



THE NEXT GENERATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT: BOLDLY GOING WHERE NO NGO HAS GONE BEFORE

Q&A TRANSCRIPT

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PRESENTERS

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Q&A TRANSCRIPT

Julie MacCartee: So I just wanted to say a very strong thank you to our excellent presenters: Winstone, Adam, and Janeth. We really appreciate your insights on civil society engagement. And thank you also to our attendees who have been posting lots of questions and comments in the chat box. We will move into a Q&A session now for the next 20 minutes or so and ask some of the questions that have come through. And I also just wanted to highlight that the presentation slides are available in the resources box at the left of our screen if you would like to download those and review any portion of the presentations.

And of course we are also recording this presentation and will send you as an attendee the link to the recording in about a week's time or so, maybe a bit later. And that way you can share it with your networks or review anything that you missed. All right so we had a lot of questions come through. We'll see how many we can get through. And I'll pose them either to Winstone or Adam or both. I'm also happy to have Susan jump in and Janeth. And do feel free to jump in if you have any comments.

I'll start off I think with a question that came up a couple of times in the chat box and often comes up at our Ag Sector Councils which is engaging youth and engaging women and how that fits into your presentations and into this discussion. So both Winstone and Adam, or Janeth, if you wouldn't mind commenting on any specifics of how things are different when engaging the youth population or engaging women?

Adam Keatts: Julie I could just jump in very quickly and give a perspective from Cambodia HARVEST. So the question was specifically how we engage them and if there were any additional challenges? Is that correct?

Julie MacCartee: Yes if it poses any different challenges for civil society engagement.

Adam Keatts: Well so for Cambodia HARVEST in commercial horticulture specifically the commercial horticulture farmers that we're working with are approximately 45 percent women. And in Cambodia generally you really can't be working in agriculture and not work with women. They're very engaged at multiple stages of the value chain. And it's really a matter of ensuring their participation up front. So when we are introducing activities at the commune level we make it very clear.

And if we have introductory meetings we encourage the participants as well as youth in the area. Sometimes organizing the timing of those meetings is a critical factor, given all of the other tasks that women in an agrarian village are burdened with. So we make sure we organize those meetings to raise awareness of what's

taking place at times that are appropriate for women. And we do the same things for the knowledge transfer activities to make sure women are engaged.

Julie MacCartee: Great. Winstone do you have any comments on engaging youth or women?

Winstone Bohela: Maybe I can comment on the engagement of women. And I can add on to what Adam has just said, especially with women. In our program for instance, taking from the experience that we have, that we give to the community through the peer support component and one is specifically to ensure that when the women are engaged there are several factors including what Adam has just said in terms of the timing.

Like a lot of other women in the world women in Tanzania, especially in the local community, are usually working in terms of their family, the man is main bread winner. So when you engage with them and you have to really make sure the context in which this will take place. And if they're meeting to discuss what time is appropriate for them without then compromising with equally relevant roles within the family.

Very specifically for our program, for instance it is a nutrition program. So one of the things that is really being promoted is to reduce their workload, including the [inaudible]. Sometimes this is a contradiction because what to present we are encouraging them..... [lost audio]

Julie MacCartee: Sorry we had a bit of an audio blip there. So I think I will jump over to Adam just to make sure that Winstone's feed is coming through strongly. But Adam we had a lot of clarifying questions come in about Cambodia HARVEST. And so I thought I would just rattle a couple of them off. One of them was how did you measure the incremental sales when we know that we didn't start with all of the beneficiaries from the outset in order to have a good baseline?

Adam Keatts: Sorry, the question being how do we measure incremental sales?

Julie MacCartee: Yes.

Adam Keatts: We measure incremental sales compared to a baseline. So we do conduct a comprehensive baseline. It happens within six months of project start up. And then we conduct statistically significant samples of the beneficiaries of the clients that the project works with. And this can be extrapolated to the population level of the project.

Julie MacCartee: Okay great. And Vicki Marrone asks: to serve the number that you mentioned about how many technical personnel are part of your work?

Adam Keatts:

Yeah I actually don't know specifically how many field extension officers we have dedicated to the horticulture producer groups. We do both agronomists on staff that visit groups and all beneficiaries once a week. And we also have local partners, local NGOs that have agronomists on staff. So we do this through both of those channels. And in other cases we also work through where incentives are aligned for embedded extension mechanisms.

