M&E GUIDANCE SERIES VOLUME 1: MONITORING AND EVALUATION UNDER FEED THE FUTURE

Overview of Goals and Objectives of Feed the Future

The President's Global Hunger and Food Security Initiative, titled "Feed the Future," has the overarching goal of sustainably reducing global poverty and hunger. To implement Feed the Future, the United States works with host governments, development partners and other stakeholders who are committed to tackling the root causes of global hunger by increasing agricultural productivity and facilitating efficient market systems to meet the demand for food, increasing incomes so the poor can purchase food, and improving health and nutritional practices to reduce undernutrition. The Initiative aims to strengthen the capacity of countries and communities to anticipate, prevent and cope with adverse weather, economic downturns and other events that can lead to food crises, reducing the suffering caused by emergencies.

Feed the Future uses management approaches that are effective in low-income countries: developing strategies and interventions in coordination with stakeholders, committing to sound investments through reliable partners, and adjusting program elements based on analyses of performance reports. Experience has shown that in order to meet Feed the Future objectives, host governments must be committed to the effort. Therefore, Feed the Future will focus on countries that have placed high priority on poverty and hunger reduction and have adopted national plans to combat those problems, which are called "Country Investment Plans."

The Feed the Future Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Approach

Through this approach, Feed the Future seeks to have growing and lasting development impacts over time. Measuring progress towards the ambitious goal of sustainably reducing hunger and poverty is key. Therefore, we are committed to rigorous monitoring and evaluation of our Feed the Future investments in order to track progress and facilitate results-driven planning and performance-based management. We will regularly assess and learn from the answers to these questions: What are Feed the Future investments buying? Are Feed the Future activities, projects, and programs accomplishing what we intended? Are Feed the Future efforts impacting our overall goal to reduce poverty and hunger? Are barriers hindering the progress or performance of Feed the Future programs? What changes would support broader or deeper Feed the Future program impacts? Are sustainable improvements to local systems and capacities being achieved?
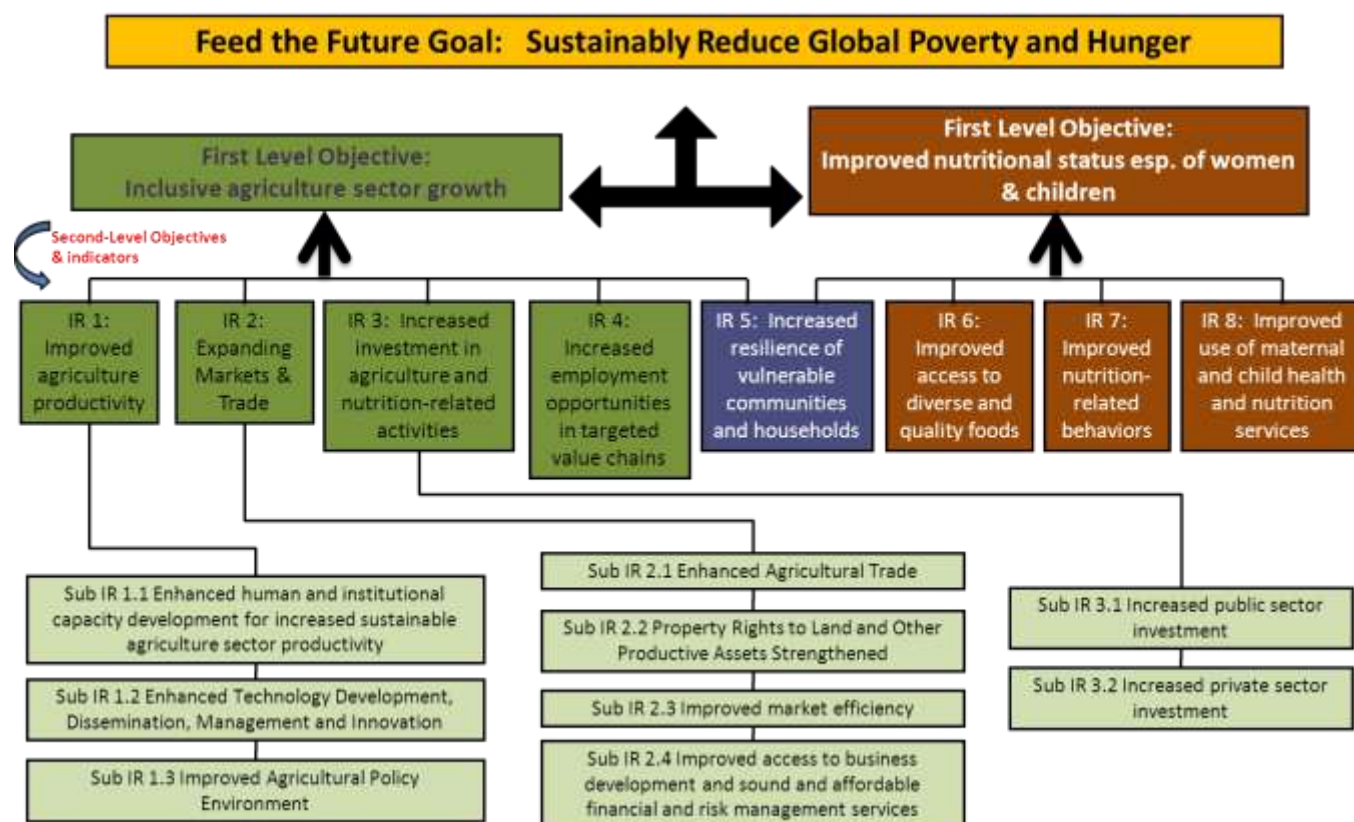
NOTE: This document is intended to frame understanding of the Feed the Future Results Framework and the three monitoring and evaluation tools being employed: the performance indicators, impact evaluations, and knowledge-sharing feedback process. Please review this document in context of viewing these three other documents:

