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Title: Sustainability in Practice: The Food for Peace Experience



USAID's Office of Food for Peace (FFP) is the United State's \$4 billion a year food assistance program. FFP funds both short term emergency response and multi-year, multi-sectoral projects aimed at sustainably improving the food security of the most vulnerable populations all over the world. Evidence shows that while FFP investments increased food security of extremely poor and vulnerable households substantially, the results were not necessarily sustainable. Ten years ago FFP began to focus efforts on increasing the sustainability of its programming and this presentation discusses the evolution of FFP's thinking and practice on sustainability culminating with a groundbreaking experiment in Bangladesh. As part of this process FFP funded a multi-country research project, implemented by Tufts University, to identify the outcomes that are sustainable and the drivers of sustainability. The Tufts study examined four former FFP project areas to determine the characteristics that make it possible to sustain project activities and effects after the project shuts down. The study used a mixed methods approach in which three rounds of qualitative data collection were conducted one year apart (at the time of exit, and one and two years later) to understand the implementation of the exit process and the evolution of the sustainability dynamics over time. In addition, researchers conducted a quantitative survey between 2 and 3 years after exit. This survey replicated each project's endline evaluation survey to quantify which outcomes and impacts were maintained. FFP used the results of this research to revise its proposal guidelines to require applicants to utilize the findings of this research and explicitly propose a detailed sustainability strategy with an action plan. FFP's evaluations demonstrated that the projects incorporated market based approaches to enhance the sustainability of its outcomes. Recently FFP expanded this process to collaboratively design an innovative approach whereby projects in Bangladesh will develop capacity of farmer organizations and local service providers to continue to provide critical goods and services after the end of the project while transitioning away from direct project service provision to private sector provision during the life of the project.