



PAKISTAN EMERGENCY FOOD SECURITY ALLIANCE



LESSONS LEARNED

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Executive Summary

After monsoon flooding affected some 20 million people in Pakistan, six agencies came together with support from ECHO to form the Pakistan Emergency Food Security Alliance. PEFSAs programming focused largely on cash transfers, but also included vouchers for food and assets and distributions. This study documents lessons in targeting, cash and other interventions, and working in an Alliance for sharing within the Alliance, and with interested stakeholders more broadly.

Targeting

Targeting was a complex and time consuming task; agencies used agency and community lead methods depending on their experiences and the type of intervention. Agencies implementing multiple programs in the same area capitalized on agency selection methods by collecting a range of information on beneficiaries and applying filters to the data in order to target groups with specific needs. Where interference was likely or conflict was present in the community, agency lead methods are probably more accountable, but do increase time required and administrative costs. In the immediate aftermath of a crisis, community selection processes or universal targeting are faster; the latter ensures that exclusion errors are minimized, but is a less efficient use of finite resources. The following are the key recommendations coming from the review:

- Consider blanket distributions of cash in “worst hit” areas in the immediate aftermath of a crisis to ensure speed and minimize exclusion; this will only be possible once ECHO removes the cap on conditional cash grants;
- Check inclusion and exclusion error rates by sampling from the general population of targeted villages, rather than sampling from the agency list;
- Use community or agency selection processes as the situation demands, but ensure communication of criteria, lists and details of the complaints response mechanism to beneficiaries;
- Target women at the design stage;
- Document geographic and household level targeting processes at the agency level.

Cash and other modalities

All agencies implemented cash grants and cash for work; several also undertook cash grants for small enterprise recovery. Distributions of agricultural inputs and assets and vouchers for food and assets were also used where the situation demanded. Each agency, without exception, would have invested more in unconditional cash grants if the ECHO cap at €100,000 had not existed. Large cash grants compared favorably with smaller, periodic cash transfers, allowing for beneficiary investment in essential or productive but more expensive activities, and promoting recovery. Checks and cash were quick to set up and accessible to beneficiaries - the Oxfam review of payment mechanisms provides excellent analysis of the different mechanisms. Conditionality reduced the efficiency of cash transfers, adding administrative and logistical costs, but had benefits, including women’s empowerment, successful small enterprise recovery, or infrastructure repair and reconstruction. Agencies varied their strategies in cash for work, with some targeting women with quilt making while others pursued more conventional infrastructure and clean up schemes. In the immediate aftermath of a disaster, when the objective is to ensure immediate food consumption, expenditures on labor should be maximized, while in later stages, investments in materials can be balanced with labor expenditures to ensure disaster risk reduction considerations are met. Despite PEFSAs focus on cash, there is still space and

need for non-cash interventions, when imperfect markets fail target groups or are interrupted by disaster. PEFSA found that under certain circumstances, distributions were required, and cash and commodity vouchers assured that specific objectives were met.

Agencies did struggle with internal financial procedures and in identifying appropriate financial services. To enable a rapid and smooth response, SOPs should be developed and tested in country prior to an emergency, and payment mechanisms that are locally appropriate and scalable should be identified. These may vary depending on location and target group. Human resource impediments also presented challenges, in that experienced staff moved on, staff had to be recruited for new programs and new operational bases, and teams had to be trained in implementation methodologies. To the extent possible, staff and partners should be trained between, not during emergencies in cash transfer implementing methodologies.

Finally, the information from the joint EMMA was valuable, but was delayed, reducing its utility in decision making. Preparedness requires greater market literacy, including an understanding of how markets for food generally function, such that in emergencies, a rapid emergency market assessment looking at changes from the baseline can be sufficient.

