SEQUENCING, LAYERING, AND INTEGRATING HUMANITARIAN AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMING

Recommendations for USAID/DRC

Feed the Future Market Systems and Partnerships Activity

January 2024
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This document was made possible through support provided by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) under the terms of Contract No. 7200AA20C00054, the Feed the Future Market Systems and Partnerships Activity managed by DAI. The opinions expressed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

This document was prepared by Kim Beevers for Wellspring Development Capital and DAI.

Recommended citation


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<td>BHA</td>
<td>Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance</td>
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide practical information and learning that the United States Agency for International Development Democratic Republic of Congo Mission (USAID/DRC) can use to develop sequenced, layered, and integrated (SLI) humanitarian and economic growth programming in the DRC. Reflecting USAID/DRC Economic Growth (EG) Team priorities, the report focuses on opportunities to integrate potential Feed the Future (Feed the Future) programming with recently awarded USAID/Bureau of Humanitarian Affairs (BHA) Resilience Food Security Activities (RFSAs) in the provinces of Kasai and Kasai Central.

The report includes an evidence review of SLI practice, an analysis of RFSA programming, and recommendations for future Feed the Future program and technical design and management. The report is divided into two parts:


Sequencing, the intentional phasing of interventions, layering, the strategic coordination of overlapping interventions, and integration, the intentional sequencing and layering of interventions is a core operational principle within USAID Resilience and Humanitarian-Development Coherence policies. SLI is also prioritized as part of the USAID/DRC Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) 2020-2025. The term SLI is used to describe a wide breadth of programming, ranging from portfolio investments within a specific geographic area to closely coordinated humanitarian and development interventions within a single program. In practice, several commonalities mark SLI programming, including shared analysis, a common agenda, and multisectoral approaches that prioritize sustainability. While it is difficult to draw transferrable technical lessons from SLI programming examples, several design and management recommendations emerge as key determinants of SLI programming success that are relevant to programming in the DRC. These include the importance of teams and team culture, the presence of a collaborative framework that guides implementation, and the availability of resources to support coordination efforts.

Part 2: Opportunities for Integrating Economic Growth Programming with RFSA Activity in Kasai and Kasai Central

Part 2 is further divided into two sections. The first section covers considerations for designing and managing integrated RFSA and Feed the Future programming. Key considerations include:

1) Establish a common agenda and results framework
2) Establish and reinforce regular coordination and collaboration between IPs
3) Proactively assemble and develop IP teams
4) Clarify allowable expenditures
5) Influence collective action beyond USAID funding.
The second section also covers recommended technical intervention options. Recommendations are shaped by three primary factors: the technical scope and planned activities of the three RFSAs; Kasai, Kasai Central, and DRC contexts; and market-based programming best practice. Recommended technical intervention options are organized into five categories: finance, agricultural input markets, agricultural output markets, off-farm economic opportunities, and the business enabling environment. Each category is evaluated for the opportunity to integrate with the RFSAs, likelihood of achieving scaled impact, and feasibility.

Finally, integrated programming is a laudable goal, but not an easy one to accomplish. The remote, fragile, and conflict-affected context of Kasai and Kasai Central, along with the complex implementation structure involving multiple RFSA and Feed the Future IPs managed by two USAID/DRC teams, presents significant hurdles. This report aspires to establish a shared understanding of the leadership, resources, time, and expertise that will enable successful collaboration and well-integrated programming.
Introduction

This report contributes to the Market Systems and Partnerships (MSP) Activity to support the USAID/DRC Mission to strengthen market linkages through coordinated investment, programming, and activities.

Purpose. The purpose of this report is to provide practical information and learning that USAID/DRC can use to develop sequenced, layered, and integrated humanitarian and economic growth programming in the DRC.

Report Structure. This report is presented in two parts. Part 1 includes an evidence review of sequenced, layered, and integrated practice, including SLI programming origins and examples, success factors, and transferable lessons for the DRC. Part 2 presents ten recommendations for the design of future USAID economic growth programming that will sequence, layer, and integrate with USAID/BHA RFSAs in Kasai and Kasai Central. Recommendations include design and management considerations as well as technical intervention options.

About USAID/BHA RFSAs in the Kasai and Kasai Central

In 2023, USAID/BHA funded three Resilience Food Security Activity (RFSA) cooperative awards in Kasai and Kasai Central. The RFSA, which comprise consortiums led by Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), Catholic Relief Services (CRS), and Mercy Corps, will implement for an anticipated five years. With the goal of sustainably improving the food, nutrition, and economic security of vulnerable households, the RFSA will implement two primary strategic purposes. The first strategic purpose focuses on strengthened livelihoods and increased incomes through improved usage of credit and capital, increased profitable, diverse enterprises and income generating activities, and increased sustainable agricultural production. The second strategic purpose focuses on improved utilization of quality food among vulnerable people, including improved maternal, infant, and young child nutrition behaviors and improved water, sanitation, and hygiene behaviors. The RFSA also include the cross-cutting themes of risk reduction and resilience, governance, gender, youth, social inclusion, and patterns of power, and climate adaptation. The RFSA launched in the fourth quarter of 2023. The first year of RFSA implementation will be characterized as the “refinement period” during which additional assessments are conducted, results frameworks are finalized, and RFSA and USAID participate in planned co-design activities.

About Potential USAID/DRC EG Programming in Kasai

The USAID/DRC EG team plans an upcoming Feed the Future Activity in Kasai. The geographic focus on Kasai has been updated from Kasai and Kasai Central, which guided the research, findings, and validation presented in this report. The EG team intends to design the program to strategically integrate with the RFSA. This report was commissioned to inform the design of the activity. The greatest opportunity to integrate programming with RFSA programming relates to the RFSA’s first strategic purpose which focuses on strengthened livelihoods and increased incomes, where significant complementarity is expected. Recommended technical intervention options focus on activities related to the first strategic purpose for this reason. However, recommended design and management considerations apply to programming at large.
Methodology

The information, analysis, and recommendations presented in this report are guided by a robust desk review and discussions with key informants.

Desk review. A comprehensive search of the literature was conducted to identify relevant policies, guides, studies, projects, and assessments drawn from diverse disciplines. Overall, 51 references were systematically reviewed, including:

- USAID/BHA RFSA materials, including the USAID/BHA RFSA RFA and proposed RFSA IP technical descriptions.
- USAID policies, guides, and strategies, including for topics such as USAID/DRC strategy, resilience, and Humanitarian-Development Coherence.
- Evaluations and learning notes regarding SLI and related programming funded by USAID and other donors.
- Industry publications, including learning documents and guides for topics such as SLI, humanitarian-development programming, resilience, Markets in Crisis, market-based programming, collective impact, cash and voucher assistance, and social capital.
- Market information related to specific sectors, issue areas, and technical approaches in the DRC, such as finance, seeds and agro-inputs, agriculture, business environment reform, and land tenure and rights.
- Market information related to Kasai and Kasai Central.

Literature was gathered from publicly available sources as well as consultations with key informants, including RFSA IPs and practitioners with experience in the DRC. References are noted in Annex 2. Direct quotes and specific examples are also footnoted within the body of the report.

Key informants. To complement the desk review, the consultant also engaged 27 key informants drawn from diverse stakeholder groups, including USAID/DRC EG and BHA teams, USAID RFSA IPs, market-based programming and resilience funders and expert advisors and practitioners, including those with DRC expertise. Informants were carefully selected for their relevant expertise and varied perspectives. Workshops with the EG team provided crucial context on strategic and programming priorities. In-depth interviews with USAID/DRC BHA team members and RFSA IPs provided context on BHA and RFSA programming priorities and limitations, planned activities and budgets, and opportunities for integration. Further, in depth interviews with leading market-based programming and resilience funders, advisors, and practitioners, explored best practices, relevant programming, critical challenges and opportunities, and important contextual considerations. Finally, workshops with USAID/DRC EG and BHA teams, along with a USAID resilience adviser, served to refine and validate recommendations. Key informants are noted in Annex 3.

