

InnoFoodAfrica Meeting Report in Sidama Region, Hawassa

Behavioral Change Communication Materials of Work Package Two

November 27-29, 2023

Introduction

The InnoFoodAfrica project dissemination meeting, a collaborative effort between InnoFoodAfrica, local partners from Hawassa University affiliated with Addis Ababa University, Consortium of Christian Relief Development Association (CCRDA) and the Resurrection & Life Development Organization (RLDO), undertook a vital initiative to conduct a comprehensive three-day dissemination meeting focused on behavioral change communication (BCC) products. This event was part of the broader efforts within Work Package Two (WP2) of the InnoFoodAfrica project and took place from November 27 to November 29, 2023. The primary objective of this gathering was to disseminate BCC materials and relevant recommendations generated from a consumption survey conducted in four African countries and eight cities out of which Hawassa city of the Sidama region is one of them.

The core aim of this dissemination meeting was to engage and collaborate with key stakeholders within the Sidama region. These stakeholders encompassed a diverse range of individuals and organizations committed to addressing nutrition-related challenges. The following section provides a detailed account of the notable highlights and key takeaways from the series of meetings conducted during this three-day event.

Attendees:

- Dr. Truphena Mukuna and Alemu Tesfaye from OSSREA
- Dr. Anchamo from Hawassa University
- Biniam from Resurrection & Life Development Organization (RLDO)

Meeting Highlights:

During the first meeting held with the Bureau of Agriculture at the Disaster Risk Management Commission, the InnoFoodAfrica team received a warm welcome from several key personnel, including the disaster manager, the nutrition focal person, and the head of supplementary programs within the commission. The discussions that unfolded during this session brought to light critical issues related to maternal and child nutrition.



One of the salient points of discussion centered on the observation that mothers within the region were not consistently adhering to recommended breastfeeding practices. Additionally, it was highlighted that mothers often resorted to the use of herbal remedies, referred to as "Hamesa," for child care, which could have potential implications for the child's health.

Recognizing the importance of disseminating the Behavioral Change Communication (BCC) materials effectively, an agreement was reached to distribute these materials to the health bureau. This collaborative approach was underpinned by the acknowledgment of the essential role played by the health bureau's nutrition, education, and counseling office.

Furthermore, the meeting underscored the necessity of inter-sectoral collaboration within the government to address the multifaceted issues related to nutrition. The introduction of BCC materials by InnoFoodAfrica was seen as a valuable resource capable of catalyzing positive changes in community attitudes and practices towards nutrition.

To operationalize these efforts, plans were laid out to initiate work at pilot sites, which would serve as practical platforms for disseminating and implementing the BCC materials. In addition, a commitment was made to collaborate closely with health extension workers, who play a crucial role in community health and education. This collaborative approach aimed to foster a comprehensive and holistic approach to improving maternal and child nutrition within the region.

The second meeting, was conducted at the Bureau of Health, specifically at the Seqota Declaration office. The Seqota Declaration is a pivotal initiative in Ethiopia aimed at combating undernutrition and ensuring food security, especially among vulnerable populations such as women and children. This declaration was launched as a national commitment to tackle the persistent challenges of malnutrition and stunting. Named after the Seqota district in the Amhara region, where it was first implemented, the Seqota Declaration focuses on a multi-sectoral approach to address the root causes of malnutrition, emphasizing improved access to nutritious food, safe drinking water, healthcare services, and sanitation facilities. The program's overarching goal is to eradicate stunting among Ethiopian children by 2030. By fostering inter-

ministerial cooperation and aligning resources across various sectors, the Seqota Declaration seeks to significantly improve the nutritional status of Ethiopian communities, ultimately contributing to healthier and more prosperous lives for its citizens.



The discussions at the Seqota Declaration Coordination office revolved around the alignment of the InnoFoodAfrica (IFA) project's work with the ongoing programs and initiatives of the Seqota Declaration office. This discussion highlighted the critical aspect of synergy between IFA's objectives and the existing endeavors within the region.

The conversation extended to acknowledge the challenges that often accompany the implementation of recommendations aimed at improving nutrition. One prominent challenge was the task of motivating various government sectors to prioritize and take nutrition-related matters seriously. This underscored the broader systemic complexities associated with promoting nutrition initiatives.

The availability and affordability of recommended food items emerged as another significant challenge. Ensuring that these nutritious food items were accessible to the community was recognized as a fundamental prerequisite for any meaningful nutrition intervention.

