MODELING NUTRITION SENSITIVE
SOCIAL PROTECTION INTERVENTION
(MNSSPI)
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SOCIAL PROTECTION INTERVENTION (MNSSPI)

Final Project Report
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I. PREFACE

Dear Development Partners,

It gives me great pleasure to present the Modeling Nutrition Sensitive Social Protection Interventions (MNSSPI) Project Achievements through this Final Report. We owe all the achievements outlined in this report to the trust our partners have accorded us; We are highly grateful to UNICEF and the EKN for the support given for the success of MNSSPI. We also thank LODA and NCDA and the Districts of MNSSPI intervention for their strong partnership since we have started in 2019 until 2021. I must attest that the three years of Modeling Nutrition Sensitive Social Protection Interventions were positive for World Relief in terms of achievement, behavior change of the most vulnerable households and also we have experienced three times project extension in more cells. We have successfully implemented the MNSSPI, in respect to four models, namely:

1. Extremely poor households in selected communities benefit from the integrated case management and referral system,

2. Sustainable access to nutrition-rich fruits and vegetables increased,

3. Increased financial access leading to improved household wellness and entrepreneurial activity,

4. Communities (especially EPW households with children under five) have increased knowledge of the availability and benefit of existing social services (in social protection, nutrition, health, WASH and ECD).

The MNSSPI Project resulted in significant improvement of nutrition and development of children with a special focus on the most vulnerable households through delivery of social protection, early childhood development, nutrition and WASH services and strengthened access to pre-primary education for children in four districts (Nyamagabe, Karongi, Buerera and Gatsibo). The program currently supports about 4,500 poorest households. The program also links with other GoR initiatives on nutrition like WASH, Community Based Nutrition program, fortified blended food, kitchen gardens, growth monitoring sessions and child nutrition grant targeting the poorest households including pregnant women and caretakers of children under two years. MNSSPI has been very important in integrating a system of service delivery at community level through appropriate and stronger coordination and a system of case management and referral, but also has indicated better ways to deliver integrated services for child nutrition and development to all relevant target groups with special attention to reaching the poorest households.

Finally, World Relief Rwanda will continue to work closely with UNICEF, LODA and NCDA and our key Rwandan partner ministries (MINALOC, MOH, MINAGRI, MIGEPROF) In 2022, we expect to grow this partner base further in order to reach more vulnerable people.

Moses Ndahiro

Country Director, World Relief Rwanda
II. ABOUT WORLD RELIEF

World Relief is a global Christian humanitarian organization that brings sustainable solutions to the world’s greatest problems – disasters, extreme poverty, violence, oppression, and mass displacement.

World Relief is dedicated to help bring fullness of life to children, their families and communities. The organization has worked in Rwanda since 1994. World Relief Rwanda (WRR), in partnership with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the Government of Rwanda Local Administrative entities Development Agency (LODA), implemented the Modelling Nutrition Sensitive Social Protection Interventions (MNSSPI) program in twelve cells within four different districts of Rwanda, namely Mucaca, Ruconsho and Rwugo cells of Burera in Northern Province, Ngara, Gashiha and Bugarura cells of Nyamagabe in Southern Province, Butiruka, Nyagisozi and Kintu cells of Gatsibo in Eastern Province and Rubazo, Tyazo and Rwungo cells of Karongi in Western province.
III. INTRODUCTION

From March 2019 to September 2021, World Relief Rwanda (WRR), alongside UNICEF and LODA, piloted nutrition sensitive social protection activities through the Modeling Nutrition Sensitive Social Protection Interventions (MNSSPI) project in 12 cells within 8 sectors from four districts of Rwanda, one in each province. The MNSSPI Program's focus has been testing and modeling of new strategies and approaches for delivery of integrated programs to the poorest households.

MNSSPI as a WRR project delivered high quality results at a competitive cost and was fully funded from UNICEF. WR's work in Rwanda has the ultimate aim to support the most vulnerable people and empower them to be self-reliant persons and demonstrate evidence of change in child nutrition and poverty reduction among these supported vulnerable households in the 12 cells of MNSSPI intervention. This important transformation reached the effective service delivery through case management and referral, access to nutrition-rich fruits and vegetables, financial access leading to entrepreneurial activities and improved household wellness through exposure to community sensitization on social protection. World Relief’s values of working with households with children under five, pregnant and lactating women, youth, gender equity, and the inclusion of disadvantaged and marginalized people, are closely aligned to the Government of Rwanda’s aspirations for its people.