Approach to technical intervention recommendations. Recommended technical interventions presented in Part 2 of this report are shaped by three primary factors: the technical scope and planned activities of the three RFSAs; the Kasai, Kasai Central, and DRC contexts; as well as market-based
programming best practice. These were informed by the desk review and discussions with key informants. The three factors that shape recommendations as well as the process for refining and validating recommendations are discussed in detail at the start of the Recommendations: Technical Intervention Options sub-section on page 19.

**Limitations.** While the information, analysis, and recommendations presented in this report offer useful guidance, further assessments are needed to refine programming in Kasai and Kasai Central. There is limited market information available for Kasai and Kasai Central as well as limited practitioner experience from which to draw on in the region, especially with respect to long-term development and private sector engagement. Given the marked differences between Kasai and Kasai Central and other regions within the DRC, though relevant, reflections from these other regions are not fully transferable.
PART 1

EVIDENCE REVIEW OF SEQUENCED, LAYERED, AND INTEGRATED PRACTICE

Part 1: Evidence Review of Sequenced, Layered, and Integrated Practice introduces sequencing, layering, and integrating (SLI), including commonly used definition, origins and relevance, types of SLI programming, and commonalities of SLI practice. Part 1 also outlines determinants of SLI programming success, with transferable lessons for the DRC. In addition, Part 1 includes a case example of SLI in practice drawn from USAID/DRC’s portfolio in Eastern Congo. This evidence review serves as a basis for programming recommendations presented in Part 2.

The information and findings presented in this section are based on a desk review of relevant programming, policies, and guides, as well as discussions with key informants, including leading resilience and market-based programming funders and practitioners.

Introduction to Sequencing, Layering, and Integrating

Definition

According to the 2022 USAID Resilience Policy, SLI is defined as:

- **Sequencing** is the intentional organization and phasing of interventions and the way they are delivered, to coordinate the order in which activities are implemented and actors are engaged to maximize outcomes and sustainability.
- **Layering** is the strategic coordination of geographically overlapping interventions across the different sectors and stakeholders that complement each other to achieve resilience objectives. Interventions can be designed to layer over and build on the completed interventions in the recent past or ongoing interventions within or across sectors, stakeholders, and different pillars of assistance.
- **Integrating** is the intentional layering and sequencing of multisectoral interventions and the coordination of actors to address needs and prevent or reduce the drivers and effects of shocks and stresses that undermine long-term well-being.”

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1 2022 Resilience Policy Revision, USAID.
**Origins & Relevance**

The idea of connecting humanitarian and development assistance through complementary objectives, strategies, programming, and funding at multiple levels has been around for decades. However, the concept of “SLI” emerged as an operational consideration as part of USAID’s efforts to strengthen resilience. Building resilience to recurrent crises arose as a cross-bureau priority in 2011-2012, following large-scale humanitarian emergencies in the Horn of Africa and Sahel. These emergencies prompted USAID and others to recognize that continuing to treat recurring crises and chronic vulnerability as acute humanitarian emergencies was untenable. In the Building Resilience to Recurrent Crises: USAID Policy and Program Guidance (2012), USAID laid out its goal of building resilience across programming and acknowledged that to do so, the agency would also need to change the way it operationalizes resources to sequence, layer, and integrate humanitarian and development assistance. SLI is also relevant to Humanitarian-Development Coherence (HDC). Within USAID, HDC is the complementary collaboration of humanitarian and development programming to maximize collective impact and reduce the need for humanitarian assistance over time. HDC is closely linked with resilience thinking. HDC describes SLI as an operational principle.

The USAID/DRC Mission also prioritizes SLI. Within its DRC Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) 2020-2025, USAID notes that it will increase its efforts to address emergency situations and the factors that precipitate them by sequencing, layering, and integrating humanitarian and development assistance. Within the CDCS, the Mission also noted its intent to promote long-term, multi-sectoral and emergency programming concurrently by co-locating activities, developing joint risk analyses, and combining types of assistance.

**Types of SLI Programming**

In general, the term SLI is used to describe efforts to create coherence through mutually reinforcing activities delivered through different types of programming and sources of funding to enhance collective impact. However, within the literature, there are nuances between types of sequenced, layered, and integrated investments, programming, and interventions. The following describe types of SLI practice commonly referenced:

- **Humanitarian and development investments that target complementary issues within the same geography.** Programming that falls within this type typically applies a portfolio approach by funding a range of

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2 For this report, Humanitarian-Development Coherence also includes Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (HDP Nexus) and the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Coherence (HDP Coherence). While there are small differences between these, broadly they all refer to complementarity and collaboration by humanitarian, development, and peace actors in pursuit of a common agenda. See also Triple Nexus and UNOCHA New Way of Working.
complementary initiatives within a set geographic context. For example, USAID-funded resilience and economic growth investments in Kenya’s arid lands on top of existing World Food Programme (WFP) Food for Asset programs funded by the Office of Food for Peace (FFP) and timed these investments relative to an Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) recovery program. In practice, collaboration for this type of SLI programming may be limited at the implementing partner (IP) level.

- **Humanitarian and development programs and funding that coordinate interventions to target complementary issues within the same geography.** Programming that falls within this type also follows a portfolio approach within the same geographic setting and, additionally, fosters collaboration between IPs. This type of integrated programming reflects USAID/DRC BHA and EG team ambitions with respect to future integrated programming in Kasai and Kasai Central. For example, in Ethiopia, USAID BHA, “funds the Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP), a graduation-style approach that combines food and cash transfers with skill and capacity development and market-based livelihood opportunities through development resources. The Joint Emergency Operation, funded with BHA emergency resources, is built around the PSNP, serving as an accordion that expands in times of crisis to reach additional beneficiaries and protect development gains. Feed the Future development funds were layered on top of the PSNP to expand livelihood opportunities for PNSP beneficiaries and enable many to graduate from the PSNP. Similarly, global health funds were then layered in the same communities to support a community-based health insurance program to help mitigate the impact of health shocks.”

- **Development programs that include humanitarian interventions.** Programming that falls within this type includes development programming that integrates humanitarian assistance. This is typically done as a response to a shock or stress or to the needs of a specific, more vulnerable population. For example, in response to COVID-19, the USAID-funded Feed the Future Nigeria Rural Resilience Activity (RRA), a 5-year Market Systems Development (MSD) program designed to strengthen recovery, economic opportunity and food security in Northern Nigeria, layered in unconditional cash transfers. In addition, it is also possible for humanitarian programming to layer or sequence development interventions.

- **Organizations that coordinate humanitarian and development assistance internally to implement complementary programming in the same geography.** Programming that falls within this type describes organizations that receive complementary humanitarian and development funding to deliver programming in the same geographic and/or thematic area and use that funding to harmonize implementation at the local level to maximize impact. The funding may or may not be designed with the intent to combine or leverage efforts. Finances, processes, and reporting are also separate. For example, Sipar, a private sector children’s book publisher in Cambodia, uses

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3 (2012). Building Resilience to Recurrent Crisis: USAID Policy and Program Guidance. USAID.
development assistance to develop books and humanitarian assistance to provide and distribute books⁶.

**Commonalities of SLI Practice**

Though types of SLI differ in practice, guidance and learning described within USAID policies and tools point to several common elements of SLI practice.

- **Shared analysis.** SLI necessitates a common understanding of the problem and a shared approach to agreed solutions. A shared understanding of context includes risks, such as frequency and severity of shocks and stress related to climate, conflict, economic conditions, and other factors, as well as the resilience capacities available to individuals, households, communities, systems, and countries.