In a positive turn of events, the Seqota Declaration program expressed its commitment to incorporate the BCC recommendations into its ongoing activities and programs. This alignment represented a promising step towards the integration of IFA's insights and findings into existing structures.

To ensure the widespread dissemination of BCC materials, plans were formulated to leverage various networks and channels. This strategic approach aimed to reach a broader audience and maximize the impact of the BCC recommendations within the region. Overall, this meeting was instrumental in forging collaborative pathways between IFA and key stakeholders in the Seqota Declaration program, with the shared goal of enhancing maternal and child nutrition.

The third meeting of the dissemination initiative brought the InnoFoodAfrica (IFA) team together with the Center for Concern, a notable non-governmental organization (NGO)



headquartered in Hawassa. The organization's overarching objective, as articulated during the meeting, is to contribute to the creation of a society that is free from poverty and injustice. This noble mission encompasses a strong focus on improving nutrition for both mothers and children, aligning closely with IFA's own mission.

One striking aspect of the organization's work is its commitment to collaborating with various development partners. These partnerships serve as a conduit for implementing initiatives aimed at enhancing nutrition in the region. The meeting revealed the organization's multi-pronged approach to addressing nutrition challenges, which includes the training of street-based mothers on providing nutritious food for their children despite limited resources. Additionally, they play an active role in school feeding programs, providing nutritious biscuits in collaboration with organizations like Save the Children.

A noteworthy strategy discussed during the meeting was the intention to engage women education ambassadors in the dissemination of BCC materials. These ambassadors are key figures within the community, and their involvement is expected to play a pivotal role in reaching and educating local mothers and families about nutrition-related matters.

Furthermore, the potential for collaboration with the Seqota Declaration office, an entity that had already expressed its commitment to incorporating BCC recommendations, was explored during this meeting. This collaboration holds the promise of leveraging combined efforts to maximize the impact of nutrition initiatives in the region.

Overall, the meeting with the Center for Concern underscored the importance of partnerships and community-based engagement in the pursuit of improved nutrition outcomes for mothers and children. It demonstrated the shared commitment of multiple stakeholders to work together to address the multifaceted challenges associated with nutrition in the region.



The fourth meeting during the dissemination initiative brought the InnoFoodAfrica (IFA) team to the World Vision Ethiopia office located in Hawassa. This meeting provided insights into the extensive and multifaceted work carried out by World Vision Ethiopia, an organization that actively engages with a range of critical issues including child protection, Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH), and nutrition.

One of the standout outcomes of the meeting was the commitment to share the Behavioral Change Communication (BCC) materials developed by IFA through World Vision Ethiopia's existing programs, channels, and networks. This approach highlights the organization's readiness to integrate BCC recommendations into their ongoing initiatives, effectively reaching vulnerable communities with nutrition-related information and guidance.

Furthermore, the discussion touched upon the importance of collaboration with civil society coalitions in order to scale up efforts aimed at improving nutrition. This emphasizes World Vision Ethiopia's recognition of the value of collective action and the need to engage with like-minded organizations and initiatives to tackle the persistent challenges related to nutrition in the region.

In sum, the fourth meeting with World Vision Ethiopia in Hawassa exemplified the organization's comprehensive approach to addressing critical issues affecting communities, including nutrition. It underscored their willingness to utilize their



extensive network and resources to disseminate BCC materials and promote nutrition-sensitive initiatives, emphasizing the shared commitment to making a positive impact on the lives of mothers and children in the region.

The fifth meeting held with the Resurrection & Life Development Organization (RLDO) provided valuable insights into the organization's role and its commitment to promoting nutrition-

related initiatives in the region. RLDO was highlighted as a prominent member of the Action Network, a coalition comprising 15 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) actively engaged in addressing various social issues, including nutrition.

During the meeting, the discussion revolved around the strategic dissemination of Behavioral Change Communication (BCC) recommendations developed under the InnoFoodAfrica (IFA) project. RLDO expressed its willingness to leverage its membership in the Action Network to ensure that BCC materials and recommendations reached a wider audience. This collaborative approach emphasizes the organization's intent to share valuable nutrition-related information with communities through an established network of NGOs, thereby amplifying the impact of IFA's efforts.

Moreover, RLDO's participation in the steering committee, which monitors NGO activities in the Sidama region, was highlighted as another avenue through which BCC materials and recommendations could be effectively disseminated. This demonstrates RLDO's commitment to utilizing various platforms and channels to ensure that the BCC materials reach those who can benefit from them the most.

