



HOW CAN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT REFORM FACILITATE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR GROWTH?

QUESTION AND ANSWER AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

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Julie MacCartee: All right, so we're gonna open it up for Q&A. We encourage you to keep posting questions or comments in the chat box. Really, any question about what you heard today is fair game, and we'll go through some of the questions that we already received and keep an eye out for any additional questions that come in the chat box. All right, so first off, very early on there was a quick clarification question that I thought I'd throw out there, which is what is meant by a custom single window? That was something that Amy mentioned in her presentation and a few people online weren't sure what that meant?

Amy Chambers: Thank you, Patrick for the question and I'm sorry for not clarifying at the time. There was a lot of information in there. It can be easy to throw around terms without recognizing that not everyone knows what they mean. So in short, a custom single window is a means of streamlining the customs process by providing a single entry point for all of the different documentation that's required to get a shipment of goods across a border.

Traditionally an exporter may have to go to six or ten different ministries for different documents, and this is a means of establishing a single entry point. It can be either physical, an actual kiosk at the border, or it can be a virtual ICT system. It also helps by reducing opportunities for corruption, and it allows speeding up of the processing of documents at the border.

Julie MacCartee: Anybody have anything else to add to that? Great. Thanks, Amy. We also have a somewhat broad question come in from Martin Markof, who asks what are in general the most important policy reforms that have to be undertaken for the enabling environment reform to facilitate agricultural sector growth? So asking about prioritization, how to prioritize policy interventions relating to the enabling environment. We learn so much by this process. How do you prioritize?

Amy Chambers: That's a hard question. As we described in the beginning, the enabling environment is a system and it's a system of laws and regulation and cultural norms that impacts on another system, which is the value chain process from start to finish. So it's a good question because there has been a lot written about the theory of sequencing policy. Whether there are some areas of an enabling environment that are more fundamental than others in where you should start, I feel that there hasn't actually been a strong theory advanced for which ones are the most fundamental.

We could probably point you to some resources if you're interested to learn more about what's been said on that topic, but the short answer that I would give is that ultimately the answer might just be wherever there's opportunity. There's a number of new reform projects out there that are adopting an approach where they don't have any specific policy initiatives that they have to work on. It's more of a work on each issues within x timeframe so that they have the capacity to go out, work with stakeholders, figure out where the needs are, and engage where they can have the greatest impact. That said, given that each one area impacts on another, even if you're doing that you

need to be cognizant of that and be trying to build the capacity of the stakeholders that you're working with so that they will have the capacity to tackle after you're done.

Julie MacCartee:

And I just heard you use that word "sequencing." We had a question come in, "Have you done any analysis on sequencing of enabling environment reforms?" Also, what exactly do you mean by sequencing?

Amy Chambers:

So that would be the question of should you start by making sure you have a good foundation for the enforcement of contracts, or is the primary thing making sure that your trade policies and trade facilitation? Like I said, I don't think there's any concrete theory of sequencing. If anyone else has read one and they think they have the answer I would love to hear it, but there is a lot of research on the topic.

We have actually under our predecessor project did some research in the area of seed policy with looking exactly at this, is there more of a theory of change. You can go read some of that. Ultimately though I think my answer is still the same, which is that you have to engage where you have political will and stakeholder buy-in.

Julie MacCartee:

Great. Thank you. Why don't we jump over to a question for Justin? A question has come in from Patrick Bins. "How do you calibrate your quantitative analysis of keywords and phrases from project outcome reports? Wordsmithing for example with selected projects quantitative accomplishments."

Justin Lawrence:

That's a really, really good question. Obviously this is more art than science. I would say with the performance narratives the way that we got around that issue is when we would code under results that were arrayed across the Feed the Future results framework, we actually use deviation narratives. So deviation narratives, basically when you exceed by 10 percent or you're below 10 percent of reaching your standard indicators you do actually have to report that and give a justification as to why.

