda team through the leadership by others including Chip for making this work and to host the participants to learn from what the Mission is doing in Uganda. Never take no for an answer – use the lessons we are generating from here to advocate for further and more funding towards this program.

Daniele Nyirandutiye, USAID, Uganda Mission Director

The USAID Uganda Mission Director, Daniele Nyirandutiye, welcomed all participants to the Graduation Approach Workshop and to the pearl of Africa. She recognized the conveners: USAID's Humanitarian Assistance and Transitions Office, the regional Resilience and Food Security Activity (RFSA) Community of Practice, and the USAID Horn of Africa Resilience Learning Network (RLA). She appreciated all for joining the workshop in Uganda and for making time in their busy schedules to better understand the "graduation approach"!

This week marks a significant milestone in USAID's ongoing efforts to reduce the need for humanitarian assistance and to build the resilience of vulnerable populations. USAID Uganda is using its collective experience to generate learning that will guide other Missions and Implementing Partners as they implement the Graduation Approach. She emphasized three things: *Impact, Influence and Inspiration.*

First, a word about *impact*. We are here, in part, to appreciate the impact of the Graduating to Resilience Program implemented by Association of Volunteers in International Service (AVSI Foundation), Trickle Up, and American Institutes for Research. Over the past seven years, they have done some impressive work. It has been documented that by the end of the activity, 80% of the 13,680 households graduated successfully out of poverty and chronic food insecurity to self-reliance and resilience. This exceeds the target of 75% and is an admirable feat! And although the approach has now been implemented in more than 40 countries by a number of organizations, within USAID, it is gathering interest – which leads to the second point, *influence*.

On *influence*, based on the strong results and USAID's growing confidence in this approach, Administrator Samantha Power used the Uganda Graduation program to justify USAID's budget for Fiscal Year 2025 before the United States Senate Appropriations Committee in early April. With tangible evidence of economic benefits, our model stands as a testament to effective intervention strategies worthy of broader dissemination and replication. Administrator Power told Congress that, "... we are now taking that program on the road to other nations." So not only have we influenced our Administrator, we may have potentially influenced Congress to continue to support this worthy approach; something that is inspirational - which is the third and final point.

The most *inspiring* aspect of this approach is the changes we see in the lives of women, children, and families who participate in this program. The interaction between people: coaches, women, children, refugees, and other community members all coming together to help people who have been traumatized by war and forced to flee their homes is inspiring. These results are also changing how refugees see themselves. I heard that at a recent graduation event, one woman proudly paraded her goat through church to show how far she had come as a result of the program. Through programs like this, we can inspire others to rebuild their lives through a human-centered approach that truly desires to see people succeed in life.

Everyone gathered at the workshop has had their own experience with the graduation approach. She expressed her appreciation that they will be grappling with some difficult questions as participants compare notes, such as:

- Can this impact happen in my context?
- Can we implement this approach more cheaply?
- What does this mean for localization?
- What national policies need to be in place for this to work?
- How can we incentivize other donors and host governments to join our efforts?

As the humanitarian landscape continues to evolve and budgets stretch to cover ever expanding needs, we must remain agile and responsive. How can this group share its experiences from across the region to have greater impact, broader influence and continue to inspire everyone from an Administrator to a refugee? She concluded by noting that she looks forward to hearing more and appreciated participant's dedication.

KEYNOTE SPEECH - OVERVIEW OF THE GRADUATION APPROACH

Samantha Carter, USAID's Office of Chief Economist (OEC)

The Office of the Chief Economist (OEC) focuses on maximizing the effectiveness of USAID programming.

What is the Graduation Approach?

The Graduation Approach combines multiple interventions that was created by a Bangladeshi Organization in BRAC in 2002. It is a coordinated set of actions delivered together in a very specific sequence to households that participate in the program. GA aims to address multiple factors that hinder households from achieving sustainable income generation in face of shocks and stresses and in particular to households that are extremely vulnerable. These households have a very hard time in accessing markets, accessing income generating opportunities, and engaging with the economy generally.

The approach consists of 5 components plus linkages and referrals. The components are:

1. Cash assistance to stabilize consumption until livelihood can generate reliable income
2. Encouragement to save via informal savings groups or linkages to financial institutions
3. Productive asset is designed to jump start one or more income generating activities
4. Skills training to start or sustain a viable livelihood
5. On-going coaching and support to individuals or group participants
6. Linkages and referrals to external services

What does Graduation really mean?

Graduation defines a programmatic approach:

- Used to define the five-component approach to delivering assistance
- Many implementers develop context-specific graduation criteria designed to indicate whether a household has met specific thresh-hold in relation to resilience or well-being

Overall, the 5 components are"

- Consumption support
- Asset transfer
- Savings
- Skill-training
- Coaching

Graduation Approach is not used to determine whether someone can receive assistance from government programs. It is not a measure of program impact. They tend to cost between US$800 – US$ 2,000 per participant. The range is wide – context matters!

What evidence are we looking at here, and why?

- Streamlined programs and classic type programs-25 in total
- Almost all of them find positive impact on consumption and positive impact on assets and savings
- Participants have higher income and assets
- Social capital, food security and resilience – community engagement and support to each other.
- Women's empowerment -no positive consistent impacts
- Impacts on nutrition outcomes are rarely measured but less promising – some studies should be done before making assumptions that GA efforts have an impact on nutrition. It is not a silver bullet

What to make of these long-run results

- Graduation programs consistently lead to meaningful improvements in household consumption and assets in the short

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

- What about community-level resilience?
- What is the most effective way to link participants to other services
- How many people will graduate?
- Shouldn't we also strengthen markets or other social services?