Children under five years in Rwanda experience multiple dimensions of poverty, with more than half of children under five experiencing deprivations in nutrition, health, water, and/or sanitation. Malnutrition directly affects one in three people worldwide, making it one of the most prominent issues affecting global health\(^1\). Despite Rwanda's impressive socio-economic growth in the past several decades, malnutrition remains an issue of major concern. More than one in three Rwandan children under five are chronically malnourished.\(^2\) With malnutrition rates in the poorest households being almost double the rate in the richest households\(^1\), it is evident that families in extreme poverty require more specific support to address many dimensions of poverty they experience. Many of these families are eligible for Expanded Public Works (EPW) and VUP programming, but under-utilization and loss-to-follow-up threaten the long-term effectiveness of these services.

The MNSSPI program built from the Nurturing Care framework and UNICEF EKN Theory of Change as well as Government of Rwanda (GoR) nutrition, ECD and social protection program platform to link nutrition, health, ECD, WASH and social protection to address the bottlenecks of integrated nutrition-specific and sensitive programming at the community level. The project has built on the findings, lessons learned and evaluations of different components of the EKN and government-supported programs in order to improve their design and implementation approach. In addition, the program tested new components developed in collaboration with the GoR in support of integrated service delivery with the purpose of ensuring roll-out by GoR partners. The program's focus is on testing and modeling of new strategies and approaches to delivery of integrated programs to the poorest households in 12 cells in EKN/ePW Sectors of four Districts over three years almost, including:

**Piloting the integrated case management and referral system:** The pilot reached 720 out of 480 targeted households with the MINALOC/LODA draft case management

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\(^2\) Rwanda Demographic and Health Survey, 2019-2020
business model to test and document the approach intended to strengthen coordination, planning and overall governance at community level in support of service delivery to poorest households. This coverage increase was due to the additional four more cells in the second year sectors. Within these districts

**Sustainable access to nutrition-rich foods:** All households with children under five in the 12 pilot cells (approximately 4500 poorest household, inclusive of the 720 households receiving case management services), were targeted with nutrition-sensitive interventions being tested for scale-up (kitchen garden toolkit promotion, linkages with savings groups, small livestock for eligible households, and community messaging on nutrition, ECD, and WASH, through VUP social protection & community sensitization (SP&CS) manual testing).

**Increased financial access leading to entrepreneurial activity and improved household well-being:** Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLA) were implemented with all 5863 households, including 4500 most vulnerable households. These intended to empower families, including the most vulnerable, to save for big and/or unforeseen expenses and to gain access to credit for sustainable investments in agriculture or non-farm entrepreneurship to increase income and improve nutrition.

**Increased community understanding of existing social protection programs:** Key activities included testing the draft VUP SP&CS manual in support of further dissemination through government channels.

**Capacity building of existing community and government structures for sustainability:** A key component of the pilot, WR staff who worked at cell level coached, mentored and built the capacity of existing cell, village, and sector leaders and equipped them to implement and sustain this model.

Overall, WRR was able to achieve most targets within budget. WRR’s work had a positive impact on the lives of more than 5863 people. This report presents the highlights and success stories from case management, nutrition, agriculture and small livestock, VSLA and social protection throughout the implementation of MNSSPI.

During the project implementation period, the MNSSPI project was present in the four districts highlighted in green in figure 2 below:

![Figure 2: Intervention Districts for MNSSPI](image-url)
IV. KEY PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS

1. Case Management and Referral System

Program Output 1: Extremely poor households in selected communities benefit from the integrated case management and referral (CMR) system.

Table 1: Performance Indicators Actuals for Program Output 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance Indicator</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Life of Project Output</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of EPW households with a child under 5 years or a PLW reached with case management and referral services, ECD and nutrition services</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of case workers, village coordinators and SEDOs trained in case management and referral model</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of cell level District Plan to Eliminate Malnutrition District Plan to eliminate Malnutrition (DPEM) bodies integrating the interventions modelled and coordination meetings held</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The MNSSPI project worked with extremely poor households to increase utilization of existing services and link households to support groups. Within program output 1, achievements of the project included:

- Orientation meetings with local authorities at both District, Sector and Cell level for their involvement on the joint implementing of the MNSSPI Project in the four districts of Nyamagabe, Karongi, Burera and Gatsibo.

