KDAD LEARNING:

Network Mapping:
Feed the Future Partners

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Feed the Future Knowledge-Driven Agricultural Development Project

Assessing & Learning Portfolio

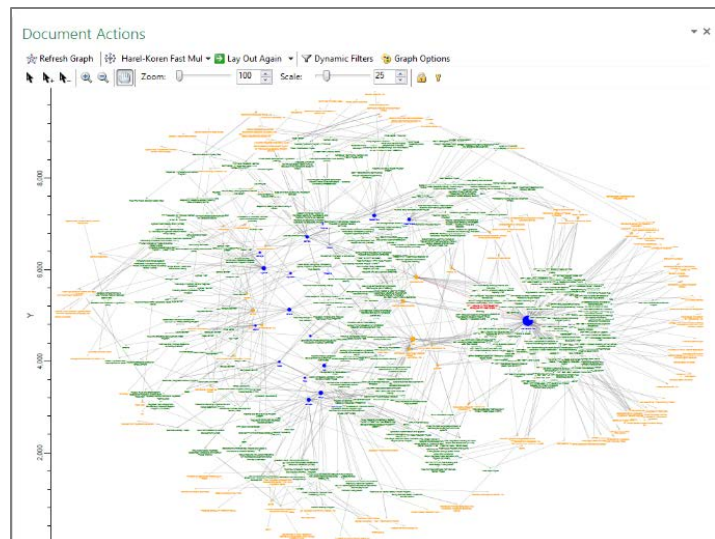# Network Mapping: Feed the Future Partners

Part of the focus of the Knowledge-Driven Agricultural Development (KDAD) Assessing and Learning (A&L) Portfolio is discerning different approaches to analyzing and visualizing data, in a palatable manner for audience consumption. With this in mind, the A&L team started a journey on how to best present and utilize data collected in the Feed the Future Monitoring System (FTFMS), one of the main databases the A&L team uses for conducting data analysis. FTFMS is part of an interagency effort to consolidate USG reporting on Feed the Future activities. USAID, USDA, MCC, Peace Corps, Treasury and the US-African Development Foundation contribute data to FTFMS. FTFMS indicator data are the official data for Feed the Future, provide the foundation for the Feed the Future Progress Report and inform decisions on future programming and budget allocations.

With access to FTFMS, the A&L team looked at the various types of information collected and stored in the database. The review of FTFMS made it apparent to A&L that there is a wealth of information stored in the system which is not being fully utilized. This could stem from the volume of data collected (financial, indicators, performance narratives, location of activities to name a few) on an annual basis and the limited analysis ability within the system. One aspect of FTFMS that the team decided to work with was the information collected on stakeholders implementing Feed the Future funded activities and how to better present this information in a way that is useful to the Bureau for Food Security (BFS) and USAID Missions.

Network maps were an approach to influence coordination among different organizations and entities that are part of the Feed the Future initiative. The information from the database would allow the team to map and answer questions in relation to activities:

- Which Feed the Future implementing mechanisms are operating where and what activities/sectors/commodities are they focusing on?
- Who are the local partners, host government institutions, civil societies, universities or private sector organizations that are working with Feed the Future implementing mechanisms?
- What coordination exists between activities funded by Missions and those funded by BFS in Washington, DC?
- What coordination exists within operating units?
- Where are the opportunities for stronger collaboration and partnership for better program implementation, thus reducing duplication of effort and increasing cost effectiveness?
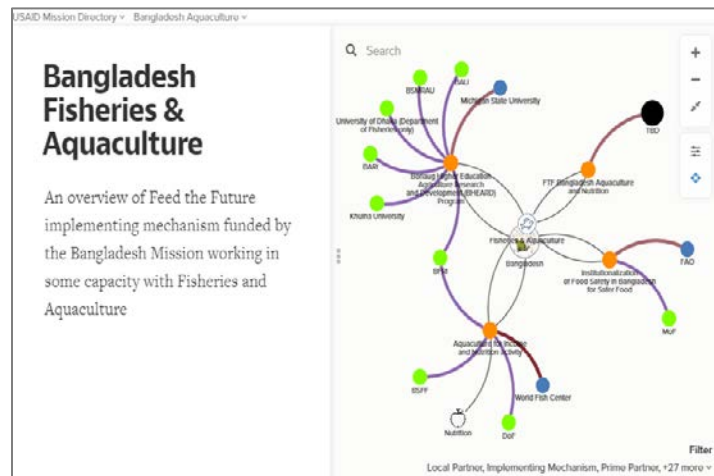
The initial attempt to create this data visualization started with using the platform NodeXL which is an add-on for Microsoft Excel. With this platform the team created a map that showed a

network of Feed the Future focus countries and the implementing mechanisms within each. The network map was shared with various BFS teams, including USAID Ethiopia. A&L received feedback that allowed the team to learn and adapt to meet the needs of the client. The Ethiopia Mission feedback included:

- During a partner's meeting at USAID Ethiopia, one theme that arose was the need for network mapping to assist partners with their work validating the importance of network maps to better coordinate and utilize resources effectively. As reiterated in the feedback by a USAID Ethiopia team member, "Per my observations, when tools like this are absent, we have funded the same partner multiple times for the same output. This is a worst case scenario reason to better track our investments."[1]
- The network maps would be an instrument for coordination and a platform to share tools and datasets as well as to enhance capacity of local partners.
- NodeXL had both pros and cons but one of the major limiting factors for use by USAID was that the program could not be downloaded on government computers, and it couldn't be synced with a dataset that would automatically update the map as new information was entered.

Understanding that there is value in creating network maps but also wanting to find a platform that is dynamic and user-friendly, the A&L team started testing other tools. The search led to another platform, Kumu, which is web-based and can pull data from a Google sheet. This addressed most of the cons provided in the feedback. The A&L team created network maps for all implementing mechanisms, including implementing partners funded by BFS, and a second

map that displayed similar relationships for implementing mechanisms in Feed the Future focus countries funded by USAID Missions. A strong advantage of the platform was its ability to narrow down connections. Looking at the entirety of the network map can be daunting, as the USAID Mission network shows over 1,800 connections. However, Kumu allows users to explore the data using various functions to refine the map to show specific connections such as aquaculture in Bangladesh or BFS-funded Coffee Rust Support mechanisms.

Going through the process of mapping the relationships not only showed the large number of partnerships that exist in Feed the Future projects but was also a reflection of how data is entered into FTFMS. One challenge was missing or inaccurate information. Two Missions, Ethiopia and Rwanda, have taken on this challenge and are actively completing this information by viewing their respective maps.

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[1] Tarr, Faith. "Re: Presentation this week March 30." Email message to A&L Team. 28 March 2017.