Overall takeaways

- Primary question should always be: What outcome (s) are we trying to improve?

Reactions and Questions to the Key Note Address

- Curious to hear about how some programs work together. Could graduation be much better if a component of it can work at the market level? Are there some learnings in this area?
- Graduation provides the push interventions while market systems development is providing the pull interventions. The intermediate internal results are interesting. They are trying to measure what is the additive impact of layering interventions. Nawiri RFSA is drawing a lot of lessons and strength from the consortium because Mercy Corps is providing market systems development while BOMA is providing the graduation interventions.
- In Kenya, there is a discussion on sustaining the programs being implemented such as the Nawiri consortium. What is your suggestion on how these programs can be sustained to make sure that the communities continue to benefit from the investments. How is the analysis accounting for changes from shocks over time in the context? We know contexts have a lot of shocks and so it will be good to hear ideas around this.

Opening Plenary

Biggest Questions to be answered

- Duration of consumption support – what is the most viable duration?
- From the BHA perspective – they hope that there will be less humanitarian assistance given over time. How realistic is the existing impact?
- Targeting and sustainability – Who are we targeting for graduation? How are we bringing the government into the Graduation Approach? There is a need to look at who is being targeted by who? Is it the ultra-poor? Is it the poor? Is it the vulnerable poor? Different targeting processes, but who is the right person to be targeted (Elderly, Young adolescent mothers etc) because shocks cut across. Can we identify the unique vulnerabilities of the who?
- Why now? Why the learning event now given that the approach has been studied in over 230 projects and over 30 countries?
- Cost-effectiveness of GA – When looking at cost-effectiveness, is it the cost of investing or the cost of saving lives? How do we measure this – quality of adjusted lives?
- Scalability – in scaling, what are the trade-offs? Can we scale all the five components? Can we layer with the intention to scale?
- How are we engaging the government in all this? - Role of Government in sustaining graduation outcomes? This was the thinking, but we decided to know ourselves then this will be taken to the next level. How government policies impact the ability to cause impact? Such as land ownership structures and land tenure systems.
- Is it possible to harmonize interventions on the various components of GA – How can we have one approach that all of us can speak to in our various contexts?
- How do we separate the specific contribution of one IP from that of another IP. How do you categorize and account for that specific contribution? Accounting for the impact we are making
- When do we really need RCTs given the existing robust evidence base for graduation? Do we always need an RCT? When is added cost of RCT worthwhile versus increasing # of HHs reached?
- In remote poorly market-linked communities, is the market saturation issue real? To what extent? What market linkages/facilitation matters versus what is not needed?
- Graduation criteria: What metrics are we measuring: Whether income is a sufficient metric to measure graduation – Do we need to look at other things. What are the thresholds for graduation, at what point do we say the HH has graduated.
- Context: Where is it appropriate to use "classic graduation" versus graduation-like programming (not all 5 classic components) versus graduation plus (grad plus other interventions). Adapting the GA approach from contexts where the programs have been implemented. Where does it make sense to implement GA? What does contextualization of the graduation approach in the Horn of Africa look like?
- Is graduation feasible in a non RFSA environment?
- What is the proportion of those who do not graduate? What happens to those who do not graduate?
- Is there potential to layer the graduation approach with market systems development?

Participant Expectations

- To learn more on what success looks like and how do we implement that?
- To get insights into the possibility of layering the markets approach and the graduation approach
- To share experiences based on the field-touch – from the beneficiaries themselves
- Want to unpack the nutrition issue more, given WASH as a key driver of malnutrition in many of these settings.
- Greater clarity on USAID's current thinking and learning questions about graduation, and how we may advance these.
- To learn more about sustainability of the graduation approach. Specifically, to learn about how long the impact is to be expected: 7yrs or 14yrs post program intervention?
- To learn about the best practices that would be applicable across the multiple contexts represented in the forum.

What participants brought to the workshop

- Experiences based on different countries and programs
- Experiences on how systems can support HHs to go through the GA process and graduate: Would like to see how this is different for Uganda, Kenya and other contexts.
- Experiences on resilience in acute emergencies.

What participants hoped to take away

- An understanding of how G2R was successfully implemented
- Constructive feedback on the various interventions or GA activities and on technical areas presented.
- Creating memories through this experience
- How do we show case that over the years of interventions the GA has led to changing lives for it to be adopted and adapted
- Funding – What kind of strategic directions can we take to ensure that we can leave here knowing that we can access funding from various avenues for the sustainability of the interventions and the approach in general
- HH experiences, interacts with HHs. Participant journey from enrolment to date, to appreciate the contribution of graduation and other factors
- Good practices documented for references and document future designs
- A joint understanding of what implementation should look like in practice
- A joint understanding of what success would look like
- Best practices from field visits and an in-depth understanding of the challenges that have been faced and overcome.
- Knowledge sharing with colleagues and networking.

FIELD VISIT

The context

Uganda is the most generous country in hosting refugees. The country is unique in its own way in managing refugees' affairs. Uganda has hosted refugees since the 1940s hosting the Polish asylum seekers. Even during COVID-19 Uganda was still admitting people despite other countries locking out refuges. There are challenges that come with this as well. It takes a lot to maintain an open-door policy with refugees. Unfortunately, it looks like most people do not appreciate the need to host and make refugee lives better and easier. No one actually is willing to adopt the Ugandan policy on refugees.

In 2022, in just one location alone, with one of the busiest transit centers, Uganda received over 60,000 refugees and the country managed to move on with life. They provided for them. Uganda has 1.6 million refugees and it is something that should be pondered about but it is not a crisis yet. In other parts of the world some countries have even promised to build walls. There is a model tried and tested that can be emulated by anyone out there who wants to support refugees. Despite providing the asylum space there is so much that needs to go with this. Access to food, access to education, access to quality healthcare among other necessary basic needs. This policy needs to be supported to ensure that an environment is provided for human survival.