- Joint Selection with UNICEF and LODA of the targeted EPW households (60 HHs per cell) with a child under five years or a PLW to be reached with case management and referral services and to participate in a pathway of support group in year two.

- Conducted strategic surveys and research: baseline studies, midterm evaluation survey, joint field visits, operational research and endline survey.

- Development of case management and referral (CMR) training curriculum, manuals and monitoring and evaluation tools to be shared with GoR as a training package upon completion of the pilot.

- Commenced capacity building; 722 people from district and sector staff (SPOs), cell staff (SEDOs) and community leaders (CWs and VCs) in CMR knowledge, training of trainers in CMR model and monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL) system.

- Organized two national learning events (each including one event per district) to collect lessons learned per each MNSSPI model.
2. Sustainable Access to Nutrition

Program Output 2: Sustainable access to nutrition-rich fruits and vegetables increased

Table 2: Performance Indicators Actuals for Program Output 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance Indicator</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Life of Project Output</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| % targeted households having functional kitchen gardens through support of farmer promoters (village level), SEDOs and animal volunteers (cell level), sector and district level agronomist and veterinarian officers | Cohort 1: 41.2%  
Cohort 2: 2.7%  
Cohort 3: n/a | 80%        | Cohort 1: 91%  
Cohort 2: 90%  
Cohort 3: 93% |
| # of EPW households with children under five and pregnant or lactating women provided with small livestock or a livestock supporting package including adequate livestock shelter and relevant technical assistance | 214        | 480    | 720                    |
| % of children 6-23 months in targeted EPW households who consumed at least 5 of 8 food groups the previous day (Minimum Dietary Diversity) | Cohort 1: 32.6%  
Cohort 2: 50%  
Cohort 3: n/a | Cohort 1: 69%  
Cohort 2: 57.45%  
Cohort 3: 42.6% |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of children 6-23 months in targeted EPW households who consumed the Minimum Meal Frequency according to their age and breastfeeding status</th>
<th>Cohort</th>
<th>1:</th>
<th>Cohort</th>
<th>1:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>42.6%</td>
<td>48.3%</td>
<td>37.9%</td>
<td>48.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohort</td>
<td>2:</td>
<td>3:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td></td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of children 6-23 months in targeted EPW households who consumed a Minimum Acceptable Diet the previous day</td>
<td>Cohort</td>
<td>1:</td>
<td>Cohort</td>
<td>1:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19.6%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>34.5%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohort</td>
<td>2:</td>
<td>3:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td></td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of VSLA members trained as master trainers in community-level fruit and vegetable drying techniques</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of trained people reporting using the technology to produce dried fruit and vegetables for their own consumption</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>In process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of trained people reporting using the technology to produce dried fruit and vegetables for selling</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>In process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of trained people reporting providing drying services to other people in their communities (disaggregated by people doing this for free and people doing this for a small amount)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>In process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of trained people having trained others in drying technology</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>288</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of trained people having procured more drying materials to expand the drying facility in their community</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>In process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MNSSSPI emphasized linking social protection activities with nutrition to cover a wide spectrum of applications (e.g. health services, agricultural inputs), calling for action to transcend sector boundaries and integrate sectoral responses. Nutrition interventions can easily become a bridge between social protection, agriculture and health which are typically three different sectors. A key recommendation from this project in order to address various dimensions of poverty and malnutrition holistically, opportunities should be pursued to connect national social protection and nutrition and agricultural policies, strategies and action plans to positively reinforce multi-sectoral approaches.

Agriculture interventions provided opportunities for building strong social networks through farmers associations, cooperatives, producer groups, farmer field schools (FFS), etc. These groups strengthened informal social protection practices and played key role in improving the nutritional status of group members and their families, once sensitized and empowered. In future programming, such groups can be sites for nutrition education and social marketing (e.g. promotion of exclusive breastfeeding, good complementary feeding, consumption of biofortified foods, among others). These groups can also be leveraged to raise awareness of the early signs of malnutrition and
to obtain insight as to who is malnourished, where, as well as to foster a sense of responsibility at the community level, help capacity development and create motivation for developing social and accessing services.