Specific recommendations include:

- Ensure preparedness to respond with cash by undertaking a baseline market assessment for staple foods and rapid emergency market assessments in the aftermath of a crisis;
- Ensure preparedness to respond with cash by developing and testing SOPs in country, training staff and partners, and identifying viable payment mechanisms prior to a crisis;
- Explicitly consider trade offs between efficiently achieving the primary expected result and secondary benefits when choosing a modality;
- Large transfers of cash serve in the aftermath of a crisis to promote investment and more rapid recovery; in the subsequent phases, targeted small tranches on a monthly basis can ensure a predictable income support for highly vulnerable households;
- Harmonize wage rates around the minimum wage in the immediate aftermath of a disaster; harmonize wage rates below the minimum wage (if legal), close to or below the price of agricultural labour in rural areas, in recovery periods to encourage self-targeting.
- Balance the need to deliver employment equivalent to the minimum food basket with flexibility in CFW targets where population movements or labour market recovery demand;
- In the immediate aftermath of a shock, focus on labour intensive schemes in cash for work programs; in recovery periods, allow for greater expenditures on materials, etc.
- PEFSA should agree to minimum standards including targeting of those without CNIC, targeting women, and data collection;
- Indicators and data collection methods should be standardized; indicators that should be used include: food consumption scores measured on a repetitive basis), expenditures on food and other items, materials to labour ratio in cash for work, and household economic indicators of beneficiaries.

Recommendations to ECHO and other donors:

- Ensure removal of ECHO cap on unconditional cash grants as soon as possible;

- Consider funding blanket cash transfers where appropriate and feasible with experienced cash partners as a first stage response, to address a range of needs including food security, shelter, household items and return; monitor and document learning.
- In highly strategic programs, ensure close collaboration in planning and transparent communication with partners to ensure that the specific objectives of both parties are met.

Working in Alliance

Forming and coordinating the PEFSAs has been a challenging but ultimately rewarding experience for the agencies involved. The PEFSAs formed at the country program level for a very specific purpose; the cooperation has been organic and nearly spontaneous, with ECHO acting as a catalyst, and for this reason the Alliance is strong and cohesive; however, the timing of formation - at the height of one of the largest emergencies ever - was not ideal. Certain important activities were not prioritized because of staff workloads and a lack of comprehensive planning. While the agencies saw advantages to the level of independence maintained by working in an Alliance, there was also a great deal of concern about the coherence of programming, and the need for the Alliance to identify a vision for itself in the medium term, in order to maintain relevance. As the Alliance matures, investments need to be made in food security surveillance and needs assessment, increased coherence of program design, planning for learning and technical support, and further standardization of monitoring.

Specific recommendations include:

- Establish objectives of the Alliance (what are we going to do) and objectives of *working in Alliance* (why is an Alliance a good way to do that) as early as possible;
- Establish with the donor a vision of what the Alliance contributes to food security at a national level in the medium term (one – two years);
- Identify, plan for and schedule activities of the Alliance, including research and learning, so they can be incorporated into agency implementation plans;
- Establish functional leads and bring on other technical/mainstreaming support as need arises; ensure that technical support is demand driven, appropriately resourced and tailored to the different needs of the agencies;
- Ensure that technical leads have clear ToR that reflect the priorities of the Alliance;
- Standardize indicators and data collection for important process and impact monitoring;
- Joint assessment of needs is critical to moving towards harmonization of program strategies; ideally an Alliance should undertake a joint assessment throughout the areas of geographic coverage and target those that are worst affected;
- PEFSAs must identify a niche in the food security sector in order to maintain relevance going forward;
- PEFSAs are a unique opportunity to undertake research; this should be planned for from the beginning.

Recommendations to ECHO and other donors:

- Ensure frequent, close contact with Alliance agencies especially during the planning stage;
- Be clear and transparent regarding donor objectives for the Alliance programs and for the Alliance itself.