This became helpful to us in that we were able to look at results that were reported within the performance narratives and be able to cross-___ it to see whether they achieved their targets or not. So by doing that we actually used a 1:5 weighting scale in order to sort of note that, which helped us sort of blend qualitative with quantitative because in that case we were basically coding excerpts in a qualitative way but being able to use that weight to get a better sense of the story as to the results being hit.

Now the other thing I would have to stress is that besides the actual Feed the Future standard indicators, we also had a variety of different other results that we included that were much more qualitative in nature, policies and reform being one of them. So initially when any sort of policy, say something gets drafted or adopted and that gets reported, we were sure to also tag that as a key result as well. So that's sort of a little bit about the approach that we used

in terms of blending the qualitative with the quantitative. We still are looking to sort of refine that process moving forward.

Julie MacCartee: Great. Thank you, Justin. As long as we are on you, we had another question come in from Abelardo Rodriguez for the KDAD team.

Justin Lawrence: Yes, that's a familiar name. How are you doing today, Abelardo? So that's a really great question.

Julie MacCartee: Let's make sure that we ask the question since our audience may not be able to see our little question list on the side.

Justin Lawrence: So what Abelardo very shrewdly asked is based on our coding structure have we been able to come up with common models for development and can we depict the theory of change based on the qualitative results, and are these results congruent with what USAID has stipulated as theories of change. Abelardo, I would say that looking across and looking at all these different performance narratives it is still – and also performance evaluations – it's tough to actually get to cobble with anything.

I think what this process has done is helped point to where Feed the Future, where there are certain gaps in programming. So I think one of the gaps that certainly came up across both the review of the evaluation piece and the performance narrative is around resilience. Resilience was an issue that looking across different aspects of Feed the Future initiative's work, ag productivity for example was pretty strong. But where there was more of a gap is how to provide Feed the Future style interventions for the extreme poor. So that was certainly something that came up. So I don't think it's at a point where we have very clear and deliberate causal pathways. It's more of a better sense of us mapping the width and breadth of what Feed the Future has accomplished and where it might want to focus resources and efforts.

Julie MacCartee: Wonderful. Thank you, Justin. Just as a reminder for everyone, the full report that has been addressed in this presentation today, the link is posted right now in the chat box. You'll see it at the bottom, "The analysis of enabling environment reform under Feed the Future." So if you want to delve further into this topic you'll certainly want to check out that report.

Just my own personal question. The report might seem like a beast for some people. In terms of approaching it, what would you recommend for a Feed the Future project that is interested in addressing the enabling environment? How should they use this report? What should they look at first? What are kind of the key pieces you should look at?

Amy Chambers: Thank you, Julie. Actually, I didn't give any background on the actual layout of the report, so for those of you who have not opened it yet, it is a little bit of a beast, but a lot of that is in the annex. We did the synthesis analysis of all of the projects covered and that section is actually not very long, so I would strongly encourage that to be read in its entirety, and it goes through a lot of

what we've talked about today. Also included in there is an annex with short summaries of each of the projects that we identified that had a strong enabling environment component.

So more information listed by country, by region, on what they did, what they accomplished, what were the dates of the project? So that's an excellent reference resource going forward. Then there's also an annex that gives a lot more country specific details on those six methods of engagement. So for example, if you were trying to plot out what types of activities to do under your project and you wanted to look at how other projects have engaged in these topics, that might be a good place to start.

Julie MacCartee:

All right. Thank you. We'll just keep plowing through the questions that have come in. Another question from Martin Markof. "If you have five days going to a developing country, on what topics should you focus to improve the agri-business environment? Do you have a checklist of sorts?"

Amy Chambers:

Excellent question. My initial response is you can't go do this in five days, there's no way. You could go in and do some sort of an overview and the next short answer to this is yes, we do have a checklist. So as a project when we go out to do these kinds of technical analyses, we are usually engaged to use a specific analytical framework, and there are a number of different tools out there for assessing the enabling environment for food security. Some are as short as five days.

Under our predecessor project, the e-project, we developed something called the ag v snapshot, which is actually designed to be done in a week with the idea of just going in, doing a desk review, and doing an overview of some of the main issues in the country as a means of focusing further later deeper dive analysis. However, more likely we are doing a more thorough review of all different aspects of the enabling environment. Those can be somewhat – you can pick and choose a bit, so we usually act on demand from USAID missions, so they may have specific policy issues that they're most focused on.