Within program output 2 of the project, the following key outputs were achieved:

- Development of homestead gardening training manual for training of trainers and farmer promoters (field level trainers) and monitoring and evaluation tools to be shared with GoR as a training package upon completion of the pilot.

Capacity building; 5863 community members and local leaders were trained in FFS and kitchen garden and 243 (90 males and 153 females) were trained on vegetables and fruit drying (in coordination with VLSA groups under Program Output 3).

Farmer Field Schools / community demonstration and home gardens: 154 FFS / community demonstration plots and 7821 home gardens established, extending the reach of MNSSPI past the 60 target households per cell to effect community level change. Demonstration plots included four types of kitchen gardens, giving FFS members multiple options to try and determine what works best in their own homes given topography, space, access to water, etc.

- The program provided small livestock to 720 EPW households with children under five and pregnant or lactating women. In total, the program distributed 1,440 small livestock (pigs, goats and sheep) in the period of almost 3 years. Including new offspring, at the end of September 2021, there were 1,681 small livestock added to EPW households by MNSSPI during the length of the project.

*Figure 4: Productive and sustainable homestead gardens have improved nutrition status of MNSSPI targeted households.*
Figure 5. Small livestock contributed in the improvement of agricultural production thus improved nutrition.

Figure 6: MNSSPI Farmer Field School Plot in Gatsibo District.
3. Increased Financial Access

Program Output 3: Increased financial access leading to improved household wellness and entrepreneurial activity

Table 3: Performance Indicators Actuals for Program Output 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance Indicator</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Life of Project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of participating households (both primary target group and total target population) participating in VSLA, taken out loans and invested in businesses or improvements for their livelihood</td>
<td>Participation:</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>100% participation in all cells.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cohort 1: 49.8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cohort 2: 48%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loans taken:</td>
<td>Cohort 1: 60%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cohort 2: 63%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cohort 3: n/a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of adolescents (ages 15-19) participating in parent-child savings groups</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>1238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of VSLA members trained in financial literacy and business development by Business Development Advisors (BDAs)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td>7501</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MNSSPIs' VSLAs for both CAT1, Youth and Adults succeeded in increasing gaining some interests mainly towards the end of their saving cycle. Additionally, the program succeeded at using group savings to contribute towards improving nutrition outcomes. Saving groups are autonomous and self-managing. After the VSLA group creation, the group saved money for a period of four weeks, building the available loan fund, before members took the first loans. According to the VSLA methodology, loans may not exceed three times the personal savings amount for each borrowing member and must be repaid within a three-month period. Through weekly meetings, members gain understanding and confidence in managing their group fund. The group discusses money management and advice on income generating activities, strengthening both financial and social capital.

Observations throughout the project in Joint Monitoring visits showed strong improvements in confidence and self-efficacy among project beneficiaries, especially those target beneficiaries receiving the integrated MNSSPI program of CMR, FFS, VSLA and community sensitization and social protection. VSLA participants displayed in multiple ways during joint monitoring and exit meetings the transformation that occurred with participating in a VSLA: from saving small amounts of money to believing in their own ability to generate income, start businesses, and move their families up from their ubudehe category 1 status.
Within program output 3 of the project, the following outputs were achieved:

- Development of desk review and field research on savings groups, MNSSPI youth VSLA training manual, smart spending curriculum, training manual and monitoring and evaluation tools for MNSSPI savings groups, to be shared with GoR as a training package upon completion of the pilot.

- Capacity building; 298 VSLA groups were created in the 12 MNSSPI areas of intervention. Groups were formed for youth age 15-19 (in and out of school) and 20-24. Adults could self-select into groups exclusively for Ubudehe category 1 households or those with mixed ubudehe categories.

- In total 7,501 members (1,993 males and 4,434 females) including both youth and adults were trained on MNSSPI VSLA methodology, financial literacy and smart spending.

- Small business created: More 2,200 small businesses were newly created by the VSLA members.