1) the comprehensive Feed the Future Results Framework document

2) the Feed the Future Indicators Aligned to the Results Framework chart

3) the complete Handbook of Feed the Future Indicator Definitions document.

To this end, Feed the Future will employ the following monitoring and evaluation (M&E) tools:

> (1) The Feed the Future **Results Framework**, which is the conceptual and analytic structure that establishes the goals and objectives of the Feed the Future Initiative;

(2) A performance monitoring process and standard **performance indicators** to track progress toward desired results;

(3) **Local capacity-building** to improve the quality and frequency of data collection and use;

(4) **Impact evaluations** to determine the measureable effects or attributable contributions of our Feed the Future investments

(5) **Performance evaluations** to assess what Feed the Future activities and projects are achieving and how they are being implemented; and

(6) **Knowledge management** activities to foster learning and use of M&E findings.

(1) Results Framework

The foundation of our M&E efforts is a Results Framework that maps linkages between program activities and their intended outcomes as they relate to the overall goal of sustainably reducing global hunger and poverty. The Results Framework assists in both designing effective programs and measuring progress by providing a structure against which to determine strategies for country-specific programs and by outlining causal pathways toward Feed the Future's end goal. It consists of four levels of desired results that feed into each other from bottom to top: project level results called "Sub-Intermediate Results" feed up into program level Intermediate Results, which feed into two Key Objectives, which lead to Feed the Future's overarching Goal. These causal relationships have been identified and tested through multi-disciplinary research and economic analysis focusing on the reduction of global hunger and poverty.

Based on the findings of that research, Feed the Future's Results Framework delineates the outcomes that are necessary to achieve as Feed the Future investments pursue the overarching goal.

(2) Performance Indicators and Monitoring

As we structure our Feed the Future investments around the Results Framework, we use performance indicators to assess the progress of our work and track changes that are occurring (see the _Handbook of Feed the Future Indicator Definitions_). The 53 Feed the Future indicators measure progress toward each result in the four levels of the Results Framework. Specifically, Feed the Future aims to achieve results that move from **outputs** - tangible and intended products or consequences of an activity; to **outcomes** - the results of those products and consequences; and eventually to **impacts** - medium to long-term effects produced by a project or program that change the development situation of a country[1]. Feed the Future tracks this progression of performance through results reported against indicators from activities (predominantly outputs and some outcomes), to the higher level objectives (predominantly population-based or sector-level outcomes), and the overall goal level (representing population-based impacts).

