



KDAD LEARNING:

KDAD Webinars
**A Critical Tool for
Knowledge Sharing on
Food Security**

2019

Feed the Future Knowledge-Driven Agricultural Development Project

Knowledge Management Portfolio

KDAD Webinars: A Critical Tool for Knowledge Sharing on Food Security

Under the KDAD project, webinars were a critical means of engaging the food security community in learning and best practices from research and field programs on a range of cross-cutting themes, as well as furthering USAID/BFS vision and guidance. Webinars also created an open space for development practitioners to network and share experiences.

Over the course of the project, KDAD implemented 48 Agrilinks [webinars and blended in-person events](#) incorporating remote participation, reaching on average more than 130 people per live event and even more through post-event resources. Webinar participants represented 135 countries spanning the globe.

KDAD's experience hosting webinars successfully engaged the food security community, leading to greater understanding of best practices and improved use of technologies.

OVERVIEW

Event Formats: KDAD's webinars were typically 90 minutes long and featured three to four presenters. They were generally divided into two 45-minute segments: one for presentations and the other for questions, answers and discussion (online through the chat box or direct discussion between presenters). Webinars were about equally divided in terms of having in-person or remote presenters.

Event Platform: KDAD produced webinars using [Adobe Connect](#) (AC), a leading web conferencing tool. While not without its drawbacks, AC was retained after a lengthy evaluation of other platforms. KDAD used a [comparative analysis process](#) to decide on the best event platform. Adobe Connect is one of only two such platforms approved by USAID-CIO, which was a deciding factor.

Audio—in some ways the most critical component of an event—was handled through a phone bridge using MeetingOne telephony to ensure more stable, high-quality sound. Backup options, typically established in case of audio failure, included dialing in the presenter by other means or having another presenter cover their slides.

Topics: USAID staff and implementing partners generated webinar topics that were frequently linked to the agency's strategic priorities or global events. This demand-driven approach ensured greater participation of motivated presenters with fresh insights to share. BFS staff were instrumental in shaping webinar content and setting priorities on topics when requests exceeded the available time in the production calendar.

“Your events represent a true Community of Practice within the industry – people coming together from other firms across the globe sharing experience and learning, talking about what works and sometimes what doesn't work as well, which is also valuable. Sometimes we just put our heads down and get focused on our own programs and forget to look around and see what others are doing. Your events are a chance to lift our heads up and keep learning and developing the skills and resources we need.”
– Mary Beggs, Technical Director
Cardno International



Planning/Timelines: KDAD fine-tuned its [planning timelines](#) over the course of the project, developing a successful formula for assisting webinar planners and presenters. Webinars were consistently held in the morning on Tuesdays, Wednesdays or Thursdays to attract the maximum number of attendees in the US and overseas.

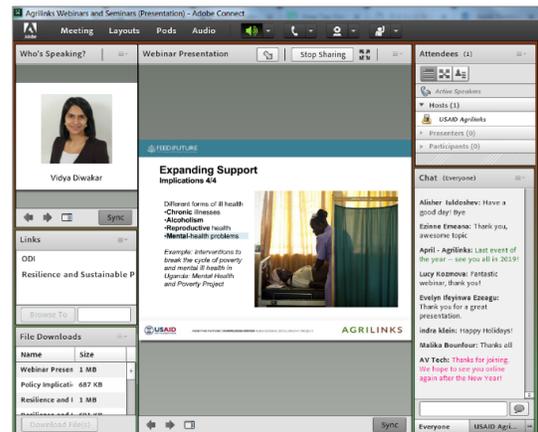
KDAD used [Basecamp](#), a project management tool, to manage the deadlines, process steps and responsibilities involved in planning and executing a webinar. This [To-Do List template](#) shows what each of the steps entailed.

New presenters and others not familiar with Agrilinks events production received a detailed briefing to ensure they understood quality standards for slide decks, how the webinar would flow and had an opportunity to ask questions.

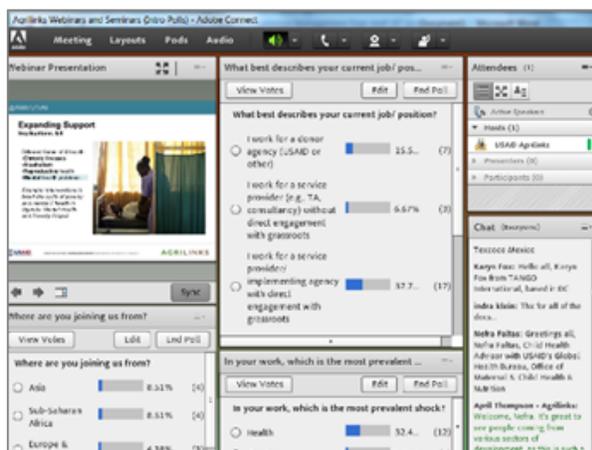
Implementation: Room and equipment setup as well as sound checks took place well in advance of the webinar starting time so problems could be resolved before the event began. Once the event went live, KDAD used Adobe Connect tools to engage webinar participants, support presenters and track audience metrics.