4. Social Protection and Community Sensitization

Program Output 4: Communities (especially EPW households with children under five) have increased knowledge of the availability and benefit of existing social services (in social protection, nutrition, health, WASH and ECD).
Table 4: Performance Indicators Actuals for Program Output 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance Indicator</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Life of Project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of Caseworkers, farmer promoters and SEDOs and other proximity advisors trained on the SP&amp;CS manual</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of households, including EPW households, reached through either home-visits or community sensitization sessions on social protection, nutrition, health, WASH and ECD using the SP&amp;CS manual</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td>4500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of households who report that they have successfully used the messages to improve their access to social services</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>Cohort 1: 97.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cohort 2: 99.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cohort 3: 99.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In recent years, social protection has increasingly gained attention as a powerful tool in the battle against poverty, vulnerability, and inequality. It is one of the nutrition sensitive interventions that, if well targeted, can be an effective means to reach marginalized, resource-poor, and nutritionally vulnerable populations. The Rwanda Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Strategy identifies social protection as one of the nutrition-sensitive interventions key in achieving the objectives of the strategy.

MNSSPI piloted the Community Sensitization and Social Protection manual for LODA, training proximity advisors in the key topics to take to the community through both individual and communal settings. This manual encompasses a wide variety of topics and gives the proximity advisors adequate information to refer households receiving the information to the correct social services where they can get more information or access services.

Within program output 4, the following activities were achieved:

- Development of information, communication and education materials such as comic booklet and flyers, to be shared with GoR as a training package upon completion of the pilot.
- Capacity building: training of 245 local leaders and proximity advisors on delivery of draft SP&CS manual, social protection community mobilization.
- Feedback compiled from piloting of SP&CS manual shared with LODA and other key stakeholders for revisions and updates.
- Community mobilization: 8,715 people reached with messages on health, nutrition, smart spending, VUP services, hygiene and sanitation, ECD and saving.
5. Monitoring and Evaluation

Program Output 5: Program coordination and M&E.

Table 5: Performance Indicators Actuals for Program Output 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance Indicator</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Life of Output</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of trained staff and relevant decentralized government counterparts in data collection tools for routine monitoring</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of staff and relevant decentralized government counterparts participated in joint field visit at end of year one</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of staff and relevant decentralized government counterparts participated in joint field visit at end of year one</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of components of the MNSSPI program that have been costed</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the area of monitoring and evaluation the following were achieved:

- Development of MNSSPI monitoring and evaluation plan and logical framework.
- Capacity building: training of 245 local leaders and proximity advisors on data collection tools for routine monitoring of all programs
- Reporting: MNSSPI operations research report, baseline reports and tools, midterm report, end line report, costing report for all four key models.
- Learning: learning workshops reports, field visit reports.
V. LESSONS LEARNED AND KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Key lessons learned described below are taken from the experience the MNSSPI project experiences and serves the purpose to inform the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of similar program activities which can be roll out in other non-MNSSPI intervention areas in the future. The lessons learned are drawn from both project narrative reports as well as from baseline, midterm and endline survey reports, and the VSLA model testing report from the 12 cells of the four districts covered by MNSSPI. The aim of modeling is to identify ways how government systems can better deliver integrated services for child nutrition and development to all relevant target groups with special attention to reaching the poorest households. Overall, some of the key strengths and outcomes achieved so far of MNSSPI include:

• National scale-up of Case Management and Referral model by the Government of Rwanda.

• Scalability of MNSSPI VSLA and smart spending model in 14 districts of Rwanda by LODA and UNICEF.

Lesson learned 1. Adopting and integrating the case management and referral (CMR) approach in local government planning is important to increase utilization of services to the poorest households and strengthen the follow-up for the long-term effectiveness of these services.

The strengthened coordination mechanisms between local government staff and proximity advisors to serve the poorest households has made tremendous positive change among the most vulnerable household in all the MNSSPI areas of intervention, but also has improved the para-social workers daily work and performances.