We have several partnerships with input providers as I mentioned, monthly field days. In those cases they may deliver training on how their products work. For instance a drip irrigation provider will deliver training on installing or maintaining the system over time. So if you contact me offline I can get you the specific number of staff that we have dedicated to the horticulture side of things. I don't have that number in front of me.

Julie MacCartee:

Okay, great. Lastly for the moment a question from Richard Tinsley: he was wondering if you could give an estimate of the advantage of bulking inputs and market produce. What are the overhead costs being incurred by the group to get the bulking advantage? Is there any quantitative information you can share?

Adam Keatts:

I don't have specifically the reduction in unit cost data. And I don't know if we collect that for HARVEST. In terms of the overhead costs there are no overhead costs for that particular function of the group to take place other than transportation to the input provider which are quite close. If you know Cambodia either at the village level or at the commune level there will be a rural input dealer. And we are also working to support input dealers both in terms of training them on inventory as well as delivering that information to farmers that they need to.

So in the areas where we're working the input suppliers are very well-stocked. And they began investing and stocking their inventory when they saw the increased demand from the project farmers. And of course the project farmers' demand increased when they saw the returns that they could generate from these improved practices.

Julie MacCartee:

Great, thank you. All right we discovered that we had a bit of delay just with Winston's audio – maybe about ten seconds. So I'm going to go ahead and ask him a question and then pause to make sure he has plenty of time to answer. So a question Winstone that came in during your presentation from Gretchen Thompson, a scientist with Family Health International in Durham, North Carolina. Is long term success in civil society engagement being measured? Also are the social and behavior change communication or SBCC initiatives coupled with any other programmatic interventions such as economic strengthening?

Winstone Bohela: Yes. I think I will give that to Janeth and then I'll add on. And if Nene also can answer from Washington that would be great. But I think we'll start with Janeth first.

Julie MacCartee: Great. Janeth please feel free to chime in.

Janeth Said: Yeah I would like to start with the second portion of the question where he's asking about if the SBCC is being coupled with other interventions. Yes, and this nutrition program is hosted within the economic growth section of which is mainly dealing with Feed the Future investments. And so it's about every country there are value chains that you are dealing with. And so even nutrition is part of that, on top of the SBCC that we are doing right now we have other interventions that are targeting on that diversification or for which clear evidence is working on but also we have small companies raising livestock just for the purpose of making sure that the targeted group that you are focusing on – women and children – are getting their required food. Maybe I will leave the other question – the second portion to Winstone to respond.

Winstone Bohela: Yes. Nene do you have anything to add on in the long term measures for the sustainability of the program?

Janeth Said: I will say that on this project we have not started measuring long term sustainability. We're on the fourth year of the project but it's a concern, the long term sustainability for CSOs. I would say that it's critical for CSOs to be linked to government in terms of supervision, monitoring, and working together throughout the project, which we are agreeing already. And to ensure that at the end of the project when there is no more funding that the government can step in and continue to work with these CSOs that we have built the capacity to implement.

Julie MacCartee: All right, thank you both. Looking at a few of the other questions that came through I thought this was an interesting one. To discuss a little bit more the importance of the local context. You both stressed that. But a bit more of the how does one gain a comprehensive understanding of the local context in your project locations? It's undoubtedly complex in many situations with limited time or monetary resources. Any comments on that?

Winstone Bohela: Yeah if I may comment on that I think it is true. It speaks to itself in the sense that different CSOs in different capacities, depending whether they're nationally-based or locally-based do react and grow and flourish differently depending on the context that they are operating. And even in cases, for instance in our case, we referred to and we insist on making sure that the CSOs work hand in hand with the government which is usually related to the institution to provide the services and helping also for the government to provide.

In such cases also the context within which the CSOs work do differ, meaning that even if we say this CSO is working for us at that regional level or district level it will depend on the type of administration at that region and that district. One, and second, it will depend on the nature of the community which it is serving or that it is for instance it is agriculture based or whether it is urban or semi-urban or pure rural area, and the nature of the economic activity that is being engaged in.

So there are a lot of factors. You cannot really draw a line and say this is what we do or where. How about you?