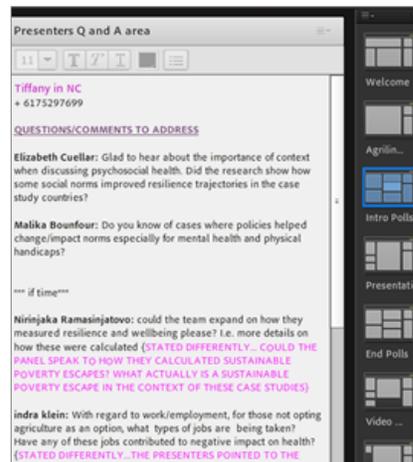
An opening screen familiarized attendees with the format while they waited for presentations to begin and answered frequently asked questions.



File downloads and relevant links were available in the presentation layout. A “who’s speaking” slide helped orient listeners, especially during the Q&A portion. The chat box was used for questions, comments and networking among attendees.



Opening and closing polls engaged participants and provided valuable feedback for webinar organizers.



A pane only viewable by presenters and organizers was used to organize and prioritize incoming questions from the audience.

INSIGHTS

Slides: KDAD developed a standardized format for slides, including “Top Takeaways” to help reinforce important points raised during presentations. With remote presentations, maintaining audience attention is critical. Special attention was devoted to ensuring slides were visually interesting and informative. Text was limited to key phrases to help audience members digest and retain information more quickly and easily.

Promotion: Webinar promotion was a key to success. It began with an email to members of the 16,000+ Agrilinks mailing list two weeks in advance of the event with a follow-up reminder distributed one week later. Events were marketed through Agrilinks’ social media channels and the bi-weekly newsletter, as well as the Agrilinks homepage. Promotion through other members of the Links website community extended the reach.

Webinars with the highest attendance tended to be those that benefited from additional promotion through the efforts of presenters (via their personal or professional connections) or organizations. Event co-sponsorship often increased attendance with broader distribution of information through co-sponsor mailing lists.

Getting Chatty: The chat box was a core element of KDAD’s webinars, where ideas were shared, conversations and connections started, questions posed, and technical difficulties resolved. KDAD paired a facilitator in the chat box with a technical expert who could help address detailed questions throughout the event and add further context. KDAD would open the chat room 30 minutes prior to the event and encourage participants to introduce themselves and network.

After Party: KDAD put significant effort into producing post-event resources that gave attendees a complete collection of event materials, including audio files and transcripts of the presentations and the chat box dialogue. All webinar recordings were uploaded to [YouTube](#), creating an easily accessible repository of past events that KDAD was able to track to gauge subsequent views and reach of programming. A post-event email with links to these resources hosted on the Agrilinks event page was distributed to all registrants.

AGRILINKS WEBINARS BY THE NUMBERS

Fiscal Year	Number of Agrilinks Webinars	Number of Agrilinks Seminars (blended in-person events/webinars)	Webinar Participants	In-Person Participants	Total Participants	Total Registered	Average participant response to poll question “This webinar was relevant to my work” (1-5 scale)
2014	8	7	1364	190	1554	Not available	Not available
2015	6	8	1851	261	2112	4239	Not available
2016	13	4	2498	210	2708	5359	4.1
2017	9	2	1740	69	1809	4366	4.0
2018	11	2	1741	54	1795	4580	4.2

KDAD WEBINAR RESOURCES

[Scoping document](#)

[Planning timeline](#)

[Sample poll questions](#)

[Sample run of show/agenda](#)

[Remote presenter guidelines](#)

[Effective presentation guidelines](#)

[Pre-webinar reminders to presenters](#)

Recordings:

[KM from KDAD -- Events and Roles](#)

[KM from KDAD -- How to Set up an Adobe Room \(2 of 3\)](#)

[AC Backend Changing Permissions in Meeting Rooms](#)

Other Resources:

["Webinar on Webinars" featuring KDAD/USAID staff](#)

[Choosing a Webinar Tool](#)

Adobe Connect discussion [group on LinkedIn](#)

[Online Video Tutorials for using Adobe Connect](#)

[Tech specs](#)

[Adobe Connect Users Community](#)