This is also one thing to keep in mind if you're going into a country is doing the background research, and one area of that is looking at what other data is actually out there on the enabling environment, which brings me back to the topic of enabling the business of agriculture index. This is a relatively new resource. The first multi-country report just came out in 2016. There will be a new one in 2017, and it covers a lot of different areas of the enabling environment, providing data on the quality of the laws and the time costs and procedure regulatory burden on agri-businesses, and it covers at this point I think 14 of the focus countries and will cover by January of 2017 18 of the current focus countries.

So that's also a good place to start to give you sort of a snapshot of what is the health of the enabling environment in the country, what are some of the key focus areas, but that's not where you wanna stop, and that's where I say you really have to have the time to go do more of a root cause in-depth

analysis of some of those more systemic constraints to understand and put those numbers into context. Actually in your resources over on the left you'll see something called a guide to enabling the business of agriculture.

That's something we put out this year as a reference document for USAID missions and how to effectively use this new tool, because it can be incredibly good not only at giving you a quick analysis of where some of the key trouble areas might be, but because it's scored across different countries it can generate a lot of interest from policymakers, a lot of momentum for reform, but you just have to be careful to make sure that you understand what is being measured, what is not, and do the extra needed analysis to put that in context.

Julie MacCartee:

Wonderful. Thank you, Amy. All right, I think there's a question that Justin can address at least in part from Patrick Bins. "Capacity building is a major objective. Do you track what in-country project staff do post-project completion? I'm thinking of folks who continue to work in the ag ministry, organize ongoing civil society efforts, enter private business and supply chains, etc. What happens after a project is completed and how do you keep track of that?"

Justin Lawrence:

That's a really good question. I mean right now as you can imagine with performance narratives for annual reporting, these are projects that are currently active and so looking sort of forward and sort of after the life cycle of the project, it doesn't necessarily address that. Where we do actually keep tabs on capacity building efforts though, is we do have a – well we certainly have a capacity building code that we use within the performance narratives, but then we also have an entire subset of beneficiary codes to understand really who Feed the Future is interacting with.

So in that way we're able to sort of keep tabs on those within the local government receiving some degree of capacity building, or maybe it's the local ag research sector. So we do have a way of at least keeping tabs on the current capacity building efforts that are being done, but to your point about being able to track sort of the long-standing impact is actually a really good one, and I think it's worth us trying to figure out how we might extract that information from a reporting organization.

Julie MacCartee:

Thank you, Justin. For those who are still online with us, we ask that you please consider taking our ending polls. These are some polls that help us gauge what you thought about this webinar, what was relevant to you, some enabling environment issues you've faced. This will help our presenters kind of understand your perspectives a bit more and help us plan future AgriLinks webinars. So please go ahead and take these polls while we keep asking a few more of the questions that have come in, and if you have another question please feel free to post it in the chat box. Let's see. All right, Phil Steffen joined us and so I thought it would be great to ask Phil's question, which is that "Those in charge of making formal laws, policies, and regulations as opposed to informal customs, practices, and traditions, may be personally persuaded by

analysis of the cost of poor incentives or counterproductive regulations, but have to keep in mind their own political futures and stakeholder interests", a political economy question. "What are good approaches to overcome reluctance or resistance to improve enabling environments in that case? Do you have any commentary on that question?"

Kelley Cormier:

I can start. Thanks, Phil for the question. You mentioned political economy. We've kind of been talking around the concept for most of the presentation. Amy recently responded to a question related to frequency and prioritization, and it's often some of these factors that you're mentioning related to political economy that help us understand what the opportunities are. You ask what are the good approaches to overcome reluctance and resistance to improve enabling environments.

I would turn that question back to the participants to bring to bear some of their personal experiences because I think that's where we're going to learn the most, but I just want to thank you for noting the importance of political economy and also indicate that Feed the Future acknowledges the importance of political economy analysis. In fact, if it wasn't apparent, many of the tools that we've referenced are in fact variations on political economy analysis, so thank you.