In Rwamwanja, the staff and partners do a lot of work to ensure that life becomes better for both refugees and settlements. There has been a lot put in the community through the support of these partners. Rwamwanja is the most peaceful settlement and there has never been an outburst confrontation between the host and the refugees since 2012 when it was initiated. From the onset, the approach of sharing resources was implemented on a 70:30 basis and this has led to the peaceful co-existence. In some cases, there is 50:50 sharing of resources between the settlements and the host communities.

Overview of the Rwamwanja Refugee Receiving Settlement

The settlement has about 96,000 refugees with 15 zones spanning 45 villages. The Settlement sits on a 40 km square piece of land. There are administrative structures that help with day-to-day management of affairs for the host and settlement communities. The top-ranking structure is the Refugee Welfare Committee 3 (RWC 3). RWC 3 is considered a president in the Settlement area, otherwise known as "presda" who is a male and has an assistant who is a female. In each village there is a local – (Refugee Welfare Committee) RWC 1 while at the zone there is a liaison officer. There are over 14 partners in Rwamwanja and 5 deal in livelihoods.

Refugee Entitlement

Refugees come from different border points. On arrival they link up with the Office of the Prime Minister at the transit center. At the transit center there is a temporary space where they live. There they get hot meals, refreshen up and given a blanket, a mat, a cup, a basin and women have sanitary pads and a piece of soap on top of what everyone gets. There they meet partners who help with family tracing. At the center they stay for two weeks. After 2 weeks, UNHCR and OPM organize a transport with security that takes them to different settlements.

There are 3 receiving settlements in South and Mid-West:

- Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement
- Nakivale Refugee Settlement
- Kyangwali Refugee Settlement

On arrival they are placed at the reception center where they find hot meals. At the reception center, different partners come and meet the refugees and introduce what they do. In regards to education, they start immediately being taken to schools for children. The education space is designed to be a protection place hence those of school going ages do not wait.

UNHCR with other partners provide them with basics. They are allocated NFIs – a whole package of cooking utensils, soap, basins, jerricans, a panga, construction items, a tap link, construction poles, nails etc. Then they are supported to construct. For single mothers, the situation is hard because doing construction is very hard for them. In some communities, there are structures where the members help with construction. However, it is difficult because on average, every entry has over 70% being single mothers and children. Upon entry into the community, World Food Programs give them food ratios of dry foods to start off. After that they are documented by the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM). No one can receive a service without an identifying number. That number is unique throughout the world. Names can be similar but never the numbers. While in the settlement they are supposed to move with their identification. OPM then allocates land to them. Because of the population, OPM now gives a piece of land worth 30 by 30. After settling, this is a settlement system and they are given space to move out. Some move out to go work and support their families. However, there are challenges of exploitation being that they are desperate to survive.
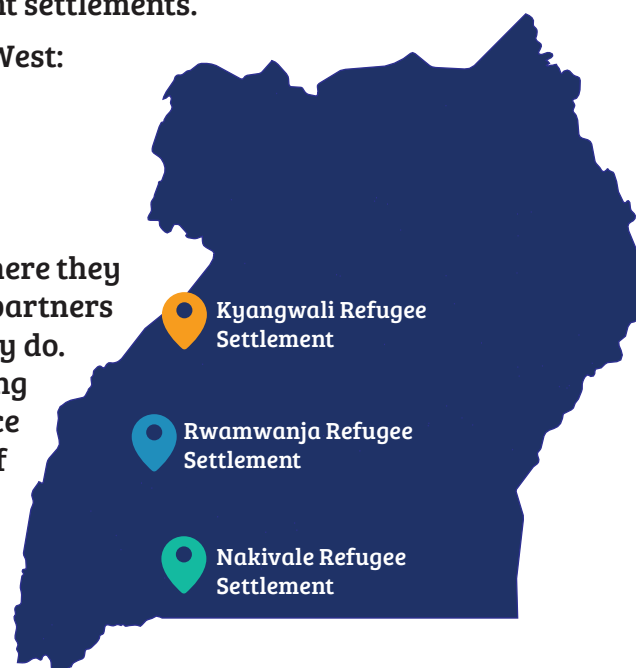
Questions about the site overview

UNHCR and budgets – What are you experiencing in terms of what you are doing to support the communities?

Response: Over the world, budgetary cuts have affected everyone. In 2012, they used to give 100% food rations but now they have dropped those who came in 2012 from the rations on assumptions that they have been integrated. But this is a lie because there are vulnerable populations, the elderly, children, single mothers with bigger families etc. However, they cannot manage to support all, hence they have done categorization. However, with prioritization there have been a lot of issues. UNHCR staff capacity has reduced to now only 11 technical staff, the package to the refugees is reducing day by day and they expect more cuts to come.

Say something about the host communities and how they relate with the refugees?

Response: There is peaceful co-existence. The host community in Rwamwanja are working very well with the settled population to an extent that they stay among each other. The host communities have accepted the refugees and now they work together. There is enough social bondage.

Can the refugees acquire land?

Response: The legal regime of the country gives refugees a way to access land through leasing. They can lease for as many years as possible – they cannot buy and own. Using the settlement approach, the government gives refugees land where they can settle and do a few small economic activities to avoid concentrating people in the camps. In some cases, refugees make personal arrangements where they hire land from the host community, do their farming activities and feed their families and supplement what the government is availing to them.

In respect to the 30:70 model in particular with healthcare services – how is this being managed in the healthcare service provision?- with the transition to more universal health coverage.