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Acronyms

ACF	Action Contre le Faim
ACTED	Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development
CFW	Cash for work
CALP	Cash Learning Partnership
ECHO	European Commission Humanitarian Office
EFSL	Emergency food security and livelihoods
EMMA	Emergency Markets Mapping and Analysis
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IRC	International Rescue Committee
KP	Khyber Paktunkhwa
NDMA	National Disaster Management Authority
NGO	Non-governmental agency
PDMA	Provincial Disaster Management Authority
PEFSA	Pakistan Emergency Food Security Alliance
SCI	Save the Children International
SME	Small and Micro Enterprise

1. Background

The 2010 monsoon season brought torrential rains over a two week period in July/August to northern Pakistan. The resulting floods affected some 20 million Pakistanis throughout Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Punjab, Sindh and Baluchistan. In early August, six ECHO partner agencies came together to form the Pakistan Emergency Food Security Alliance (PEFSA).

A series of conversations with ECHO's Regional Food Security TA were the catalyst to the first Alliance conversations. ECHO sought partners who would present a coherent needs assessments and implement a coordinated emergency program in line with the EC Humanitarian Food Assistance Communication, the ECHO policy on food security programming and expenditures from the food assistance line. The partners sought funding for a coordinated emergency program with opportunities for learning from each other. Early discussions focused on the use of cash or food aid to ensure food security objectives.

While ECHO was initially interested to support an emergency food security consortium, it was agreed with the partners that an "Alliance" would be faster. Under the Alliance, one shared program would be developed, and each of the six agencies would submit the same proposal for funding. In the midst of such a massive emergency response, the risk of taking the lead and accepting financial and programmatic accountability for a large program with five implementing partners was great. Negotiations to establish a consortium would take time. It was envisioned that the Alliance would grown into a consortium at some later stage.

The six agencies were awarded € 15 million in total for six programs, each six months in duration, starting September 1, 2010 (approximately 1 month after the start of the floods). The program proposal did not define the interventions to take place, but rather defined objectives and results, a process of assessment and *potential* responses, and a general budget. The PEFSA had the following expected results:

- Targeted households receive an appropriate level of resources transferred through a proper modality, in a timely manner to ensure access to sufficient food to meet their daily consumption needs
- Targeted households receive an appropriate level of support through proper modalities, in a timely manner to minimize asset depletion and where possible to preserve or increase the asset base.
- Best practices in cash transfer programming during the flood response in Pakistan are identified, documented and disseminated.

The Alliance prioritized a joint Emergency Market Mapping and Analysis (EMMA), a methodology well known to several of the agencies, for September. The EMMA, combined with each agency's own food security analysis, either ongoing in August or planned for September, would provide the basis for determining which emergency food security and livelihoods (EFSL) interventions would be appropriate. The six programs were approved for funding on the condition that the agencies provide clarification on what modalities were planned by October 15th; prior to approval, no interventions were to be implemented. Modalities were submitted jointly to ECHO by this date, and were finalized and approved by November 15th.

The Alliance shares expensive technical resources in monitoring and evaluation, gender and child protection mainstreaming, cash transfer programming, market assessment, and coordination.

Agencies identified and implemented a range of EFSL programming, including

- Cash grants
- Cash for work
- Small and mirco enterprise grants
- Cash vouchers for food
- Commodity vouchers for assets
- Distributions of food, seeds, poultry and small stock.

2. Methodology of Review

The key research questions for this review included:

- What were the key strengths, weaknesses, enabling factors, stumbling blocks in implementation of the modalities chosen?
- What were the key strengths and weakness of targeting methods used?
- What are the key successes and challenges of working in Alliance?

The methodology included the following:

- Desk review of pertinent PEFSA and other literature
- Structured interviews with PEFSA agency program management, implementation and operational staff, technical leads, and ECHO
- Online survey filled by Islamabad and field based staff
- Preliminary results workshopped with PEFSA agencies

The online survey was not statistically representative. A total of 44 PEFSA agency staff took the survey; on average, 22 or 23 people answered each question. Specific results are included in Appendix 1.

3. Targeting

Targeting processes are not well documented by agencies, and can be poorly understood by beneficiaries, donor agencies, and sometimes, even agency staff. Given the different agency experiences and loose nature of the Alliance, PEFSA agencies did not align targeting methods but did document these.