As a means to prioritize Feed the Future investments, each Operating Unit will first determine which section(s) of the RF is most applicable in their country context and which causal linkages will have the greatest potential for change. While all countries will share the top two layers of the RF (the Goal and First-level Objectives), the specific intermediate results and Sub-IRs (third and fourth level of the RF) to be addressed will vary by country and region. Project-level indicators will then be selected from the set of 53 to best measure progress against the chosen sections of the RF. For each indicator selected[2], countries establish baselines, set targets, and routinely track progress toward them. Operating Units will monitor performance against applicable output and outcome indicators for their projects and programs. In most cases an M&E contractor will measure higher-level impact indicators, such as "prevalence of poverty," to maintain consistency in reporting and reduce workload in the field. Each Operating Unit either has a Feed the Future performance management plan (PMP)[3], a Feed the Future project M&E plan, or integrates performance management for Feed the Future into existing PMPs under their CDCS. Feed the Future implementing partners will develop M&E Plans for all activities supported by an Operating Unit.

Movement in indicator values and comparison with indicator targets helps measure progress toward the associated objective and, thus, can be used to monitor our investments. Over time, the comparison of targets against actual results, combined with analysis of planned against actual spending, will provide critical information on the effectiveness of our investments and enable us to make shifts in our programs in order to be more successful. Performance management through these monitoring tools will be conducted at the country, regional, and global level.

Of the 53 Feed the Future performance indicators, eight are required for Feed the Future focus country Missions and 23 are required-if-applicable across all Feed the Future Operating Units in an effort to ensure comprehensive reporting on the priorities and objectives of the initiative. Some of these indicators will be fulfilled through data collection and entry by M&E contractors, as mentioned above. Missions will use more than the required/required-if-applicable indicators and may create custom indicators tailored to measure specific projects, when no standard indicator is available.
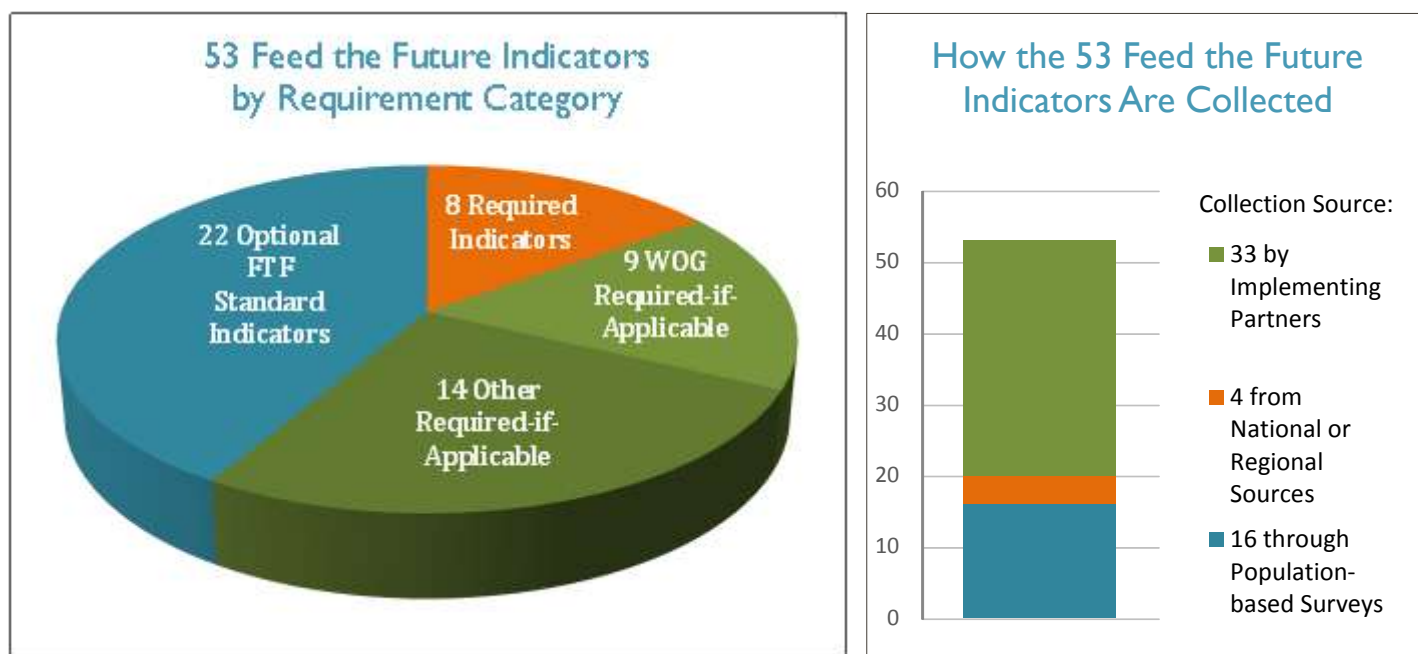
Of the 23 indicators that are required if applicable, nine of them have been identified as whole-of-government (WOG) indicators. These are indicators which other USG agencies supporting food security programs and services (e.g. MCC, USDA, etc.) have pledged to use, at a minimum, even though they are encouraged to use as many of the 53 as applicable to their work. The USAID/Bureau for Food Security M&E team works with these USG agencies and coordinates performance reporting.