- **A common agenda.** SLI necessitates a shared vision for change. This includes joint analysis, shared measurement, and mutually reinforcing activities that are managed through continuous communication and collaboration and backbone support to coordinate.

- **Multisectoral approaches that prioritize sustainability.** SLI engages with multisectoral approaches, such as livelihoods, human capital, and financial inclusion, rather than distinct sectors or crops. SLI also plans for sustainability, such as applying a market-based approach to programming that leverages commercial motivations, in recognition that sustained resources, capacities, motivation, and linkages are crucial in achieving and protecting outcomes.

**Success Factors for SLI Programming**

While there are many examples of intentional SLI design across different types of programming and funding, there are few ex-post assessments or reflections on the success of these efforts. The lessons that do emerge, however, are overwhelmingly reflections on the design and management of SLI programming as opposed to technical guidance. In practice, SLI programming – which should be rooted in a deep and shared understanding of context established through joint analysis – would reflect the unique, complex, and evolving qualities and relationships of a particular people, place, and time. For the most part, reflections on technical interventions, then, are highly contextual with limited transferability. The exception to this is with respect to learning regarding the application and integration of specific humanitarian assistance tools⁷, and in particular cash and voucher assistance, within longer-term resilience and development programming. The body of information and learning available for these tools, including on integration with market-based programming, is well-established.

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⁷ The community of practice, toolkits and guidance, and learning for cash and voucher assistance are too extensive to cover in this report. The CALP Network is an excellent starting place.
Design & Management Success Factors

Several design and management factors emerge as determinants of SLI programming success. These are transferable across contexts.

- **Teams and team culture heavily determine the success of SLI efforts.** Regardless of the type of SLI programming, leaders and teams that are intrinsically motivated to collaborate, find a way to do so. This inherent drive is particularly crucial in SLI programming, where progress often demands individuals and teams actively push against the established current. For instance, navigating compliance requirements to implement innovative programming or finding consensus between humanitarian and development practitioners or bridging funding between multiple sources can all be difficult to accomplish. A strong personal commitment to collaboration motivates individuals to address inevitable hurdles that emerge to move integrated programming forward. This is underpinned by a team culture of coordination and collaboration. This includes strong working relationships between leaders and team members, dedicated time for consensus building activities, and open, collaborative design and critical reflection that fosters a sense of shared ownership.

- **From the outset, a collaborative framework is key.** Successful sequencing, layering, and integration requires a shared goal, direction, and targeting established from the beginning of design. Successful approaches were thorough, systematic, and clear. They focused on enhancing synergies and cross-sectoral approaches among funding sources, teams, or IPs, and typically involved participants with complementary strengths and mandates. They also identified intervention areas for collaboration and clarified responsibilities and division of labor to achieve that goal.

- **SLI programming must be appropriately resourced to manage for collaboration, joint planning, team training, and capacity building.** The time and effort required to coordinate is significant. The availability of dedicated resources for coordination was frequently cited as a key determinant of the success of integrated programming. Coordination is required at all levels, from the implementation team to USAID Mission, to achieve well-integrated programming. In some instances, USAID has funded “backbone support” in the form of a dedicated coordination program to create, manage, enable, and monitor collective impact between USAID-funded activities within a given geography.
**Case: Integrated Feed the Future & DFSA Programming, Eastern Congo**

The following case is an example of integrated humanitarian and development programming and funding in which coordinated interventions targeted complementary issues within the same geography. This case was selected because it is an example of integrated programming within the DRC Mission portfolio that is well-known to the EG and BHA teams. It offers valuable reflections as the Mission considers the development of RFSA and future Feed the Future programming.

The Strengthening Value Chains Activity (SVC) was a 5-year, $24.7 million Feed the Future activity implemented between 2017-2022. SVC was designed as one of three complementary USAID investments in the South Kivu area that, together, would reduce extreme poverty and malnutrition in target populations. The other investments included two Development Food Security Activities (DFSAs) funded under Food for Peace and other USAID-funded projects active in the area. These activities comprised what was USAID/DRC’s new model of integrated regional transition planning for Eastern Congo that aimed to shift assistance away from humanitarian relief and toward market-led development. This was outlined within USAID/DRC’s CDCS at the time.

Some examples of positive formal and informal integration between SVC and the DFSAs transpired, particularly with respect to the bean sector, including:

- SVC trained DFSA staff on strengthening producer organization capacity related to market principles, warehouse management, post-harvest processes, and access to finance that enhanced DFSA implementation.
- SVC provided technical assistance to DFSA initiatives, such as facilitating market linkages for DFSA bean producer organization partners and delivering gender training to DFSA-supported village savings and loan association (VSLA) community agents.
- Activities also shared some partners, such as apex farmer organizations, and implemented in the same geographic areas.

However, overall, SVC and DFSA activities lacked formal and strategic integration that challenged collaboration and undermined USAID’s transition planning objective. Issues identified include:

- SVC and DFSAs lacked a shared, one team approach. Siloed work planning, including between consortium members and across IPs, challenged cohesive implementation. Moreover, formal coordination efforts were halted early on, with IPs citing increased security issues as a chief cause.
• Poor contractual alignment between SVC and DFSAs disincentivized integrated programming. For instance, the activities largely focused on different value chains. SVC primarily worked on the coffee value chain and, to a much lesser degree, the bean and soybean value chains. The DFSAs worked within the bean value chain but dropped their focus on the soybean value chain. This deviation was further encouraged by the performance metrics and targets that guided SVC implementation, which measured things like production, market linkages, access to finance, and improved practices, that are less challenging to achieve for commodities that have a strong commercial alignment.

• SVC and DFSAs also failed to appropriately budget or prioritize available budgets to facilitate cross-IP coordination and collaboration.

• The activities also received limited guidance from USAID on joint monitoring and reporting that may have reinforced integration.

The successes and shortcomings of the integrated programming effort between SVC and DFSAs point to several recommendations for future efforts. These recommendations were gathered through desk research, including a mid-term evaluation of the SVC activity, and discussions with USAID Mission teams and IPs.

• *The right leadership is paramount.* The most cited reason for limited integration between Feed the Future and DFSA activities was limited buy-in from the programs’ leadership that translated into minimal effort to collaborate between teams. As one member of USAID/DRC BHA team noted, “The human element: I don’t think we can underestimate how much this matters.”

• *A framework for collaboration is needed.* The use of standardized protocols, such as bi-annual work planning or shared beneficiary databases, and clear contractual obligations would further collaboration between IPs, even requiring it where necessary.

• *Dedicated resources for integration efforts amplify coordination.* Coordination activities, such as joint analysis, work planning, and learning exercises, receive more follow through when an IP has a dedicated coordination budget line.

• *Integration is reinforced by coordination efforts at the Mission level.* Coordination between Feed the Future and BHA Contracting Officer’s Representatives/Agreement Officer’s Representatives (COR/AORs) and DRC Mission staff would benefit coordination at the IP level.

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PART 2

OPPORTUNITIES FOR INTEGRATING ECONOMIC GROWTH PROGRAMMING WITH RFSA ACTIVITIES IN KASAI AND KASAI CENTRAL

Part 2 presents recommendations for designing Feed the Future programming that will sequence, layer, and integrate with USAID/BHA RFSA in Kasai and Kasai Central. The recommendations are practical and aim to ensure that the USAID/DRC Mission portfolio can integrate planned humanitarian and resiliency programming with longer-term market building efforts. The recommendations are also market-based and aim to engage with the private sector in ways that will not distort local markets. The recommendations presented in Part 2 are designed to leverage the Mission’s unique strengths and drive an economic growth agenda by developing integrated programming that will further the Mission’s goal of “A More Peaceful and Prosperous DRC with Improved Opportunities for Communities and Individuals to Thrive.”