The MNSSPI CMR is an important tool for empowering the para-social workers and other proximity advisors as it increases the awareness on their role and responsibilities. It also has increased their economic empowerment and cohesion through the creation of their own VSLA group at cell level and establishment of communication and data sharing through social media network (WhatsApp groups formed at cell level to facilitate CMR and follow-up). Information sharing has improved since the proximity advisors know about each other’s work and area of responsibility. This approach has also quickened the socioeconomic and mindset change for the members of the poorest households within the short period of time during the project implementation. CMR referral data and reports from Friends of Family (proximity advisors who address family conflict issues at household level) show a reduction in the number and severity of conflicts between families in the areas where CMR was piloted due to this synergy between para-social workers and friends of families and other proximity workforces.

The para-social workers are also playing an important role in the promotion of ECD services at village and also filling any gap that may arise due to the high turnover of the local government staff, which is critical for the sustainability of nutrition sensitive social protection activities at local and community level.
Challenges:

- High turnover of local Government staff.
- Low level of education for many of the proximity advisors.
- COVID-19 pandemic has affected the socio-economic tissue at both national, local and community levels.
- Limited number of smart phones among proximity advisors to facilitate social media platforms formation, use and reporting.

Recommendation:

- The Local government staff and proximity advisors are highly in need of on-going capacity building to enhance their ability to effectively carry out their responsibilities for community development.
- Due to the high turnover of local government staff, it is recommended to have an empowered delegated proximity advisor to coordinate and compile the reports of other proximity advisors’ activities and report to SEDO to prevent any gap that may occur to the continuity of nutrition sensitive social protection activities at community level.
- The handover process between the transitioning local leaders on nutrition sensitive social protection has been recommended to increase the ownership of the MNSSPI activities for the sustainability purpose.

Lesson learned 2. The implementation and adoption of smart spending among VSLAs members is a very important and an effective way to guide the VSLA members for how to spend VSLA funds (loans and share out) in wise ways that will bring about a positive benefit to the entire household.

During the course of MNSSPI implementation, WRR learned that a household may have knowledge and understanding of what changes they need to make, but, without the financial means to physically implement those changes, no tangible action may happen. WRR designed the Smart Spending manual as a better way to link health objectives from the VSLA activities. By linking the VSLA group and therefore the funds within the VSLA group to the overall objectives to MNSSPI, World Relief has seen more practical changes taking place in the lives of the VSLA members in the MNSSPI intervention areas.

Challenges:

- Smart Spending and VSLA structures are very limited for enforcing this important behavior change strategy.
- COVID-19 disrupted VSLAs and other project activities for certain periods of time, interrupting the savings cycle and limiting important project monitoring and follow up.
Recommendations:

- Scalability of Smart Spending countrywide was recommended due to a positive benefit to the entire household as witnessed by the big majority of VSLA members.
- WRR and community leaders suggest adding two or three more years of program activity in the MNSSPI zones for better sustainability of the new strategies.

Lesson learned 3. The startup and implementation of youth VSLA has been an appreciated innovation for the economic empowerment of youth.

The startup and implementation of youth VSLA were found performing better than expected, changing their graduation period from two years to one year as youth have claimed this as well. By starting to save money at young age, youth are able to put aside funds that may help them in the future, that may gradually add up to a significant amount. The MNSSPI saving program allowed young people to meet their needs and invest in the future. Likewise, for the adult saving group, a large number of youth saving groups have initiated income generating activities in all the 12 cells.

Improving financial literacy and access to loans may help youth save at earliest age, this allow them to meet their financial needs and invest in their futures. In all the 12 cells from the 4 districts of MNSSPI interventions where 50 youth saving groups been created and followed up, MNSSPI found that total savings and income had increased among youth who were equipped with VSLA methodology and financial education. One year and half after the intervention ended, youth who had been offered both education and group accounts still had higher savings levels and incomes.

Challenges:

- Limited project timeline for enforcing important behavior change strategies relating to youth VSLA programming.

Recommendations:

- Scalability of youth saving program countrywide due the many benefits this has to the entire household as witnessed by the majority of VSLA members.
- WRR recommends continuing youth savings group activities for three more years in the MNSSPI zones as accompanying measures for this important behavior change strategy.

Lesson learned 4. The small livestock needs assessment and joint procurement process conducted with the local leaders, proximity advisors has led to increased survival of animals.