Response: The settlement is taking baby steps towards transition but this has not been done as expected well. The country is not yet ready for this transition. There is a thin line between what happens in the settlement and the host communities. For example, the health center here, level 4, is handling cases from many other districts. The level of healthcare overall is still wanting even in places outside the settlements. It will not be proper to fully transfer the health burden to the healthcare system that is already overwhelmed. Healthcare is not only a challenge to the settlements and the government would be really overwhelmed if they had to be transferred with the burden. Some of these challenges are cutting across from settlements to the host communities. There are no boundaries.

Reflections From the Field Visits to The Settlements and The Host Community in Rwamwanja Scheme

It is really working. The team that visited Tuungane Group observed that getting together has made them stronger. Their concerns are no longer about the fact that the USAID funds are ending. They have been able to actually graduate. They are empowered and talking about the power of groups.

The aspect of training before giving support was really visible as essential. Training makes anyone prepare to put the loans in good use.

Some questions:

- These groups that AVSI Foundation are supporting are also getting support from WFP. So, the question is, we are graduating to what if they are still benefiting from USAID BHA funding through WFP.
- The saved money is going up. Perhaps there is a need to look into making these groups more competitive and adopt a business approach.

The issue of the same graduates still receiving funding from WFP. We need to ask ourselves what will happen if WFP drops the support? The groups however expressed confidence that they can live even without WFP support. Hence, should there be a deliberate decision to stop WFP support completely? BHA is working with the Uganda Government and the AVSI Foundation Foundation on a process to ensure that there is a classification of the graduates to eventually remove them from the WFP or other similar food assistance programs. There is a lot of work that needs to go into this to make a smooth transition.

The coaches and community-based trainers are doing an incredible job – coaching, facilitating linkages, offering financial literacy etc. However, their time in the program has come to an end. So, the question is what happens next? While the groups have gained support, they may still need

to be hand-held on some further aspects beyond graduation. Some of the coaches and community-based trainers, given that they belong to the community, have offered to continue supporting their community members as a way of giving back to their communities. In some cases, the community members can come together and continue paying for the services being offered by these CBTs and coaches where needed.

In some cases, the group members have been empowered. They actually are transferring the information and lessons learnt to their neighbors. They are doing it on an individual basis.

What actually makes sense to the households from the Graduation Approach? What is the main game changer?

- This became difficult for the households. Essentially, GA has to come as a package. For instance, even coaching alone is not enough. Where knowledge transfer or asset transfer or mind-set change would come singularly, they still would not make sense.
- In some cases, household members mentioned that life skills are the most important for them that comes through coaching.

A question that needs to be asked is whether the groups really meant the ultra-poor criteria. So, there is a struggle to understand the criteria being used for the host communities. Hence, how do we attribute our contribution vis a vie that of other partners working in the same set-up or working with these families.

Lesson learnt – there is a need to bring in other partners who we rely on at the beginning of the program design stage so that work is done together to ensure the desired program objectives are achieved.

Coaching - Involves the hire of someone from the community with a social work background. They are also trained on everything technical so that they accompany the participants throughout the curriculum. They use a coaching manual developed by the program. They start by introducing the whole concept to the families / households who upon agreeing sign a contract for 24 months. The coach also signs the contract. The first few weeks are to share the realities in the household. The first month of activity is consumption support. The coach works with the family on how to receive, manage, and use the consumption support. Once the consumption support starts, the discussions on savings begin. Other matters like nutritional issues, having toilets, issues of gender, relationships, decision making, parenting etc.

Community-Based Trainers (CBT) - To make sure the technical training is delivered efficiently. . They train on matters like digital literacy, financial literacy, bookkeeping, farmer field schools among others.

REGIONAL EXPERIENCES AND INSIGHTS ON GRADUATION APPROACH

Synthesis report

Projects Reviewed

Country	GA Project Reviewed	GA Lead Partner
KENYA	Nawiri Project Cluster 1 -Marsabit & Isiolo Nawiri Project Cluster 2 -Turkana & Samburu KSEIP -WB (Makueni, T. Taveta, Muranga, Kisumu)	Village Enterprise The BOMA Project Village Enterprise
UGANDA	Graduation to Readiness (G2R) – Kamwenge Nuyok – Karamoja	AVSI Foundation Uganda CRS Uganda
SOMALIA	Ultra Poor Graduation (UPG) Project Baidoa	WV Somalia
ETHIOPIA	RFSA-Pre-SERVE – Amhara, Oromio, Tigray SPIR II - Amhara	FH Ethiopia WV Ethiopia

Theme 1: Targeting and Graduation Criteria

Adaptations	Challenges
Adapted Nutrition-Friendly Graduation Model (AN-GM) Blended Targeting. Govt. Enhanced Single Registry	# of HHs that qualify far exceeds available slots/resources HHs deliberately starve children prior to enrollment date Lack of formal ID documents Unscrupulous community gatekeepers

Theme 2: Livelihood Skills Training, Coaching and Mentoring

Adaptations	Challenges
Adapted Nutrition-Friendly Graduation Model (AN-GM) Blended Targeting. Govt. Enhanced Single Registry	# of HHs that qualify far exceeds available slots/resources HHs deliberately starve children prior to enrollment date Lack of formal ID documents Unscrupulous community gatekeepers

Theme 3: Consumption Support & Asset Transfer

Adaptations	Challenges
Bank Transfers to field agents - Participants without IDs Consumption Support in 2 modes (Cash stipend & Food package) Conditional vs. Unconditional Consumption Support: Alternative Pathway to Asset Transfer: RFSA	Dependency syndrome Diversion of Consumption Support Strong sharing culture in some communities Artificial price hikes in markets – periodic surges in demand