Part 2 is divided into two sections. The first section covers considerations for designing and managing integrated RFSA and Feed the Future programming. The second section covers recommended technical intervention options. Recommendations are shaped by three primary factors: the technical scope and planned activities of the three RFSA, the Kasai, Kasai Central, and DRC contexts, and market-based programming best practice.

The considerations and recommendations presented in this section are based on analysis of planned USAID/DRC BHA RFSA activities in Kasai and Kasai Central derived from a review of the USAID/BHA Request for Applications (RFA), the proposed technical descriptions provided by two of RFSA IPs, ADRA and CRS, and a brief activity description shared by a third RFSA IP, Mercy Corps. They are also guided by the evidence review of SLI best practice presented in Part 1 of this report as well as a desk review of relevant DRC, Kasai, and Kasai Central market information and market-based programming literature on DRC and other regions. Finally, the considerations and recommendations presented in Part 2 are also informed by discussions and workshops with USAID/DRC EG and BHA teams, RFSA IPs, and expert DRC and market-based programming funders and practitioners.

8 The geographic focus on Kasai and Kasai Central has been updated to Kasai as of February 2024. The research, findings, and validation presented in this report was earlier guided by a focus on both Kasai and Kasai Central.
Recommendations: Design & Management Considerations

The following section presents five key considerations for designing and managing Feed the Future programming and shaping the current RFSAs during their refinement phase to maximize opportunities for effective and impactful sequenced, layered, and integrated humanitarian and development programming in Kasai and Kasai Central.

1. Establish a Common Agenda & Results Framework

Well-integrated programming necessitates a common agenda established through a shared results framework and joint planning between activities from the onset. This will include close alignment between targeting used by RFSAs and Feed the Future activities, including the following considerations:

Focal geographies. The RFSAs each selected focal health zones within Kasai and Kasai Central geographies. One RFSA will work at a population level while another intends to further refine geographic targeting by selecting focal villages within selected health zones. A more commercially oriented economic growth activity with a broader, potentially regional mandate, may require specific targeting to ensure populations within focal RFSA health zones and villages are engaged. Likewise, the RFSAs may also need a mandate to engage commercial and business networks, likely based in urban and peri urban areas that may or may not overlap with focal health zones, that will be a focus of an EG activity and also drive economic opportunities for and contribute to the durability of RFSA activities.

Target populations. The RFSAs target vulnerable populations within target geographies. While population targeting will be refined at the onset of programming, RFSA populations will likely be especially low in income and assets and may be more time scarce. This population is an important participant within the broader economic system but will likely require additional effort and resources to engage as potential business owners, producers/suppliers, and consumers of new products and services. Moreover, some economic outcomes (e.g. changes in income, production, or trade) associated with targeting this population will likely be lower. The additional

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9 According to the proposed CRS RFA Technical Narrative, “A health zone is the administrative level used by the MoH. Health zones are the most clearly structured and well-delineated geographic unit in DRC that also have accessible demographic data.” According to the EG team, health zones are a geographic unit of measurement that both BHA Resilience Focus Zones and Feed the Future Zones of Influence can use to determine areas of implementation in the DRC. Health zones are organized around health services that create more focus for humanitarian and development interventions than DRC provincial and territorial units of measurement in some cases. Health zones are also the method used by the Mission’s health programming to select areas of intervention. Accordingly, the use of health zones improves the Mission’s ability to coordinate.
challenges and costs associated with engaging this population underscores the value of layering Feed the Future activity with RFSAs. For example, using vouchers allocated within RFSA budgets to connect specific vulnerable individuals to agro-input dealers and agents established through Feed the Future would reinforce shared targeting and provide financial support for individuals that may not otherwise afford agro-inputs.

**Value chains.** Maize, cassava, groundnut, cowpea, beans, legumes, and others are noted as primary crops supported by the RFSAs. Failure to align value chains was cited as a core hindrance to integration between the SVC and FFP activities in Eastern DRC (see the text box on pages 11-12).

**Indicator targets.** There is overlap between USAID Feed the Future and RFSA standard indicators\(^\text{10}\), creating opportunity to align results measurement, which is a critical determinant of intervention design and targeting. In addition to aligned indicators, it will be important to structure targets to incentivize integrated programming. For instance, setting ambitious targets for yield, value of produce traded, or agriculture-related financing received, may incentivize a Feed the Future team to focus programming to more lucrative crops and commercial farmers that, if not balanced by targets that also incentivize them to target RFSA crops and populations, could challenge integration.

**Market analyses.** Joint, in-depth market analyses are often cited as a critical ingredient for integrated programming. Joint analysis can foster a shared understanding of market dynamics, actors, and risks that would enable activities to design layered and sequenced interventions from the same informed perspective. The RFSAs will complete initial assessments in early 2024, before the Feed the Future activity will be launched. The EG team should consider shaping these analyses to inform Feed the Future design. Further, ensuring RFSA teams participate in and shape Feed the Future analyses at launch would also be important.

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**RFSA Refinement Activities**

The RFSA refinement period presents a critical opportunity to shape RFSA activities, inform design, and create opportunities to integrate future programming. The refinement period began in November 2023 and will continue until the end of September 2024. Key activities and corresponding dates are presented in the chart below, though dates and details are expected to evolve.

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\(^{10}\) Examples: 1) Yield of targeted agricultural commodities among program participants with USG assistance; 2) Value of annual sales of producers and firms receiving USG assistance; 3) Value of agriculture-related financing accessed as a result of USG assistance.
2. Establish & Reinforce Regular Coordination and Collaboration between IPs

Sequenced and layered implementation will require robust and regular coordination and collaboration between IPs, including at the level of specific implementation teams. While USAID/DRC EG and BHA teams cannot directly manage this process, they can play a critical role in establishing the foundation for effective coordination, including the following:

Use contractual incentives. The EG team referenced the use of contracts, as opposed to cooperative agreements, as a mechanism by which to ensure more substantial USAID involvement to direct IP activity and coordination. For RFSAs, which have been established as cooperative agreements (a type of grant), the BHA team noted annual planning, which includes budget and implementation plan review, as a place where USAID has leverage to steer programming. Finally, making option years conditional on a partner’s ability to collaborate with IPs within the field may be a particularly powerful incentive for integrated programming.

Leverage routine engagement. USAID should use regular engagement, such as routine communication with IPs as well as formal check-ins (quarterly or more frequently) and field visits related to cross-IP programming to consistently message the importance of sequenced and layered programming efforts. Where possible, USAID should also create opportunities for joint sessions between BHA and EG teams and IPs.

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11Option years are a common feature of USG contracts. Such contracts provide for a base period of performance and then allow the USG to exercise one or more options to extend the contract term. When a contractor satisfactorily performs the contract, options are typically exercised.
Develop a common agenda. Create a common agenda by establishing a flexible strategy built from a robust analytical and results framework used by all IPs. This framework should provide a common understanding of shared objectives, target populations, and context. This is discussed in more detail under the first recommendation above.

Establish joint work planning. Regular, shared work planning sessions and documents are essential for integrated programming. Joint planning should involve relevant technical teams and advisors, foster open communication, and allow for early identification of potential challenges and opportunities. By jointly planning activities, IPs can streamline implementation and optimize resource utilization and timing to effectively sequence and layer implementation. USAID could require receipt of joint work plans on a semi-annual basis, for example. Robust planning would necessitate additional team time and administrative support.

Encourage a culture of collaboration. Effective collaboration starts with building a foundation of mutual understanding. At the onset, USAID could encourage IP teams to map and share their unique strengths, such as technical expertise, business or village relationships, and available resources. Encourage strategic partnerships and task allocation between IPs, where each leverages its comparative advantages to drive integrated implementation.