In addition to the transparent procurement process on small livestock, the strong commitment and close collaboration with local leaders jointly with the para-social workers and other proximity advisors has contributed to survival of animals distributed in the 12 MNSSPI Areas of intervention compared to other similar programs also involved in the supply chain of small livestock at community level. Needs assessments completed before distribution allowed households to identify which animals they preferred and allowed animal volunteers to make sure households were adequately prepared. The regular follow up for the well-being of these small livestock was strengthened to track the progress of the animal multiplication and increase their safety and security.
Challenges:

• Some very few households are still selling illegally and prematurely their small livestock even though they signed a contract promising not to do so.

• Some household in Ubudehe category 1 were not able to avail the shades and sties for their animals.

Recommendations:

• Strengthening the linkage of the small livestock beneficiaries to the veterinary was very important in order to provide technical support to the owner(s) to recover the small livestock in need.

Lesson learned 5. The locally introduced and developed approach on fruit and vegetable drying technology was found to be very important to promote smallholder domestic fruit and processing to reduce post-harvest losses and increase household incomes by linking the processed fruits and vegetables to local markets for sale.

MNSSPI identified and trained 5 VSLA members per cell who have acquired the technology on a pilot basis. These people also acted as catalysts or TOTs for other VSLA Members to scale up the appropriate vegetable and fruit drying technology in the surrounding communities using locally available materials and technology.

Challenges:

• Lack of vegetables drying and juice processing materials among FFS members.

• Insufficient time to follow up and sustain this important cheap and local technology.

Recommendations:

• Three years more were suggested in the MNSSPI zones as accompanying measures for maturing this important technology.
VI. SUCCESS STORIES

Success Story 1

Mbonivugiro John, 70 years old, from Nyakibeyi Village, Bugarura Cell, Kibirizi Sector, Nyamagabe District.

“MNSSPI project has been very useful to us, it has helped us a lot because it came to support vulnerable families with children under the age of five, and I am happy that they selected my family and helped me to change the life of my grandson. They have grouped us in Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) which allows us to save money, take out loans that help us to get money to buy food and survive starvation period. Saving groups are very important because they also allow people to meet and discuss about their personal development.

“Moreover, we were given vegetables and fruit seeds to grow, and watering cans which help us to water our vegetables and fruit farms during the summer seasons. The project also gave us small livestock that allowed us to get fertilizers to fertilize our vegetables and fruit farms and they have taught us how to grow seeds and how to take care of them so that we can get vegetables at all seasons. We are really grateful for the support of this project.”

Success Story 2

Nyirandikubwimana Charlotte, 41 years married with 6 children. Burindwa Village, Gacunndura Cell, Rwerere Sector in Burera District.

“I was living in extreme poverty but World Relief gave me small livestock so that I could get manure to be used in my vegetable farming and growing other crops. I had no land for farming but after MNSSPI project grouped us into VSLAs, I applied for a loan and rented a farm and now I am grateful that I have food from my rented land. Small livestock that we have been given have contributed in good agricultural production, and after realizing the role of domestic animals, I immediately bought two other domestic animals, and all these have contributed in my development. It was difficult for me to get food even once a day for my family, but now I manage to get food at least twice a day.”

“This project trained us how to prepare a balanced diet, my child had malnutrition but now he is healthy. My children had dropped out of school, they were wandering around the community. The project encouraged me to get them back in schools and now they are all back in schools. We thank all those who contributed to the transformation of our lives. May God bless the Government of Rwanda, UNICEF and World Relief.”
“This project has been helpful both for the community and for local authorities because, before the project came we had various problems in the community. There was a problem of extreme poverty; there were so many people who did not have livestock to help them get organic fertilizers to increase agriculture production. The project has changed people’s attitudes about hygiene, and now when you go to the households of World Relief beneficiaries, you find it being different from other households in regard to hygiene.

“The MNSSPI project has enhanced the economic development of beneficiaries through training them and helping them to create Savings and Loans Associations. They didn’t even think that someone would save a small amount of money and lead them to development. Before the project implementation, we had a lot of malnourished children, some of them were even severely malnourished but this project taught people how to prepare a balanced diet, taught us how to make productive kitchen gardens and they provided livestock to beneficiaries for them to get fertilizers.