Theme 4: Complementary Activities & Referrals

Adaptations	Challenges
Partnering with National Govt to scale up GA: KSEIP Partnering with National Govt. to upgrade Social Safety Net Scaling & Sustainability through Private Sector Partnerships - DREAMS in Uganda & Ethiopia	An informal or casual attitude towards partnering with private sector players or government. Limited capacity of client-facing workforce - quality of services delivered & effectiveness/impact. Avoiding the risk of work overload for client-facing staff

Theme 5: Savings/Loan Group, Linkages & Beneficiary Transitions

Adaptations	Challenges
Savings with a Purpose (SWAP)	Unstable Savings Groups - Poor leadership Arbitrary modification of certain key elements of VSLA can destabilize stable groups. Seasonal migration of participants due to climate-related shocks Insecurity, limited social cohesion, lack of proper personal ID docs etc Scarcity of strong credible financial service providers in some areas.

Promising Practices

1. Use current data generated through assessments to inform GA program design.
2. Use RCT & Action Research to test the effectiveness of project strategies.
3. Apply Adaptive Project Management & CLA Practices in the programming operations.
4. Design GA projects to embrace formal multi-sectoral collaboration
5. Develop formal linkages to Govt. and private sector (market) players
6. Document and disseminate LKM Products.

Questions and comments on the GA Synthesis Report

- The variations and adaptations are well appreciated. Presentation did well in comparing practices and strategies across the region and gives a great starting point for the discussions to follow.
- Around the challenges, they are real and critical. As we speak in the workshop, let us talk about them. We do not want a situation where mentors are stressed and over stretched.
- The issue of some families starving children to get to a point of malnourishment so that they are enrolled into the program is something that should be relooked into. Is it a systems issue? Or is it anecdotal.
- Can we unpack the issue or perception that giving people unconditional cash transfers that they become highly dependent. Is this really the case because globally some studies have found that unconditional cash transfers lead to people being motivated to even work harder. Can this be looked into?
- Could you speak a bit more on the issue of casual relationships? At one point the study indicated that if partners or the private sector worked harder than the gap will be bridged.
- Can we unpack some of the details around private sector engagement? What does that look like? What of when you are in the demand and supply sector, are these still the same?
- Can we understand how the issue of cost is related to the issue of challenges being seen in the synthesis. Can there be trade-offs for all the elements and where do the trade offs come in?
- What would be the cost per beneficiary and the impact of a particular program so that we can start comparing an apple with an apple.
- Cost efficiency or success is currently being measured based on each program's theory of change. Can we have a similar framework for measuring impact or success?
- How can technology be integrated to offer hybrid coaching to complement the human mentors, coaches, and community-based trainers?

THEMATIC SESSIONS

Theme 1: Targeting and Graduation Criteria

Questions on presentations by USAID Missions

What is the reason for doing RCT for each region yet there are a lot of researchers that have been done? Should we spend money on this?

Response: YES, there have been studies done. However, these studies do not measure similar indicators. Some measure cost-effectiveness. However, there may be a need for doing randomized trials that look at the specific gaps related to implementation. The Uganda Mission is designing another program with AVSI Foundation that will focus in a different region. They decided not to conduct an RCT rather to put the money in trying to see the impact of the interventions in a completely different setting.

To USAID Kenya

Could you clarify how you count if acute malnutrition is still high yet income has increased with asset changes. Will this household be counted as graduated if malnutrition has improved while assets have not improved?

Targeting – Wasting used as main criteria for geographic targeting while poverty is still high in those areas. Why use only acute malnutrition when we could have other areas with high poverty and low acute malnutrition?

Response: They used a humanitarian lens which does not only focus on the face value of the issue without looking at underlying issues that drive the need for malnutrition needs like acute malnutrition in the ASAL areas.

On the decision for graduation – participants must meet the nutrition criteria and other criteria to be graduated from the program. This requirement looks a bit rigid. Graduation can be determined by different factors. What if the households fail to meet the nutrition criteria and meet the other factors?

Response: This is because the goal is to reduce acute malnutrition hence making nutrition as one of the key and main factors for graduation. Even if the program would push on other criteria without having met the nutrition criteria, then they would really not be considered as graduated because they will not have fulfilled the goal of the program. Hence why the program has specific interventions aimed at enhancing the nutrition outcomes. On whether the criteria are rigid, results have shown that the theory of change is working. Proving that underlying causes of acute malnutrition are also other issues in the household.

Theme 2: Consumption Support/ Smoothening and Asset Transfer

Questions on presentations by USAID Missions

Pathway to starting a business or another pathway to employment. There is no mention of the employment pathway here. Should we be thinking about employment as a pathway?

Response: There are lessons that it is better to include the employment pathway in the technical skills as opposed to the asset transfer.

On challenges mentioned by Somalia like around the money tied to each household. How involved is the government of Somalia in this project or the GA program?

Response: Government role is very limited to non-existent. The World Bank and other partners are trying to do it though it is not meaningful.

Numeracy and literacy are challenges among poor women as well. How has Uganda and Ethiopia managed this challenge?

Response: Learning aids and tools such as maps and audio recordings were used in Uganda by AVSI Foundation to bridge the literacy issues and numeracy challenges among beneficiaries.

Consumption support recommendation on basing the transfer value on the food basket. Speak more on what the evidence says on this.

Response: A world bank study has shown that a minimum expenditure basket is not best for a poor household. However, if there is the money and budget consider a minimum amount which is the safety net and has shown real evidence of progress. Prediction is the key here that makes other households really pull through and not the amount of the budget.