Janeth Said:

Yeah I wanted to add that for us in general is recruiting local staff that is familiar with the culture and the context was really helpful. You know 95, 96 and I would say *[inaudible]* is from Africa which is very helpful in rapid startup of the project. They know the context. They don't need much orientation about what the communities have to think about why they do what they do. That to us is extremely helpful in starting weekly and implementing bids on that. The staff knows already about the people we are serving.

Julie MacCartee:

All right. We had a question come in from our event page online. So not here in this chat box but from our event page that I think would be interesting to post. And an attendee asks: in parts of West Africa, which are emerging from long democratic transitions, the private sector and professional associations have not emerged as a set of interest groups to inform policy and resource priorities advancing the interest of our constituencies.

Policy center, media, academia are not meeting the needs for research analysis awareness building in part because there's not a big demand or market for such services from government, or civil society interest groups, or the general public. So how do implementing partners and donors support civil societies who make this transition? Anyone can jump in.

Adam Keatts:

Julie if the question is specific to West Africa I wouldn't be appropriate to answer that. But just generally in Cambodia I would refer back to some of those enabling environment characteristics that we talked about. And just a general comment on Cambodian civil society and their role in policy advocacy it is an extremely contentious and challenging situation in Cambodia for civil society and local interest groups to influence the ruling party decisions where it conflicts with their own interests.

And so in many ways it really is about aligning the interests of communities with the private sector and the public sector development objectives. And that is a great deal of what we do in Cambodia through the technical working groups

which are multi-stakeholder platforms to discussion some of these issues. But in terms of political advocacy that is not specifically something that the Cambodia HARVEST project engages in.

Winstone Bohela: If I may –

Julie MacCartee: That's good insight even though –

Winstone Bohela: Yeah if I may add in around that question in Tanzania and specifically with the nature of the CSO that we deal with. Actually the type of civil society organization that we deal with can be termed as still very far in terms of Janeth or us doing exactly that. That's because the civil society that we engage in partner with actually themselves engage in service provision. So in order for a CSO to really qualify to be a very strong watchdog or advocating for a policy it has to be a civil society that does not engage itself in a service but is able to stand aside and look and criticize what is going on.

And that's not the case in our civil society, in the category that we are really engaged in our program. And maybe Janeth can add to that.

Janeth Said: Yeah I wanted to emphasize one of the point here with that Winstone was trying to make in relation the strength of the CSO and the technical capacity of the CSOs to engage in – I don't know – whatever field that they are capable of. And so prior I was trying to explain on how difficult it is to engage with certain CSOs in activity implementation and at the same time trying to build capacity. I've seen is that sometimes there is a mismatch. You push them too hard to get results but you know you can delay on the capacity building.

So in that case it becomes very, very difficult to find a CSO that is really focused and can do the advocacy nicely as you would want to see unless you just set aside some time to make sure that you go slowly within capacity, and at the same time trying to engage the CSOs in activities.

Julie MacCartee: All right, thank you so much to all of our presenters for your comments. We're going to wrap up as we're at the end of our webinar timeslot here. I'd really like to extend a huge thank you to our presenters and apologize for a few audio issues along the way. That sometimes can happen when we are bringing in speakers from around the world, which is something we're always trying to do and trying to make sure that we bring perspectives from the field to our Agrilinks audience.

But I think it was a rich discussion. We know that there are a few questions that weren't able to be answered. But you're welcome to continue the conversation on the Agrilinks event page for this seminar which has been posted a couple of times in the chat box. And we'll also share all of the remaining questions with the

presenters. And I know there was also a lot of Cambodia HARVEST and the details of that program. We'll try to get some information about HARVEST up on Agrilinks, perhaps on the blog, to make sure you have the information you need.

All right so you can see that there are some poll questions on the screen right now. Please take a moment before you depart to answer these polls. They help us improve our events for the future. And we also like to know a little bit more about our audience and about whether this event was useful to you. We're always open to your feedback and we really appreciate it.

Thank you so much to Susan, to Winstone, to Adam, Janeth and Nene and all of the support staff who have helped to make this webinar happen today. We'll be sending you information soon about future events. So thank you very much for joining and we'll talk to you next time.

[End of Audio]