



Case Title:

How Action Against Hunger's Evidence Week Inspires Cross Program Learnings

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Organization:

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Summary:

Action Against Hunger is a world leader in the fight against hunger and provides lifesaving humanitarian assistance in over 55 countries worldwide. Our vision is a world free from hunger. For over 40 years, our field staff have been on the front lines, treating and preventing malnutrition. Last year, we ran 856 projects and helped over 28 million people.

In 2022, we had 61 offices in 58 countries around the world. The Horn of East and South Africa Region (HEARO) team represents Ethiopia, Kenya, Haiti, Somalia, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia. Country Directors and field staff alike from across the HEARO office collaborated last fall to create an interactive series of educational discussions and workshops called "Evidence Week."

Evidence Week provides a podium to pause and reflect on how our country teams continuously address threats to health systems and food security. The series was launched during the COVID-19 pandemic when our country teams were launching new and innovative ways to provide lifesaving services, and then sought to share these innovations with the rest of our network. Teams are able to present on their newest initiatives and programs---especially those that ensured the uninterrupted delivery of services to HEARO's hard-to-reach populations.

Evidence Week was informed by the need to collaborate, learn, and adapt. Other teams are able to learn from programs implemented in different countries and in turn enhance their own programming and operations.

Over the last two years, Evidence Week allowed dozens of staff members to inform programming, provide technical assistance, and build evidence and accountability frameworks. Teams can share everything from new malnutrition case studies to climate-resilient gardening techniques to high-tech devices that can bring water to entire communities.



The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted several of our programs across the HEARO region. When access to healthcare and aid delivery was impacted, our program teams were prompted to develop innovative ways to provide services. Evidence Week was ultimately launched to spotlight each team’s new innovations and provide a space for learning and collaboration across the network.

Key learning outcomes included:

1. Cross learning of technical skills, program and operation activities
2. Increased involvement and commitment by stakeholders to reinforce partnerships
3. Adaption of evidence and integration of lessons to achieve an intended impact

Our last three themes have included:

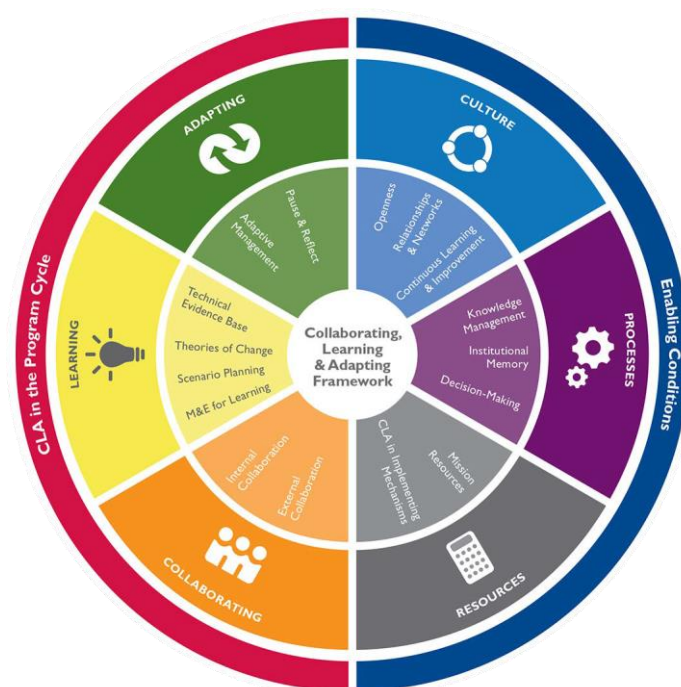
- 2020: “Equipped to Influence Change “
- 2021: “Beyond Evidence, Data for Decision Making “
- 2022: “Innovate, Collaborate and Accelerate Towards Zero Hunger”

The presentations were delivered with PowerPoint, with poster presentations and with videos, including the voices of the communities where we work. Guidelines and templates were given to ensure consistency in the flow of the presentations.

Internal Collaboration



Adaptive Management



In preparation for Evidence Week, our teams consulted with our Country Directors and informed them of the key objectives and reason for the initiative. We wanted to ensure that the country teams were all represented during the Evidence Week series and were able to share their innovations and discoveries, as well as collaborate with their colleagues and leave with fresh perspectives.

After these consultations, we selected the key representatives from each Country Office who took the lead in identifying the theme and series lessons.