Consumption smoothing – In Kenya there was a realization that the government had been providing safety nets year in year out and that was not seen as sustainable. Even after that over 17% still do not graduate. Hence, at what point do we stop consumption smoothing?

We know that graduation is not an end but a pathway. Therefore, is there a need to generate an evidence base for these households after the 24 months to go back and see how those who never graduated are performing with or without consumption support?

USAID Kenya mentioned that consumption support has worked to support families during severe cases. What have you noticed as the usage criteria? You can actually leverage on other programs and layer resources to off-set amounts taken by harsh environments or conflicts. Probably, there can be a crisis modifier.

What experience do you have during times of shock?

Are you providing food only or cash as well? How do you value and ensure both are equal? – This is debatable. You may decide that you want to support the market linkages and strengthen to ensure that they are able to provide community needs.

Development of business plans was a requirement in Uganda. Has there been a similar case or practice in Kenya, Somalia, or Ethiopia?

Response: Kenya has a requirement on development of the business plan hence why the first tranche was coming at month 5 when they will have acquired some skills and be able to develop their plans.

How do group assets perform?

Response: There may be no evidence. However, Kenya was able to know that the three women accessing grants as a group were able to address the idea of women tying businesses together. In the ASAL region, tying women to poverty is essential. It also helped them to keep them in check and for accountability purposes. Doing the asset transfer in 2 trenches or a group, accountability is really enhanced.

Theme 3: Complementary activities and Referrals

Questions on presentations by USAID Missions

Can there be a clear understanding of complementary activities?

What goes to referral, what goes to linkages, and what goes to complementary?

Theme 4: Livelihood skills training and Support and Business Coaching

Questions on presentations by USAID Missions

300 US$ grant given to the graduated model participants – What are the common types of business they start and are there any innovations you are seeing?

Recertification done every two years to participants within the graduation approach – Is this recertification done by an independent party? Is it an in-house or partner led? Is it the point of assessing the graduated participants?

This is done for participants after being involved in the livelihood support program. The learnings delayed significantly for the PSMP and the RFSAs. Once households are enrolled into the program, that is where the two-years kick in.

Design of the model – What is your thought on this noting that the amount of consumption and asset transfer were less but also noting the effects of this lower amount. This made it more cost effective and scalable but how are you thinking about the effects of this?

Theme 5: Savings/loans groups, linkages and beneficiary transitions

Questions on presentations by USAID Missions

Post-graduation so what? What should we do after graduation?

If we start thinking about after graduation it means we are hanging around. Participants that do not meet the graduation criteria will most likely not meet the criteria in the post-graduation period.

How has digitization worked in the G2R considering the literacy levels in the settlements and host communities?

Deliberately integrate safeguarding right from the time of program design. This ensures children and women in the program are not taken advantage of.

Collaboration, learning, and adaptation during the graduation implementation – Do we learn from each other? How can we learn and unlearn bad approaches?

Sustainability – more often than not people look at savings groups as ways to provide sustainability. However, in times of some shocks, the savings groups are unable to actually withstand these shocks. Hence the need to look at other investments that can ensure real sustainability such as water projects. We should not just limit sustainability to savings. Let us not narrow so much that we limit ourselves particularly for places that experience such shocks gradually and regularly.

Consolidated Thematic Discussions by Groups

Theme 1: Targeting and Graduation Criteria

Key lessons, takeaways, or recommendations	To Do's	Don't's
On targeting Household level targeting is preferred as it ensures the most vulnerable are reached Geography and goal clarity are important as they inform the graduation criteria selected. Start from the community going up in consultation with the government. Consult all stakeholders, understand the context, align with the donor on the expected impact.	**Do's for targeting** Vulnerability-based targeting using a contextualized mixed method approach Program goal & vision must be clear and specific as it drives the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Get the right geography then get the right person within that locality Targeting should use existing reliable data/social registry where available	**For targeting:** Do not copy and paste. Do not rely on a single targeting criterion. Don't use any "cookie cutter/standardized" element of targeting or graduation criteria without contextualization and/or validation. Even if you start with something more "standard", validate your results Do not rush in your targeting or take short cuts
On graduation Have simple graduation metrics that the local community can identify with for households to track their own progress e.g. number of meals per day. Balance between contextualization and universal indicators to ensure standardized impact measurement. It is important to find opportunities to be as inclusive as possible. However, it is not always viable for this to all be done by one organization. It is important for a leading implementer to establish linkages with other programs and organizations who are better fit to deliver appropriate support (i.e. SAGE for support to elderly populations, WFP/UNHCR for the most vulnerable refugee populations) Targeting and decision of who is included in a program is extremely sensitive. It is important to consider other investments for those who are not selected to participate (other programs who are better fit to respond to their needs) Saturation: if a high number of participants are setting up businesses, many will set up the same and the market will become saturated. When we over-target, there will be saturation. This is why strong market systems are important. How many HHs can be targeted before saturation occurs and impact decreases?	**Do's for graduation** Graduate participants responsibly with clarity of graduation pathways. (Once graduated/not, participants are not cut-off, there are other pathways). Have simple graduation criteria for the household so they can track their own progress. When targeting and focusing on participants who are viable for success in graduation, it is important to establish linkages with other programs (state social protection programs, WFP) who can target those not included in graduation. Why: Improved cost effectiveness and successes Targeting households rather than individuals Why: This accounts for time poverty, interpersonal relationships within HHs, and inclusion of those (elderly, disabled) who would otherwise not have been included Measure results beyond the period of the program Why: To measure sustainability	**For Graduation** Don't make graduation criteria overly complicated (Graduation criteria) Don't rely too heavily on global indicators. While it is useful to be able to compare across programs and establish a baseline, in reality, contexts are different, populations face different types of shocks, have different preferences, etc