Budget for coordination. Regular coordination between IPs, including shared analyses, learning exercises, and joint work planning, as well as coordination with other development partners operating in the same geographic region, will require effort and funding. Requiring IPs to dedicate human resources, such as a specific coordination role or coordination responsibilities written into the job descriptions of key team members, and budget, such as a coordination or joint work planning budget lines, including at the bid stage, would signal USAID’s commitment to integrated programming and empower IPs to work together.

3. Proactively Assemble and Develop IP Teams

The capabilities and motivations of individual team members are likely to drive (or hinder) the effectiveness of integrated programming. Two core considerations emerge from literature and key informants:

Leadership. The personality and drive of the Chief of Party (COP) or Team Leader – specifically, their commitment to collaboration and ability to navigate complicated, opaque systems – were frequently cited as crucial factors in the success of integrated programming. Undoubtedly, systems and rules and norms of implementation will pose hurdles to integrated programming. As one informant aptly stated, integration is likely to happen “in spite of the system” not because of it. Therefore, securing leadership that is motivated to collaborate across IPs and resourceful in overcoming systemic obstacles to do so, will be essential. COPs/Team Leaders should possess strong interpersonal skills to foster a cohesive team environment and champion interactivity between programs. Additionally, navigating opaque financial and procurement requirements demands proactive and solution-oriented individuals who can find creative pathways to achieve integrated programming. As key personnel, COPs/Team Leaders will be approved by
USAID, giving USAID teams the opportunity to ensure the characteristics and qualifications of the COP are consistent with the needs of integrated programming.

**Implementation team capability gaps.** Effective integration will require teams equipped with market-based and humanitarian programming capabilities and motivated and adaptable individuals with a strong commitment to collaboration and continuous learning. It may be difficult to find this experience within Kasai Central, where little market-based programming has transpired in recent years, necessitating a combination of thoughtful recruitment and professional development. For RFSA IPs, recruiting and building business, finance, market systems, and private sector development team expertise alongside humanitarian expertise will not only be key for the delivery of the activity, but also the integration with Feed the Future programming. Likewise, for the Feed the Future activity, recruiting fragile markets, vulnerable populations, and humanitarian team capabilities alongside core business, finance, market systems, and private sector development expertise will do the same. Where teams fall short on recruited capabilities, building in training and professional development will bolster performance. This should be extended to include training on integrated planning and interpersonal skills. Finally, ongoing cross-team coaching from market-based programming and SLI experts would be a benefit.

4. **Clarify Allowable Expenditures**

Inconsistent interpretation of allowed expenditures will challenge IPs to effectively layer interventions and place the timing of sequenced activities at risk. The ambiguity surrounding permissible activities and expenditures was identified as a key integration and delivery challenge in discussions with informants. It also emerged through varied interpretations of restricted goods (e.g. seeds, fertilizers) and mechanisms (e.g. cash, vouchers, loans) planned and discussed by RFSA IPs. For example, one RFSA IP plans to distribute vouchers to farmers for the purchase of a basket of agro-inputs, including seeds and fertilizer, from select agro-dealers where the quality would be impossible to assess universally. Another RFSA IP, however, plans to distribute seeds through its local output partner in part because it can control for the quality of seeds distributed. USAID/BHA categorized seeds as restricted goods within the RFA, meaning they are subject to specific quality and process requirements. The lack of clarity on allowable expenditures extends to finance and compliance teams within IPs, where inconsistent application and interpretation of rules can limit technical flexibility, partnerships, and innovation.

Informants also indicate that more flexibility in terms of allowable procurement and expenditures often exists than is initially perceived. Clarifying allowances regarding the use of key tools, such as vouchers, and engagement with restricted goods, such as seeds, fertilizer, and loans, would enable more efficient and creative design. Further, establishing transparent communication channels with USAID to address specific concerns and seek approval for innovative approaches quickly, may also help to overcome procurement barriers to integrated programming.
5. Influence Collective Action Beyond USAID IPs

A number of other humanitarian and development initiatives, including those funded by World Bank, AfDB, UNDP, FAO, and Swedish and Korean development agencies, implement programming in Kasai and Kasai Central. These and other initiatives have the potential to amplify or undermine USAID's integrated, market-based, and resilient programming goals in the region. USAID must then actively advocate to align priorities and foster strategic partnerships with other actors in Kasai and Kasai Central.

Foster regional collaboration and learning. Leverage donor and practitioner working groups, such as the Humanitarian Development Nexus Coordination Group, to share approaches and programming priorities. Consider leading broader coordination efforts, learning from USAID initiatives like the Sahel Collaboration and Communication activity which promotes a common resilience mission and learning and facilitates collaboration between initiatives funded by USAID and others in the Sahel.

Encourage IPs to engage others in collective action. By engaging in strategic collaborations with humanitarian and development partners, USAID IPs may be able to leverage or align additional expertise and resources to further shared resilience and development objectives within Kasai and Kasai Central. Strategic collaborations may also foster a quicker and more robust international response to emerging shocks and stresses, should they arise. Opportunities for collective action beyond integrated RFSA and Feed the Future activities look like those integrated programming opportunities outlined above and in the technical intervention section that follows. Collective action could involve joint needs assessments, co-designed interventions, or coordinated resource mobilization for shared objectives.

Recommendations: Technical Intervention Options

The following section presents five technical intervention areas for potential future USAID/DRC Feed the Future programming in Kasai and Kasai Central. Recommended interventions are designed to both integrate and complement the RFSAs. The level of development of each intervention reflects the availability of market information and relevance to RFSA implementation. All programming should be informed by thorough market analyses, delivered jointly between Feed the Future Activities and RFSAs where relevant.

Approach

Recommended technical interventions are shaped by three primary factors: the technical scope and planned activities of the three RFSAs; the Kasai, Kasai Central, and DRC contexts; and market-based programming best practice. These are informed by desk review and key informants, including discussions with USAID/DRC EG and BHA teams, RFSA IPs, and resilience, market-based programming, and DRC practitioners.

1. Resilience Food Security Activity (RFSA). The technical scope and planned activities for the recently awarded RFSAs in Kasai and Kasai Central informed recommended interventions.
The USAID/BHA Request for Applications (RFA), the proposed Technical Descriptions provided by two of the IPs, ADRA and CRS, and a preliminary activity description shared by the third IP, Mercy Corps, indicate planned strategic approaches, implementation activities, and budgets for the RFSA activities. Complemented by discussions with USAID teams and RFSA IPs, these documents were analyzed with the objective of identifying opportunities to leverage, strengthen, or expand on planned RFSA activities to increase impact through sequenced, layered, and integrated economic growth programming. Recommended interventions focus on opportunities to integrate potential Feed the Future programming with RFSA Strategic Purpose 1, where significant potential for sequencing and layering is anticipated. Recommended interventions also include opportunities for complementary economic growth programming that may not directly sequence or layer with RFSA activities.

2. **Context.** Recommended interventions reflect Kasai and Kasai Central context as well as best practice in the DRC. Information on the Kasai and Kasai Central context, such as market dynamics and actors, geographic positioning, and development partner activity, was gathered from secondary sources, including primary market research conducted by RFSA IPs and the Humanitarian Private Sector Landscape Analysis managed by the MSP Activity, as well as through Klls. DRC sectoral market information and market-based programming learning is primarily derived from secondary resources based on programming in Eastern DRC and at a national level as well as from practitioners with significant experience throughout the DRC.

3. **Market-Based Programming.** Finally, recommended interventions conform to practical, market-based approaches informed by best practice derived from communities of practice, such as Markets in Crisis and the BEAM Exchange, desk research, Klls with expert practitioners, and the consultant’s own professional experience directing and advising market development programming in sub-Saharan Africa and the DRC. Interventions are also assessed on their potential for scaled impact, which weighs the likelihood for substantial, sustainable, and systemic change that benefits a large number of people.