“World Relief has a particular way of providing help to the people through monitoring activities and lives of the beneficiaries on a daily basis. In addition, World Relief has changed peoples’ mindset first and provided practical knowledge to people to help them know how to thrive. I am grateful that they have been monitoring domestic animals but breed them so that they get organic manure to use in farming and therefore productive agriculture. We wish that this project would increase the time to work with this cell, we still have other poor families, we want you to help us lift them out of poverty.”

Nyirampore Jeanne, Social Development Officer of Gashiha Cell, in Kibirizi Sector, Nyamagabe District.

Success Story 3

Success Story 4

Mukamusoni Dancilla, Kigando Village, Kintu Cell, Kageyo Sector, Gatsibo District

“World Relief first came up with fruit and vegetable farming training courses through which they taught us that vegetables are anti-malnutrition, they ended up giving us seeds that to grow and now we are growing vegetables and we are feeding our children a balanced diet even during summer seasons. As of now, beyond having vegetables to feed my family, I expect to receive more than 30,000 RWF from vegetables production which I will invest in other small business especially in vegetables farming and small livestock breeding. This is the impact of trainings and a small loan that I took from VSLA.”
**Success Story 5**

Munyandinda Damascene, 42 years old, married with six children, Kageyo Village, Nyagisozi Cell, Kageyo Sector in Gatsibo District.

“When World Relief arrives in this village, they first of all encouraged us to do is to create saving groups. These saving groups helped me and my family to figure out how to spend money wisely, borrow money and invest in the business. Through investing money I got from the saving group, I bought two cows, four goats and one pig and now I am renovating my house. I now have an estimated 1.5 million RWF in assets here at home, these are achievements that I got in less than two years. I have now applied for the new Ubudehe category because my family’s life has been improved, I don’t deserve category one now.

“World Relief helped us change our diet, we used to devalue vegetables but World Relief taught us its role and how to grow fruit and vegetables in modern kitchen gardens. I used to have conflicts with my wife but friends of family encouraged us to get out of the conflict and now conflict issues have been resolved.”

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**Success Story 6**

Ngayaboshya Steven, Rwungo Village, Rwungo Cell, rugabano Sector, Karongi District, 30 years old, married with 4 children.

“When World Relief encouraged us to go in saving groups, after forming groups; I immediately borrowed money and started farming beans and maize. I harvested enough harvest for my family to get sufficient food. Due to the use of organic manure provided by small livestock we have been given, I harvested 40 kgs on the same area which I used to harvest 8 kgs. We planted vegetables for family consumption and market.

“Saving groups helped us keep resources and save money. Through these groups, one can be able to get equipment needed at home. The project gave us training on proper vegetables growing, we used to cultivate them inappropriately but now we grow good vegetables using organic manure on well-made kitchen gardens which last longer than usual. Vegetables farming have brought a change in my child’s development because it has taken him out of malnutrition.”
"Thanks to World Relief for helping us improve the lives of the poorest families, we have been given various trainings, World Relief helped us to form Village Savings and Loan Associations, and the community members have been provided with small livestock that improved their aiming productivity. Apparently, World Relief support has been productive because this cell was the first to have a large number of malnourished children in the whole sector, but now the problem has been solved because people have been encouraged to grow fruit and vegetables to feed their children. Livestock that have been given to them have made it possible to fertilize and cultivate different crops which are being used in preparation of a balanced diet as World Relief has taught them. Moreover, these saving groups helped them earn money to buy food they don’t have in their homes.

"We are pleased that there are now 24 Village Savings and Loan Associations created in support of World Relief in this cell. These associations help vulnerable families because they borrow money and invest in small projects for their development and for their children’s school fees. Some families which were very poor have now been empowered. As of now, we count three families who have applied for upgrading their Ubudehe Category.

"Through different interventions of this project, issues of family conflicts have been solved through proximity advisors, we are now receiving news of peaceful families which used to live in conflicts, that’s a huge impact of this project. We have appreciated the World Relief’s approach of daily follow up on beneficiaries, which resulted in a quick and sustainable families' development. We wish that this project would be extended over on other period of time and help more beneficiaries because we still have a lot of poor households.'

Kanani David, Executive Secretary of Tyazo Cell located in Rugabano Sector.