In summary, the fifth meeting with RLDO showcased the organization's active role as a member of the Action Network and its dedication to advancing nutrition-related initiatives. It emphasized the collaborative spirit and collective efforts among NGOs to facilitate the dissemination of BCC recommendations and contribute to improving the well-being of communities in the Sidama

The sixth meeting with the Sidama Region Finance Bureau provided insights into the role of this government body in supporting the alignment of programs with regional

priorities. During the discussion, it became evident that the finance bureau plays a crucial role in facilitating the activities of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) operating in the region. This support includes helping CSOs align their programs with the government's identified priorities, which notably include initiatives aimed at improving nutrition, especially for mothers and children.



An important highlight of the meeting was the acknowledgment that each of the region's bureaus has allocated budgets dedicated to enhancing nutrition. This financial commitment reflects the seriousness with which nutrition-related issues are viewed at the regional level. It was recognized that, in order to effectively address malnutrition and promote better nutrition practices, CSOs need to play an active role and incorporate nutrition-focused initiatives into their programs.

The meeting also touched upon the evaluation criteria for CSOs, emphasizing that one of the key criteria is their contribution to addressing malnutrition. This criterion reinforces the region's commitment to improving nutrition outcomes and underscores the importance of CSOs in achieving this goal.

In conclusion, the sixth meeting underscored the finance bureau's support for CSOs aligning their programs with regional priorities, with a specific emphasis on improving nutrition. The allocation of budgets and the inclusion of nutrition-related criteria in CSO evaluations demonstrate the region's dedication to advancing the nutrition agenda and enhancing the well-being of its population.

The seventh meeting with the Resource Center of Sustainable Change (RCSC) shed light on the organization's extensive reach and its commitment to addressing nutrition-related challenges, particularly in the Southeastern region. RCSC, which operates throughout the country, emphasized its focus on the Southeastern region, where it is deeply engaged in addressing various development issues, including those related to nutrition.

One significant outcome of this meeting was RCSC's expressed interest in supporting the dissemination of Behavioral Change Communication (BCC) materials through their extensive networks. This commitment indicates that RCSC recognizes the value of the BCC materials developed as part of the InnoFoodAfrica project and their potential to drive positive changes in nutrition practices.

Moreover, RCSC articulated its intention to connect the BCC materials with broader food security initiatives. This approach highlights their dedication to addressing not only immediate nutritional needs but also the underlying factors contributing to food security challenges in the region. By integrating nutrition issues into their programs and initiatives, RCSC aims to create a more holistic approach to addressing nutrition and food security challenges.

In conclusion, the seventh meeting with RCSC showcased the organization's nationwide presence, with a specific focus on the Southeastern region. Their commitment to supporting the dissemination of BCC materials, their emphasis on relating nutrition to food security, and their plans to develop new programs to address nutrition issues underscore the critical role of organizations like RCSC in advancing nutrition and food security agendas in Ethiopia.

The eighth meeting with the Shiny Day Social Services Association highlighted the diverse range of sectors in which the organization is actively engaged, reflecting their commitment to addressing various social issues in the community. One notable aspect discussed during the meeting was the innovative approach to urban agriculture adopted by the organization. Shiny Day Social Services Association works to empower communities, particularly in urban settings, to utilize small plots of land effectively for agriculture. They employ affordable local technologies to support urban agriculture, enabling individuals and families to grow vegetables and fruits for local consumption.

In addition to their urban agriculture initiatives, Shiny Day Social Services Association also focuses on student engagement, offering training on how young people can make the most of small backyard spaces for growing vegetables and fruits. This approach not only promotes food security at the household level but also instills valuable skills and knowledge in the younger generation, contributing to sustainable and healthier communities.

One significant outcome of this meeting was the organization's commitment to incorporating Behavioral Change Communication (BCC) materials into their programs,

with a particular emphasis on urban agriculture and student initiatives. By integrating BCC recommendations into their existing efforts, Shiny Day Social Services Association aims to further enhance the impact of their work and promote healthier nutrition practices among urban residents and students.

In conclusion, the eighth meeting with Shiny Day Social Services Association showcased their multi-sectoral approach to addressing community needs, with a specific focus on innovative urban agriculture and youth engagement. Their willingness to integrate BCC materials into their programs demonstrates their dedication to improving nutrition practices and food security within urban communities, ultimately contributing to healthier and more resilient societies.

These meetings were instrumental in introducing BCC materials to key stakeholders and fostering collaboration for the successful dissemination of nutrition-related recommendations in the Sidama region. The commitment of various organizations and government entities to improving nutrition outcomes is a positive step toward achieving the goals of the InnoFoodAfrica project.