Final recommended technical interventions have also been refined following a process of review and validation with USAID/DRC Mission teams. During a working session on November 29, 2023, a shortlist of interventions was first presented to the USAID/DRC EG team for validation and feedback. During the Integrated Humanitarian & Development Programming Findings & Recommendations Workshop on December 12, 2023, a refined list of interventions was shared with members of the USAID/DRC EG team, BHA team, and a USAID resilience adviser for additional validation and feedback. The technical intervention recommendations presented here have been refined to reflect feedback and guidance received.
Summary

Recommended technical intervention options are summarized in the following chart. The opportunity to integrate with the RFSAs, likelihood of achieving scaled impact, and feasibility are assessed on a High, Moderate, and Low scale for each option according to the following:

- **RFSA Relevance.** “High” indicates a significant opportunity for meaningful sequenced, layered, and integrated programming with the RFSAs.
- **Scaled Impact.** “High” indicates significant potential for scaled impact which weighs the likelihood for substantial, sustainable, and systemic change that benefits a large number of people.
- **Feasibility.** “High” indicates the potential for lower implementation costs, quicker implementation timeframe, and fewer barriers to progress.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intervention Option</th>
<th>RFSA Relevance</th>
<th>Scaled Impact</th>
<th>Feasibility</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Finance</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Agricultural Input Markets</td>
<td>High</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Agricultural Output Markets</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Off-Farm Economic Opportunities</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Business Enabling Environment</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>Low</td>
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**Intervention Option 1: Finance**

**Description**

The RFSA IPs and the Development Finance Corporation (DFC)/EG team each plan to improve financial inclusion through a series of interventions at micro and macro levels. Specifically, the RFSA IPs plan to develop and strengthen VSLAs and MSMEs to connect rural households and enterprises to financial institutions while also working with financial institutions to adapt their offerings and extend their reach to engage rural customers. The EG team plans to improve the capitalization of microfinance lenders by structuring a new loan or a partial credit guarantee with a financial institution in DRC to mobilize lending to microfinance institutions and/or micro-lenders.
The Feed the Future activity has an opportunity to develop interventions with financial institutions in Kasai and Kasai Central, including commercial banks and microfinance institutions (MFIs), to bridge planned RFSA and DFC/EG activity. Activities could include:

- Conduct financial performance reviews for relevant financial institutions and develop capacity strengthening activities to address weak financial indicators.
- Support client growth strategies by increasing the MFI capital base and building the capacity of portfolio managers and agents.
- Provide technical capacity on greater mobilization of savings deposits as well as the development of new savings and lending products.
- Support digitization to improve operational efficiency and potentially open additional distribution channels to extend geographic coverage.

Concurrently, the future Feed the Future activity could consider additional activities to improve potential borrower bankability, such as strengthening area business advisory services and small and medium-sized enterprises that may be beyond the scope of the RFSA. Moreover, additional interventions that influence financial services uptake, such as mobile infrastructure and payments, as well as those that improve access to alternative capital, such as supplier-led credit schemes and impact investment, have the potential to further elevate financial inclusion and growth in Kasai and Kasai Central.

**Rationale**

**RFSA Relevance: High**

RFSA Sub-purpose 1.1: Improved usage of credit and capital aims to improve usage of fair and equitable credit and capital to increase profitable enterprises and agricultural production by developing VSLAs, facilitating linkages to FIs and MFIs, advising FIs on product development, and preparing borrowers. Each of the RFSA IPs plans to establish and train VSLAs, including providing them with financial literacy education. To varying degrees, IPs intend to work with financial institutions, including local banks and MFIs, to develop savings and agricultural lending products for area farmers and agribusinesses as well as to link VSLAs to formal financial institutions. For instance, CRS noted its intent to work with Equity Bank to expand its agent network into programming areas to establish a network of rural cashpoints to support deposits and debits and assist new clients to open bank accounts. IPs also plan financial education, including at the household and business levels, with the intent to strengthen financial literacy, improve financial management, and prepare businesses to receive credit.

**Scaled Impact: High**

By integrating interventions to strengthen local banks and MFIs through operational and management improvements and product and service development and engaging medium-sized businesses to improve
bankability with the financial inclusion interventions planned under the RFSAs and through DFC/EG team activities, the opportunity to reach many individuals and achieve systemic impact is high.

**Feasibility: High**

Finance interventions will leverage relationships, activities, and capital that are already in play, such as the DFC guarantee and CRS’s partnership with Equity Bank which replicates and builds from activities completed under its past RFSA. This will reduce costs, speed activity, and minimize friction. With demonstrated models and returns, the opportunity for and ease of replication with other banks and MFIs is likely to emerge.

**Intervention Option 2: Agricultural Input Markets**

**Description**

**Agro-Inputs Distribution, Seed Systems, and Agronomic Training**

Interventions designed to facilitate the emergence of dynamic seed, agro-input distribution, and agronomic training systems that facilitate access to affordable, high-quality seed, other agro-inputs, and advisory for farmers in Kasai and Kasai Central by establishing and strengthening local seed, distribution, training and education, and governance actors and networks that do not now exist in the region would address critical market failures and strongly complement planned RFSA activities. Feed the Future programming could include:

- Establish urban and rural agro-dealer networks, strengthen their business, financial, and agronomic advisory capabilities, and develop their motivation and capability to engage different rural farmer segments, including through innovative rural distribution models and distinct customer targeting.
- Connect agro-dealers to national and local sources of seeds and other agro-inputs to develop a reliable supply chain and ensure consistent access to quality goods.
- Connect agro-dealers and their networks to public and private agronomic advisory and farmer field schools to build, extend, and reinforce their advisory capabilities.
- Improve access to finance to expand agro-dealer inventory and distribution, including through banks and company-supplied credit.
- Strengthen DRC seed companies and breeding programs, including enhancing production capacities and quality control mechanisms.

**Rationale**

**RFSA Relevance: High**

RFSA Sub-purpose 1.3: Increased sustainable agricultural production aims to increase agricultural production through improving the seed system, enhancing market linkages, and promoting agronomic training activities, among others. In terms of local seed systems, the RFSA technical plans emphasize
improving local seed production and multiplication by supporting producer organizations, farmers, and agribusinesses with foundation seed (e.g. maize, cassava, cowpea, groundnut), training, grants, and linkages to relevant public and private actors. One RFSA plans to distribute vouchers to farmers for local seed and other agro-inputs purchases while another RFSA plans to distribute seed and other agro-inputs to farmers through its output partner. In terms of agro-input distribution, RFSA IPs plan to select and develop lead farmers and rural agro-input agents from amongst the farmer field schools and producer organizations they will engage. They also plan to train local agro-dealers to engage rural farmer participants. In terms of farmer training, to varying degrees, the RFSAs plan to utilize current and create new farmer field schools, farmer market schools, and producer groups and deliver training directly through these mediums and trainer-of-trainer models. The RFSAs will promote improved production practices, conservation agriculture, soil fertility management, and natural resource management. They also plan to provide governance, marketing, finance, and business management training.

**Scaled Impact:** High

The population of Kasai and Kasai Central is predominantly rural and reliant on agriculture. Interventions designed to improve agricultural production by leveraging commercial incentives and when coupled with other interventions such as access to finance and output markets, are likely to engage a large percentage of the overall population. If well integrated with RFSA programming, which places particular emphasis on agricultural production, the potential for scaled impact is high.

**Feasibility:** High

Interventions related to agro-inputs distribution are likely to attract partnerships and co-investment from the private sector, including established national companies. This may enable these interventions to progress relatively quickly and without much resistance. Seed and agronomic training systems, which will necessitate collaborations with private and public actors and where commercial incentives are lower than with agro-input distribution, may require more resources and time to progress.