Theme 2: Consumption Support/Smoothening and Asset Transfer

Key lessons	To Do's	Don't's
Need to embed learning components in the program design in order to intentionally capture and document learnings. Having asset transfer in two tranches helps mitigate risk from losses and provides for learning. Don't implement in a vacuum. Work with other partners to provide other support services to provide reports, extension services among others. Work with businesses to fill in the gaps.	Ensure that consumption support and asset transfer are contextualized Why: You have to think about the timing, value, seasonality and modality Timing - this needs to be contextualized. Choose the best season to deliver consumption and asset support Try and protect the asset as much as possible through issuance of consumption support. Continue consumption support during and immediately after the asset transfer The amount should be as flexible as possible. Think about at what point you determine the amount. Try do this at the work plan time and not contract signing Business mentorship from the beginning is critical Diversification of livelihoods to adapt to market changes. Two tranches of asset transfers help to mitigate risks that come with first time entrepreneurs. Conduct post distribution monitoring for consumption support Involve spouses at the onset to provide information and prevent potential GBV. Must monitor use of the food allocations. Avoid duplication in the support from other partners. Be aware of the ecosystem.	Do not transfer asset before skilling and training Do not transfer asset after the program because you will not have time to mentor and follow-up on the progress of the beneficiaries Do not use in-kind for asset transfer or for consumption if possible Do not dictate to the households what assets they should have. Don't push cultural boundaries which may trigger potential GBV especially when targeting women in the programs. (Consumption support)

Theme 3: Complementary activities and Referrals

Key lessons	To Do's	Don't's
It is important to consider the cost of building complementary activities within the activity versus relying on outside programs and entities to provide complementarity. For graduation to succeed, there must be some level of enabling environment, whether it comes from within the same program or from another entity. Complementarity versus integration - In a grad approach, complementarity can become overwhelming. Rather, than stacking complementary activities, integrate activities. Integration should be context specific, consider timing Intentional community engagement in some contexts can also supplement where there is lack of involvement from the government or from other partners	Service mapping to establish a thorough understanding of the working environment Prioritize and sequence. When the partner is adding complementary activities, implementers must carefully consider what complementary activities are most needed and will not be overbearing to the program Where possible, co-invest with governments to establish enabling environment Be intentional, proactive and patient. GA requires a complementary ecosystem in order for it to work.	Don't overload program participants and staff with too many complementary activities (a woman who spends hours collecting water cannot dedicate an appropriate amount of time to participation in a graduation activity) Don't rely on volunteer workforces to deliver critical services Don't overlook cultural norms and preferences Don't try doing everything as a graduation program: you can't afford it and don't have the skillset. Don't stay if it's not working.

Key lessons	To Do's	Don't's
Timing is everything. Participants rejected a product due to seasonality issues. Therefore, appreciate community experience. Graduation is very sequential and Village Enterprise does 12-month programming. MSD requires leading time if you are going to sequence, layer and integrate. Consider household activities in the different seasons. Crowd in private sector actors early in the program to identify entry points:	Take care of the big question: How do you cost linkages, how do you quantify or measure it? and how you determine the success of the linkages. This needs to be planned for right from the start – design phase. Make linkages objective-oriented, context-specific, and safeguarded. Recognize donor obligations which may make sequencing, layering and integration difficult especially where there are different donors involved.	Do not do direct intervention at the systems level. Don't refer your participants to service providers or introduce service providers to participants if you are not sure of the availability of the services and the capacity of the service provider to deliver the services effectively. Do your homework and conduct a thorough mapping/assessment of the capacity of the service providers before implementing referrals or linkages

Theme 4: Livelihood skills training and Support and Business Coaching

Key lessons and recommendations	To Do's	Don't's
Mentors work as interlocutors to bring on board all the services. Training is a specialized transfer of skills for a specific period of time while a mentor is the day-to-day contact of the household to support reinforcement and implementation of training. Officially introduce the mentor at the start of the program to raise the profile of the mentor as a community resource person. Mentors need to be people who are trusted by the community and also to have the skills. If you are changing the lives of people, you need to be in direct control of the person providing that life changing service and the data collected. Therefore, have the mentors as staff to ensure full engagement and motivation. Risk Reduction: a DRR element is necessary in every graduation approach During coaching, participants are taught mitigation measures ie for floods to build barriers around houses, keep goats in an elevated space, coaching on savings for when they inevitably face shocks	Livelihoods Integrate digital response to increase touch points between programs and participants on a weekly basis. Involve the technical officers to provide technical extension/ government officers and integrate with other services in the ecosystem. Coaching and mentoring Relationship building and mindset change requires time. Therefore, mentors need to come from that village to foster formal and informal relationships. Mentor 2.0 recruitment provides mentors with multiple skills who receive continuous training on entrepreneurship. Basically, serves as an interlocutor. Frequency of contacts determines no. of households and groups the mentors can handle in a day/month. Need a standardized minimum across programs. 14-day training on farmer business model, 5 days financial literacy, 5 days VSLA, Selection Planning and management training. Close supervision at the onset from the technical leads. Clearly define mentor, coach and trainer. Define the terminologies in this approach. Encourage mentors to also start businesses so that post program engagement, the mentors have activities to sustain them and set a good example to the program participants. The role of the mentor should be to facilitate change through direct support to reinforce the business skills, nutritional screening and referrals to health, nutrition, livelihoods and other services depending on the program goals.	Don't overwork the mentors; intentionally manage the workload and expectations based on feedback loops with the mentors. (Mentorship) Don't copy paste from other contexts. (Livelihoods) Don't overwhelm mentors, coaches, or participants and do not rely too heavily on volunteers