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[1] As defined by USAID's Automated Directives Service (ADS) 200.6, accessed here: http://www.usaid.gov/policy/ads/200/200.pdf
[2] As an exception to this rule, three indicators are considered "contextual" and only require baseline and annual reporting. Target setting is not required. Those indicators are: 3.1.9.3(1) Percentage of national budget to nutrition; 4.5(12) Percentage of national budget to agriculture; and 4.5.2(35) Percent change in value of intra-regional trade in targeted agricultural commodities.
[3] Some OUs may have created a Feed the Future-specific PMP before they had a CDCS in place.

The following diagrams illustrate the various categories of Feed the Future indicators:

53 Feed the Future Indicators by Requirement Category

- 22 Optional FTF Standard Indicators
- 8 Required Indicators
- 9 WOG Required-if-Applicable
- 14 Other Required-if-Applicable

How the 53 Feed the Future Indicators Are Collected

Collection Source:
- 33 by Implementing Partners
- 4 from National or Regional Sources
- 16 through Population-based Surveys

Please see the *Summary Chart of Feed the Future Indicators* for a list of all Feed the Future standard indicators with information on:

✓ the type of indicator (output, outcome, impact)

✓ the level of collection (national level/country context, zone of influence targeted by Feed the Future, or direct beneficiary), and

✓ the designation of the 8 required indicators

✓ the designation of the 22 required if applicable

✓ the 9 WOG indicators

(3) Local Capacity-Building Investments for Data Collection and Use

All countries require valid and reliable statistics for strategic planning and therefore monitor economic indicators, demographics and other measures of a country's status and welfare. In developing countries this is often accomplished through specialized agencies that are responsible for collecting, processing, and disseminating official statistics. However in many low-income countries, including some Feed the Future focus countries, the work of those agencies and the use of data to build effective policy responses to complex development problems and to monitor progress toward economic and social objectives is not well appreciated. This has become a serious impediment to implementing development strategies. To ensure sufficient and appropriate data is collected to measure progress of Country Investment Plan implementation for food security, Feed the Future will advocate and support investment in strengthening national statistical systems and capacity in data use to inform policy, development priorities, and program design. Specifically, local capacity building will be a crucial component of the development and execution of impact evaluations, where local groups or host government agencies will be engaged in the process from the beginning to formulate impact evaluation

priorities, learn proper evaluation methodologies, and collect and analyze data. In addition, certain tools used for data collection against performance indicators, such as household surveys (e.g. Feed the Future Population-based Surveys), include local groups or host government staff, such as the national statistics office, to build capacity to conduct the same methodologies in the future.