**Intervention Option 3: Agricultural Output Markets**

**Description**

Interventions designed to improve production will achieve limited success without complementary activity to improve markets for agricultural offtake and trade, which ultimately incentivize farmers to invest to increase their production. While there is limited market information on output markets in Kasai and Kasai Central, in reference to local buyers, one RFSA IP informant who participated in a scoping assessment of Kasai noted, “There is no one.” However, the informant also noted that there may be untapped opportunities to strengthen output markets, such as high local food prices that may encourage increased local production and trade as well as empty Kinshasa-bound transport that could be leveraged to facilitate regional trade.
Within other regions of DRC, activities to structure agricultural trade, like engaging traders through training and networking events, facilitating market linkages between apex organizations and buyers, facilitating price transparency and infrastructure development, and developing outgrower schemes that distribute inputs and training to farmers on credit, have shown promise. Further, the development of public-private partnerships with regional buyers and value-added services providers has also attracted better financed, more capable companies to thin DRC markets. Activities that focused on high value, specialty commodities with strong international markets and price incentives, were able to facilitate relatively higher increases to area farmer production, trade, and incomes. However, engaging with high value and specialty produce may not be possible in Kasai and Kasai Central where staple crops, including maize and cassava, dominate production.

**Rationale**

**RFSA Relevance: High**

The RFSA s place much greater emphasis on increasing production than they do on improving output markets and increasing trade. Activities related to output markets center on building technical and business skills, including training on business practices, marketing, and engaging with buyers. Activities also include improved market infrastructure, such as roads and market stalls. One RFSA IP plans to partner with Bio Agro-Business (BAB), a Congolese company specializing in production and processing that also manages a government-owned agribusiness hub. Through its partnership with BAB, the IP plans to establish an anchor farm training site, deliver agronomic training, establish a seed multiplication farm, distribute seeds to farmers, process imported and, later, locally produced maize, and rehabilitate feeder roads and other market infrastructure. RFSA IPs also plan to distribute grants to micro and small enterprises for small scale processing equipment, like grinding mills.

**Scaled Impact: High**

This intervention is likely to have a significant effect on income and production and, if integrated with RFSA programming, will likely engage a large percentage of the population. Stronger agricultural output markets lead to increased agricultural income for farmers and drive their investment to expand and improve production, including through the use of improved inputs and services.

**Feasibility: Moderate**

Given the especially thin and fragile state of Kasai and Kasai Central markets, it may require more time and resources to facilitate improved output markets. Learning from other DRC initiatives suggests that efforts to establish larger, better financed, and more capable regional actors, while likely costly and time consuming, may achieve more impact overall. On the other hand, efforts to engage and influence a larger number of smaller traders will be less costly and more immediate, with limited potential for scale over time. It may be valuable to implement both approaches concurrently.
**Intervention Option 4: Off-Farm Economic Opportunities**

**Description**

Interventions designed to improve off-farm agricultural and other business opportunities are likely to contribute to improved farmer livelihoods and broader economic development in Kasai and Kasai Central, though with less direct connection to the RFSAs. Off-farm opportunities in Kasai and Kasai Central include agricultural services that support and complement on-farm production, such as tractor services, mechanics, veterinary services – as well as those mentioned above, like financial services, agro-inputs distribution, and processing – among others. Facilitating the emergence of business growth, entrepreneurship, and employment in supporting agricultural services may enable improved agricultural production and trade as well as broader economic dynamism. Activities could include linking SMEs in Kasai and Kasai Central to national companies and providing start-up capital or ensuring ready access to credit to enable businesses to invest and grow to expand products and services. Activities could also include skill development, such as targeting the large number of urban-rural migrants that often find employment as casual laborers in towns and offer important and diversified income and resources for rural family members.

In addition to off-farm agricultural opportunities, other economic growth opportunities may include those associated with boosting cross-border trade. Markets located at the border with Angola, about 150km from Tshikapa, supply cities within Kasai and Kasai Central with manufactured goods, building materials, and food at lower prices than those coming from Kinshasa. These markets are open on Wednesday and Saturdays only. Further, activities related to expanding renewable energy access and uptake may also help to provide vital energy sources for emerging agricultural services and other businesses as well as households with growing income. It is estimated that urban settings in Kasai and Kasai Central access less than 10 hours of electricity per day. Households and businesses rely on battery-powered torches and candles for lights and generators for power. In rural settings, a reliance on firewood and charcoal, combined with the charcoal trade, place important environmental pressures on area natural resources.

**Rationale**

**RFSA Relevance: High**

Through Sub-Purpose 1.2: Increased Profitable, Diverse Enterprises and IGAs, the RFSAs plan to work through local service providers, such as business advisors, to provide technical assistance, training, and grants that jumpstart IGAs and enterprises and strengthen local business services provision concurrently. Both RFSA technical proposals outline a plan to define these activities in greater detail during the refinement period. In addition to off-farm IGAs, and as noted above, the RFSAs prioritize finance and agricultural production activities.

**Scaled Impact: Moderate**
The emergence of a supporting, non-farm agricultural services sector will be an important economic growth driver. While services such as tillage are likely to reach few and more commercial farmers, other services like processing are likely to improve the availability and price of food for many.

**Feasibility: Moderate**

The Feed the Future Activity is likely to partner with established and new SMEs for this activity. While capacity and capital may be higher amongst this group, it is likely that significant capacity building and capital – provided by the activity or through FIs related to the activity – will be needed. Where interventions challenge those local interests that are benefiting from the status quo, such as food trade, friction may emerge.

**Intervention Option 5: Business Enabling Environment**

**Description**

In the 2020 USAID Private Sector Study, the challenging business enabling environment in DRC, including legislation, taxes, governance, and corruption, were the most-cited obstacle to private sector growth. In the DRC, as one key informant put it, “The business environment is a part of everything that you’re doing – it turns up in everything”. With respect to Kasai and Kasai Central, discussions with the RFSA IPs and other informants pointed to concerns regarding land tenure, food export laws, informal government surcharges, poor infrastructure, environment and climate degradation (e.g. charcoal production and trade), and transportation limitations, among other issues. Land tenure, in particular, emerged through discussions with BHA and RFSA IPs as a critical enabling environment challenge in Kasai and Kasai Central. Here, returning Internally Displaced Persons are challenged to reclaim their land. Moreover, most land in Kasai and Kasai Central is owned by individuals who live outside of the region, resulting in both underutilization for production purposes and high rental costs for area farmers. Limited access to land and high land rental costs especially harm women, who may rent lower cost land that is further from their homes, adding to their time burden. Conflicting legal and customary laws, illegal yet normative investment development practices, frequent land disputes and land hoarding, and insufficient land valuation, among other issues, are key land reform issues in the DRC.

Within other regions of the DRC, interventions to support private sector associations or industry groups to identify pain points experienced by members and to support members to organize themselves and advocate for change have shown promise. So too have interventions to create platforms, such as radio shows and social media forums, for businesses and individuals to speak out and showcase governance issues that may be challenging production, trade, transport, health, etc. One experienced DRC business enabling advisor noted that planning for direct engagement with the government is an essential element of business environment reform activity in the DRC that is also often unfunded by economic growth programs.
Rationale

RFSA Relevance: Moderate

While acknowledging the importance of business enabling issues, including land tenure, in Kasai and Kasai Central, the RFSAs do not have an explicit governance or business enabling environment focus. Rather, the IPs plan to engage with a range of formal and informal government institutions, such as the Ministry of Agriculture, SENASEM, Ministry of Environment, government extension services, and local chiefs, on specific interventions and as needed. For instance, IPs plan to consult and engage institutions when use of government storage facilities may be beneficial or consult with specific institutions on the location and rehabilitation of markets and other infrastructure. Nonetheless, improved business enabling environment — and as it relates to specific interventions such as seed system governance, land access and production, and infrastructure rehabilitation — is highly relevant to the overall performance, impact, and sustainability of RFSA interventions.