Julie MacCartee:

Thank you, Kelley. A comment that came in from Doudou Ndiaye I thought was worth bringing up and allowing the presenters to comment. "I agree with the importance of market information systems, but according to my experience in West Africa, most market information systems work under support from projects and the system falls down at the closeout of these projects. The sustainability of these market information systems needs to be assessed." So this is a question about sustainability. Is that something Meaghan Murphy: can start chiming in on?

Meaghan Murphy:

Sure. Thanks, Julie. This is a great question, Doudou. One thing that this does raise is kind of the importance of actually tracking and monitoring progress on activities at a different level so that we know for instance how well this market information system is functioning not just in some of the traditional ways but also getting a better sense of the level of public and private investment engagement so that the project can ensure that the strategies that they're working on are supporting these very foundational actors as part of that system.

I think it also actually raises a really interesting assessment question as you say about what types of information are we tracking, and being able to track funding, human resourcing, and different aspects that ensure success of these important project efforts is key. But I would also be very interested to hear how others that might be working in market information systems do some of this while they're building up these systems.

Julie MacCartee:

Excellent. Thank you, Meaghan Murphy. There was a question that came in really close to the beginning of the presentation actually from Dick Tinsley,

but we thought we'd bring it up again just for some clarification. So Dick said that "I noticed that you are talking about how enabling environment concentrating on host country administrative issues, but how many small holder farmers operate completely independently of any government contact? Perhaps as many as 90 percent" he suggests. "Are you overlooking the operational environment that will enable the farmers to expedite their crop management?" So how is enabling environment assigned in terms of small holder farmers who maybe don't have a lot of interaction with some of these reforms and policies?

Amy Chambers:

Sure. Dick, I'm really glad you asked that and I see that Nate Klein our chief of party chimed in, in the chat box to answer in part relating to the fact that enabling environment includes much more than just the administrative rules and the formal rules. It also includes the informal customs that affect transactions at all levels of the value chain. We get this question a lot, and part of what we were trying to convey at the beginning with that graphic of the value chain is that small holders don't operate in a vacuum. It may be true that they operate informally. They don't have much interaction personally with government officials or with regulations specifically, however because of the rules that impact those further down the chain, those impact the outcomes for farmers as well.

So where you have roadblocks that are increasing the costs of getting goods to market, or you have long delays at the border that are causing goods to spoil or causing tremendous losses, those things ultimately affect the price that the farmer receives at Farm Gate. Another way to look at it is that the way in which the rules are structures can determine how wealth is distributed within the system. So where competition isn't well enforced, that can impact the price that the farmer receives, and even as broad as where there isn't strong regulation and intellectual property rights for inputs on things like seeds, that can impact the access that small holder farmers have to improved inputs.

Julie MacCartee:

Excellent. Thank you. I think that's an important clarification and something to understand. All right, I think that we are going to go ahead and wrap up today's webinar. We really appreciate all of the questions and comments that came in the chat box. We wanna be respectful of your time and encourage you to go ahead and delve into the report that was shared in the chat box on the enabling environment analysis. So I would like to go ahead and thank all of our presenters here today, Amy and Meaghan Murphy: from the EEFS project, Justin and Gwen from the KDAD project, and Kelley from the USAID Bureau of Food Security.

Thank you so much for your comments and discussion of the enabling environment. I think this is a really important topic and a lot was learned from these reports or these analyses, so we're gonna keep the discussion going through Agrilinks. Again if you attended the webinar today you will get an email with the recording, a transcript, and any other post-event resources that the presenters would like to share. So keep an eye out for that recording.

Most importantly, thank you to our attendees. Without you we wouldn't be able to continue this seminar series. So please keep returning to Agrilinks webinars. Keep letting us know what you like and what you don't like. We are making sure that these webinars are appropriate for your needs, implementing ag development projects in the field. So take care, all of you. Enjoy the rest of the month. Happy Halloween. We'll be back with another webinar in November. Thank you very much.

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