Key lessons and recommendations	To Do's	Don't's
When comparing participants who have been supported with coaching, mentorship, they are more in control of their HH over a long period of time and can provide support to other HHs in their community.	Before the inception of the activity, check existing government structures and activities – sustainability in mind. Flexibility in design of program Target the most vulnerable HHs (whose HH heads are non-elderly and who in some way can be productive; including those with disabilities) Consider saturation; work directly with participants to do community-based market assessments Integrate risk analysis into livelihoods planning as well as DRR where appropriate	

Theme 5: Savings/loans groups, linkages and beneficiary transitions

Key lessons and recommendations	To Do's	Don't's
We don't have to do everything. We don't have to only integrate within USAID programming. We need to look outside of USAID programming for complementary services. Why can't we horizontally integrate GA programs with MSD programs? What is the thing that you want sustained, how are you going to assess your system and support creation of the enabling environment for sustainability.	VSLAs Include financial service providers on board early in the program. Build the relationships and linkages from the start. Sequence the approach as it takes time to build relationships and capacity to support uptake of the services. Private sector is driven by profit and development actors by impact. Development actors can support in designing products that private sector actors. Transition from graduation to market systems approach. Work with government to create policy frameworks to support the implementation of Linkages / Referrals Leverage the government to take up the consumption smoothing bit to ensure adequacy. Training should be transitioned to government TVETs in contexts where they are operational. Curriculum programs are offered and can be transitioned to TVETs. Certification: local organizations are the ones certifying trainers. This certification should be done by TVETs. Government level framework to facilitate the certification. Self reflection on everybody to support sustainability and linkage. Behaviour changes and mental change is key for long term sustainability. Designs should have sustainability from the onset and inclusion of government from design stage.	Don't wait for the maturity stage as this creates mistrust between the groups and the banks. Let them grow together and build trust as the money grows. The banks can also co-train or link to Development Finance Loan Guarantees (VSLAs)

Country Specific Commitments after the Workshop

Uganda

- Set up a COP meeting to relook into the outcomes of the meetings
- Purpose to influence donors and find a way to advocate for more funding towards GA
- COP work to include and scale-up with the government
- Build capacity of private sector and international organizations on GA
- Share evidence and any new studies where this is a gap
- Measurement of self-reliance
- Develop a minimum standard for GA in Uganda (SoPs, tools, best practices)

DRC

- Make sure the information coming out is shared with the mission and IPs
- Clear Graduation Measurement
- Embed coaching and CBT taking into account matters sustainability

Ethiopia

- Joint planning and adapting for better GA implementation
- Have a technical working group next week to share lessons from the workshop
- Advocate for lower interest rates from financial institutions
- Digitization of savings
- The current graduation criteria not clear – they will work to refine and clarify it
- Work together to leverage resources from government and other partners

Madagascar
- They have learnt about the importance of complementary activities and will consider including in their interventions and systems strengthening to maximize impact
- HDP Nexus platform with evaluations set up. Create working synergies with resilience.
- Have internal mission support – synergy building

Somalia
- Targeting criteria – borrow from AVSI Foundation and others and refine it
- GA is still new in Somalia – loss of staff to other programs
- Look at curriculums and tools

South Sudan
- Debrief team in Juba and HQ
- Sharing the knowledge and information gathered to the team back in Juba to inform design of programs and interventions.

Kenya
- Sharing knowledge at the Kenya level and the regional level.
- Existing GA partners in Kenya have a close working relationship with the government and other stakeholders. They would like to use the opportunity to start a conversation and see how to sue the existing single registry.
- Importance of impact evaluation. A smaller task team to conduct an evaluation and fine tune any gaps with evidence in Kenya.
- Different models and tools. They identified some innovations that have been used. One of them is the skills development that can be used within the Kenyan context. Also using the TVETS
- Policy recommendations and influencing the government of Kenya for standardization to ensure there is coherence.
- Quarterly meetings to continue the process of discussions around GA in Kenya.

WORKSHOP CLOSING SESSION

Next steps and way forward

Emily Mkungo – Project Management Specialist, USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance

Reflections on how this conversation started and the passion that came with it. At some point they were opting for individual coaching however based on lessons the Kenya Mission GA IPs went for the group coaching sessions. At a meeting in May 2023, there was a thought that there needs to be a conversation around GA and be able to consolidate thinking around this approach. Appreciated the AVSI Foundation team for hosting the workshop as well as all partners who adhered to the call and came in to share knowledge with each other. Last but not least an appreciation to the other Missions -Ethiopia, South Sudan, DRC, Madagascar, Uganda, and the Washington DC team. Finally, thanks to the planning team – the OEG and RLA.

What next:

- Summarizing all the information
- Synthesis report

Soledad Rodgers

Uganda has a very incredible refugee policy and with over 1.6 million refugees. She came from a point where she did not know what GA is. They traversed Uganda to find a place where the RFSA working with refugees will work and where there would be a place for incorporation of a livelihood component. The search ended in Rwamwanja. Though GA was not new in 2016, it was new to Food for Peace. In 2017/2018 during the refinement year the team worked with AVSI Foundation to pull this together. She never got to see the implementation of the program. The Uganda team led by Chip, Juma, and Carren have made this work. In Kenya, in 2022 she saw Nawiri presenting their research findings from a 2-year study and surprisingly they were talking about GA. In April the same year they went for a week-long learning mission in Kenya together with the two Nawiri Implementing Partners. There has been a lot of learning since them. Emily and Chege came up with the idea of a RFSA Community of Practice and this is like their idea and the need to do something for all.

She was impressed at the openness and willingness of all participants to share with each other and thanked everyone for their participation.