

EMPOWERING WOMEN AND IMPROVING NUTRITION THROUGH LIVESTOCK TRANSFER

Lessons from USAID | Yaajeende (Senegal) and Other Projects

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BACKGROUND

Development activities hypothesize that providing small livestock to vulnerable households along with agriculture, economic growth and nutrition interventions can improve women's empowerment and household nutrition. This is also important for child nutrition since evidence suggests that **women are key mediators** in the pathways between resource allocation and the nutrition of young children. To help program designers create **more effective Livestock Transfer Interventions**, USAID Advancing Nutrition reviewed a mixed methods study on the USAID | Yaajeende Agriculture and Nutrition Development Program for Food Security in Senegal project conducted by Michigan State University¹ (MSU) and explored implications of the study's recommendations by comparing them to other activities with small livestock components.

¹ Valerie Kelly, Aysatou Ndiaye, Nathalie Me-Nsopec. 2016. *The Contributions and Challenges of USAID | Yaajeende's Passing on the Gift (POG)* © Component. Washington, DC: The National Cooperative Business Association (NCBA CLUSA).



RECOMMENDATIONS

Small livestock transfer activities are usually one of many activities within complex, integrated programs and their success requires careful planning for accessible, reliable extension and advisory services tailored to the local context. **Programs can benefit from links with behavior change or household decision-making initiatives to help participants establish strategies for diversifying family diets through consumption as well as income.**



The USAID | Yaajeende Agriculture and Nutrition Development Program for Food Security in Senegal sought to strengthen household resilience by

- Sustainably increasing women's empowerment
- Diversifying livelihoods
- Improving nutrition through sustained livestock production and animal source food (ASF) consumption.

Highlights from USAID | Yaajeende Livestock Intervention in Senegal:

- Overall 81% of participants perceived tangible benefits.
- 39–66% of participants directly consumed animal source foods as a result of the program.
- Of income generated through the livestock intervention
 - 61% went toward direct food purchase and other household needs
 - 30% went toward expanding household livestock enterprises.

Key Recommendations from USAID | Yaajeende Livestock Study:

- Involve successful women beneficiaries as mentors to further develop confidence of women and facilitate knowledge transfer while reducing pressure on project staff as the project expands.
- Promote group action to improve access to and reduce costs of animal maintenance such as regular veterinary visits, community herders and improved storage of crop residue for fodder.

METHODS

We compared recommendations through a desk review of evaluations and quarterly, annual and final reports from the following 8 USAID activities from the last 5 years:

- Empowering the New Generation to Improve Nutrition and Economic opportunities (ENGINE)
- Livestock Expansion and Stability Project (LIVES)
- Livestock for Resilience (L4R)
- Resilience in the Sahel Enhanced (REGIS – ER)
- Resiliency in Northern Ghana (RING)
- Resiliency through Wealth, Agriculture, and Nutrition in Karamoja (RWANU)
- Smallholders in Livestock Value Chain (SLVC)
- USAID | Yaajeende

FINDINGS

The experience of the livestock transfer activity on the USAID | Yaajeende project as described in the MSU study showed that the activity spurred modest improvement in income and access to ASFs, promoted more economic independence among women and improved family diet. In comparing USAID | Yaajeende learnings with the results of other projects, we identified four key lessons learned:

- 1. Women's empowerment was significant:** Strategies to empower women by creating opportunities to manage income-generating activities were successful. For instance, in a LIVES project evaluation, 71% of respondents said the situation for women in participating communities had improved.
- 2. Clearer pathways to nutrition are needed:** Although better nutrition was not an explicit goal for most activities, multiple documents mention it as a possible outcome. Impact pathways to improved nutrition such as increased consumption of ASFs produced by the household or increased income to purchase higher quality foods must be clearly defined and programmed if improved nutrition is to be a project outcome.
- 3. Consistent, affordable access to quality animal health services is critical:** Projects often supported the training of community animal health workers (CAHWs), but failed to prepare adequately for serious animal health issues (which resulted in animal deaths) or ensure linkages to specialized service providers (either public extension or private practitioners).



4. Stronger intervention design would enhance results:

- a. Build in clear intended outcomes for the livestock component** of complex food security or resilience programs to enable more tailored strategies (choice of animals, labor factors and gender roles).
- b. Build in education for livestock recipients** that includes professional follow-up to support knowledge transfer between community animal health workers and livestock owners and sustain demand for livestock services.
- c. Consider the benefits and drawbacks of different targeting strategies** such as vulnerability, equity and/or capacity as well as groups vs. individuals. Involve communities to avoid unintended social consequences.
- d. Before designing, learn about local market prices, breed preferences and seasonality.** These factors affect household decisions about when to consume or sell animal products and when and how to breed animals and purchase animal health services and feed.
- e. Continue support and oversight for as long as possible.** Monitoring the uptake of practices, support structures and problem-solving through several reproductive cycles creates a greater chance for sustainable impacts.