Scaled Impact: Moderate

Through effective organization and advocacy for key issues like taxes, fees, and infrastructure, business associations can influence broader market enablers, unlocking immense and wide-reaching value, such as attracting increased investment and expanding the availability of lower-cost goods. Moreover, building the capability of local leaders and institutions to organize and advocate for themselves has the potential to drive positive change well beyond the life of a program.

Feasibility: Low

Business environment reform, including policy change, is often complex and with a long time horizon. It is primarily political, not technical, and subject to shifting winds. Sustainable, systemic change requires strong local leadership and broad coalitions and networks as well as stable institutions, which are difficult to facilitate. However difficult broad reform may be, it is possible to concentrate efforts on specific issues with momentum while strengthening local capabilities for long-term change.

Conclusion

This report provided practical information and learning that USAID/DRC can apply to develop sequenced, layered, and integrated humanitarian and economic growth programming between BHA RFSAs and future Feed the Future economic growth programming in the Kasai and Kasai Central as well as transferrable lessons for other programming. Key design and management considerations include establishing a common agenda and results framework; establishing and reinforcing regular coordination and collaboration between IPs; proactively assemble and develop IP teams; clarifying allowable expenditures; and influencing collective action beyond USAID funding. Recommended technical intervention options include interventions related to finance, agricultural input markets, agricultural output markets, off-farm economic opportunities, and the business enabling environment.
ANNEX 1: RFSA IP TECHNICAL APPROACH DESCRIPTIONS

The following chart outlines technical approaches and implementation plans for RFSA IPs ADRA and CRS. This is summarized from the proposed Technical Descriptions provided by two of the IPs as well as discussions with each IP team. The third RFSA IP, Mercy Corps, participated as key informants but was not willing to share their Technical Description.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geography &amp; Targeting</th>
<th>ADRA</th>
<th>CRS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>Kasai</td>
<td>Kasai Central</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ADRA will work in five Health Zones (HZ): Kamonia, Tshikapa, Kanzala, Kamwesha, and Mutena in Kamonia Territory.</td>
<td>CRS will work in three Health Zones(^{13}) (HZ): Lubondaie (Dibaya territory), Yangala (Luiza territory), and Masuika (Yangala territory).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Participant Targeting | ADRA targets the most food insecure areas of its five target HZs and the most vulnerable populations within communities. They identify four primary sub-populations, noting the intent to tailor interventions for each group:  
  1. Extremely poor HHs living below the poverty line of $2.15 per person per day  
  2. Chronically vulnerable HHs at or above the poverty line, with risk of slipping into abject poverty  
  3. Pregnant and Lactating Women (PLW) and caregivers of children under 2 (CU2) at risk of malnutrition  
  4. Persons with disabilities (PWD) and youth, in particular adolescent girls and young women. | CRS employs a total coverage approach. Its program will work in all 649 villages and 72 health areas in the HZs, targeting all chronically poor and vulnerable families in these villages. The three prioritized health zones have a total population of 627,083 in 104,514 households. |

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\(^{13}\) According to CRS RFSA Technical Narrative, “A health zone is the administrative level used by the MoH. Health zones are the most clearly structured and well-delineated geographic unit in DRC that also have accessible demographic data.”
**SP 1.1 Improved usage of credit and capital**

**IO 1.1.1** Formal and informal financial institutions increase credit flows
- Develop Go-to-Market Strategies with FIs
- Build out a rural agent network
- Establish and train VSLAs
- Establish crop season credit for farmers
- Develop contract farming model
- Develop commodity credit model for farmers

**IO 1.1.1: Rural households and entrepreneurs have access to appropriate savings and lending**
- Informal financing: Savings and Internal Lending Communities (SILC)
- Child optimized financial education
- Formal financing products & services
- PSP competencies and network

**IO 1.1.2** Farmers and entrepreneurs access credit and capital
- Train MSMEs and VSLAs on financial literacy
- Promote financial services
- Facilitate financial network linkages
- Promote access to improved usage of credit

**SP 1.2 Increased profitable, diverse enterprises and income generating activities (IGAs)**

**IO 1.2.1** Enterprises expand or upgrade operations
- Provide grants to local NGOs to train women and youth in business skills.
- Conduct training of trainers for local NGOs.
- Provide grants to MSMEs and IGAs.
- Establish business incubators.
- Create educational courses for value chain services.
- Build network of BDS providers.

**IO 1.2.1: Small non-farm entrepreneurs, especially youth and women, improve or develop new income-generating activities**
- Small Business Development, including developing group-based businesses and IGAs by providing business training, grants, and technical support.

**IO 1.2.2** Markets are vibrant, competitive, dynamic, and well-integrated
- Rehabilitate feeder roads.
- Support market information access.
- Strengthen market linkages with private sector actors.
- Rehabilitate and/or construct village and urban markets.
- Provide technical assistance to farmer marketing groups/producer associations and IGAs.

**IO 1.2.2: Vulnerable households have strengthened their farm businesses**
- Governance and capacity strengthening of Producer Organizations (PO)
- Private Agricultural Service Provider (PASP) model, including expanded input provision and service availability for farmers and linking farmers to buyers
● Train transporter associations.
● Provide grants to FMS groups.
● Link FMS groups with MFIs.

Market and road infrastructure development

IO 1.2.3 Farmers and enterprises increase income and profitability of agricultural products
● Train farmers and entrepreneurs on market systems.
● Organize FMS groups.
● Train IGAs and enterprises on value addition processes.
● Assist agricultural input suppliers to plan and manage market demand.
● Coordinate vouchers and cash grants with MOA.
● Promote commodities and CSA practices.
● Support supply of CSA inputs.
● Connect market system stakeholders with private sector.
● Train on post-harvesting handling practices and storage.
● Organize, support, and train producer associations.

IO 1.3.1 Farmers apply improved, sustainable agricultural practices
● Promote conservation agriculture practices.
● Support and mentor FFS and farmer leaders.
● Refine intensive cropping system model.
● Establish FFS.
● Promote FFS recommendations beyond FFS
● Train and support GDRC institutions, agro-dealers, and local NGOs.
● Promote increased seed availability and build demand for quality seed of improved varieties.
● Provide technical support and feasibility analyses for seed systems.
● Train Seed Producer Organizations.
● Provide seed multiplication grants to Seed Producer Organizations and seed cooperatives.

IO 1.3.1: Farmers use regenerative, climate-smart practices for (plot and homestead) production and post-harvest handling
● Farmer Field Schools and market/home gardening, which includes the provision of inputs and training to begin.
● Soil fertility management
● Local seed system strengthening, working at the formal system (public and private), the informal system (farmers and traders), community multiplication, and private agri-multipliers using an approach to be determined during the refinement period.
- Facilitate and strengthen linkages with CORIDEK, DRC seed companies, and INERA research stations.
- Train farmers to recognize and use high quality agricultural inputs.
- Increase access to high quality agricultural inputs.
- Provide voucher to purchase seeds or other agriculture inputs.
- Conduct agricultural input fairs.

IO 1.3.2 Farmers manage a diverse and intensive agricultural system
- Build permagardens demonstration sites
- Provide training on production.
- Establish dry season production of market gardens.
- Construct irrigation demonstration sites.
- Develop loan products to facilitate dry season irrigation development.
- Promote improved soil and water management practices

IO 1.3.3 HHs have equitable access to nearby arable land for production
- Strengthen advocacy capacity of community groups.
- Work with local leaders to increase land access.

IO 1.3.2: Communities manage their natural resources sustainably and equitably
- Community-based natural resource and climate risk management
ANNEX 2. REFERENCES


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## Annex 3. Key Informants

<table>
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