(4) Impact Evaluations

While monitoring results through indicators is an important piece of managing performance, impact evaluations are needed to thoroughly understand the changes resulting from Feed the Future programs in the focus communities. Specifically, data collected through performance monitoring will track progress and changes in indicators; impact evaluations will then explore if, how, and to what extent Feed the Future programs are causing those changes.

Feed the Future's impact evaluations have a two-fold purpose: (1) to foster learning that will improve the effectiveness of Feed the Future programs and (2) to strengthen Feed the Future's accountability to stakeholders. Through impact evaluations, we will learn which results can be attributed to Feed the Future interventions and use this knowledge to inform future program design and development, enabling a feedback loop that is a critical piece of the Feed the Future strategy. Impact evaluations will examine whether and how Feed the Future programs are fulfilling their specific objectives and provide the best available empirical evidence to inform policy and investment decisions that support effective, innovative, and sustainable development practices.

Impact evaluations will use qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis methodologies and apply experimental and quasi-experimental design to rigorously and objectively examine the impacts that Feed the Future programs have on targeted beneficiaries, as well as test the causal linkages establish in the RF. Feed the Future will prioritize the use of impact evaluations to examine pilot or experimental interventions. Many Feed the Future impact evaluations will be carried out by a centrally-funded mechanism (M&E contractor). However, Missions fund impact evaluations as specified in the new USAID Evaluation Policy (see Guidance on Impact Evaluations in this M&E Guidance Series).

(5) Performance Evaluations

According to the USAID Evaluation Policy: "performance evaluations focus on descriptive and normative questions, such as: what a particular project or program has achieved (either at an intermediate point in execution or at the conclusion of an implementation period); how it is being implemented; how it is perceived and valued; whether expected results are occurring; and other questions that are pertinent to program design, management and operational decision making. Performance evaluations often incorporate before-after comparisons, but generally lack a rigorously defined counterfactual." Performance evaluations are designed to identify accomplishments, performance issues, and constraints in the implementation of the project. They identify results and lessons learned in project implementation. As a result of performance evaluation programming, decisions are made on what activities to continue, modify, or enhance.

In accordance with the USAID Evaluation Policy and ADS 203, Feed the Future uses performance evaluations to understand how Feed the Future activities are performing and working, ensure accountability of funding spent, and apply evaluation findings to programming decision processes. Each Operating Unit supporting Feed the Future activities is responsible for conducting performance evaluations per ADS 203 requirements.

Feed the Future performance evaluation data collection and analysis should use "mixed methods" (both quantitative and qualitative) to provide rigor and richness of data. Performance evaluations should combine qualitative and quantitative methods, and depending on the purpose of the evaluation, use primary and secondary data collection sources. Data collection methods should be selected to provide the highest quality and rigor in answering the performance evaluation questions. The choice of method is determined by the information that is needed and by the cost of collecting the data.

(6) Knowledge Management: Sharing Monitoring and Evaluation Findings

Systematically sharing findings garnered through monitoring and evaluation will ensure that case studies, best practices, and lessons learned about the effectiveness of different methods are well described and widely disseminated. Feed the Future uses a variety of approaches, such as reports, briefs, seminars and webinars, to reach a range of target audiences. Innovative and efficacious knowledge-sharing approaches, such as a centrally-managed knowledge-sharing database, will facilitate the discipline of incorporating feedback into program design, development, and implementation.

Reporting will be done annually to Congress at the country, regional, and global levels and include evidence of learning through our rigorous M&E approaches. In following President Obama's call for transparency and openness in government, Feed the Future is also committed to sharing our progress towards overall goals externally, both with development stakeholders and the general public, through the Feed-the-Future website (www.feedthefuture.gov) and the Foreign Assistance Dashboard (www.foreignassistance.gov). Additionally, Feed the Future is working to release data sets generated through M&E processes in a timely manner in accordance with ADS 579 and the Presidential Policy Directive on Open Data. Overall, through use of the tools and methods described, Feed the Future will demonstrate its commitment to rigorous performance management and sound investments to sustainably reduce global hunger and poverty.