These representatives worked together to develop a Concept Note which included the theme, overall objectives, and specific objectives of Evidence Week. The Terms of Reference provided the entire Action Against Hunger Team with their set roles and responsibilities throughout the week.

During the week, team members were able to present on their innovations and host discussions on key topics. There was even a poster competition, and the best poster won a trophy.

Everyone collaborated to help make this Week a success. The Communications team provided support in ensuring media coverage and collecting content for website stories and future branding. The technology (ICT) team played a huge part in ensuring that the virtual platform was functional and maintained throughout the week. We were able to amplify community voices in several respects---both by ensuring that our communities on the ground were heard, and also ensuring inclusion across our Country Offices. We also focused on the inclusion of our partners-- namely government representatives, non-governmental organizations and local organizations.

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In 2020, the presentations were focused on new innovations and the implementation of key programs, with a focus on building strong service delivery and protecting communities from the impacts of COVID-19. Subsequently, in 2021 and 2022, there was a major shift in the presentations. Now, Evidence Week is focused on cross-learning collaboration and the inclusion of community stories and voices.

In 2022 South Sudan Organized a one-day hybrid in-Country Evidence Day This event brought together all the staff from the various implementation location with participation of director-level officials from the Ministry of Health, state representatives, local partners, young activists, and nutrition champions There were also donor representatives from the following entities: United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) Nutrition Advisor, European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) Technical Assistant, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) Programme Specialist, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Chief of Nutrition and GBV Specialist, and World Food Programme (WFP) Head of Nutrition.

The Evidence Week learning platform provided a unique space for country teams to showcase innovative projects and new program ideas.

Teams were able to take a step back and reflect on both their achievements and challenges. They were able to collaborate with other team members and gain key knowledge about their implementation processes. This platform allowed staff across eight countries to embrace adaptive learning and ensure that they were properly listening to the concerns and addressing the needs of the communities we work with.

One presentation, done by the Kenya Country Office, showcased the Smart Tap System. This innovative technology functions essentially like a solar-powered vending machine, dispensing water for entire communities. The presentation, called 'Tap, Fetch and Go,' discussed how Kenyans in the West Pokot and Isiolo counties can now simply tap a token on the Smart Tap's electronic interface before water flows freely from its storage tank. Then, they can easily fetch the water and go. Before this innovation, community members had to walk for long hours in search of water, which often came from unsanitary sources. The Smart Tap System was first implemented in 2020 in West Pokot, and after spreading awareness of the innovation, the Kenya Team replicated the System last year in another county.

The South Sudan Team also presented on a key innovation. In Fangak County, floods have destroyed many livelihoods and made humanitarian operations costly and complicated. Action Against Hunger introduced climate-resilient interventions in Fangak County, including farming methods in Old Fangak that have proven to be a game-changer in combating malnutrition.

The methods include rice planting within the flooded areas. In Paguir, our teams introduced a rice variety that matures in just three months. We also hosted informational discussions and taught community members how to plant the rice. This variety of rice is fast-growing and flood-resilient, which makes it ideal for the county's flooded areas.

Our teams also introduced floating gardens, which combined with the rice farms have introduced sustainable solutions for the entire community. These initiatives showcase the importance of adapting to climate challenges through innovative agricultural practices. As our teams work together, we get closer to ensuring food security and nutrition for the world.

The support and collaboration from our Country Directors was key in ensuring the success of Evidence Week. Teams were also encouraged to contribute, and the Technical Working Group from each country office helped program teams identify and construct their presentations.

We faced some obstacles along the way. One challenge included low attendance from the Technical Working Group during the monthly catch-up meetings, typically due to urgent competing program priorities.

Additionally, the virtual nature of the event often led to connectivity and Wi-Fi challenges. Most of our field sites across the HEARO region have very weak signals, so not all staff could attend. Furthermore, the time difference across our country offices prevented several others from joining the online event.

Furthermore, our agenda was packed with many staff members hoping to share their presentations. This left very little time for a question and answer session or a deep dive into the panel discussions.

Although this event may have worked better as a hybrid event, lack of funds prevented us from launching an in-person component. We also lacked a post-event monitoring tool that would have provided us with key insights on the level and impact of cross learning among the teams.

Nevertheless, our teams are committed to addressing these challenges and ensuring that Evidence Week 2023 runs as efficiently and successfully as possible.