Geographic targeting

PEFSA agencies went through a joint geographic targeting process that sought to ensure coverage of the worst affected districts and avoid overlap. Agencies chose districts that had been identified as worst affected primarily based on existing operational bases and capacity. Avoiding overlap at the district level was not entirely possible, but nor was it necessary: districts are home to far more residents than one agency can generally target.

There was some limited overlap at this level. For example, three agencies worked in Punjab, in Rajanpur, DG Khan, Muzaffargarh and Mianwali. All three overlapped in DG Khan, a very hard hit area, while two overlapped in Muzaffargarh and Rajanpur. This required three organizational bases in DG Khan, two in Rajanpur, and two in Muzaffargarh. A more efficient use of human and operational resources would have seen each agency targeting their resources to one of the three districts, with a total of three operational bases. Likewise, two agencies worked in both Nowshera and Charsadda, although they were able to manage these districts with only one operational base each. The overlap in Punjab did however foster greater cooperation than was seen elsewhere. This was the only area where exchange visits between the agencies were conducted.

Coverage in Sindh, which was perhaps the worst hit area, was weak – only two of six PEFSA agencies worked there under the Alliance, though now all six have a presence in the province. This was consistent with a broader pattern across the humanitarian community in the first months of the floods: few agencies had operational bases in Sindh, and these took time to establish for a number of reasons. The floods affected all four provinces, plus the Northern areas, and agencies had little excess HR capacity to work with. Instead of moving staff from existing bases not facing an emergency to start up new operational bases, they had to hire new staff. This had a huge impact on the level and speed of scale up of services in Sindh, including within PEFSA. Sindh and Punjab also had a smaller humanitarian presence to start with, simply because they had not faced the same disasters as KP. Operational constraints also arose in the geographic targeting for the second phase. While the financial costs of closing one operational base and opening a new one might have been justified and paid for by ECHO, the non-financial costs were also significant: agencies would have to lay off experienced staff, only to have to hire and train new staff in a new area; to exit to one community, only to have to establish ties with a new community; to close one operational base, perhaps only just opened, only to open somewhere else. All three reduce efficiency of delivery and can have more severe repercussions, including on security. This is an ongoing tension that must be balanced: the donor seeks to target scarce resources to the areas of highest need, while agencies face the aforementioned constraints and thus seek to perpetuate operations in previously targeted areas. Creative human resource policies that encourage and enable staff to relocate in emergencies as the need arises, and generally foster organizational loyalty are critical to an agency's flexibility and capacity to respond, and should be part of their preparedness.

Box 1: Targeting at the sub district level: IRC's village selection process

IRC elected to work in Nowshera and Charsadda districts in KP, areas generally considered to be worst affected, but with a high density of agencies on ground. In order to identify the worst affected villages, avoid overlap, and allocate resources, IRC followed this methodology: program managers short-listed villages to be targeted based on information provided by Community Mobilizations Officers (CMOs) and other staff from the area according to the following criteria:

- Preferably villages (<500 households), classified as rural, close to or on the Kabul River
- Not on main road but accessible
- Greater than 50% of houses, crops and infrastructure damaged or destroyed
- Primary two livelihoods strategies have been destroyed
- No or very little support received from other governmental and non-governmental entities
- Not covered by other PEFSA partner with similar modalities

A village survey was conducted in 70 of the most affected villages, in collaboration with the Agriculture University of Peshawar. The methodology entailed Focus Group Discussions with representatives of each village (women and men were interviewed separately) and visual inspections. The village survey produced quantitative data on the demographic features of each village, and the damages and loss suffered in terms of agriculture, livestock, infrastructure and business assets. In order to prioritize villages and match the appropriate modalities to such villages, a set of filters were applied to the data. The final recommendations underwent a human review to no logical mistakes had been made. The village profiles produced provided critical basic information on the villages, livelihoods strategies and damages, and allowed IRC to make comparisons between the villages.

Beneficiary selection

Agencies either selected beneficiaries themselves following house-to-house survey (sometimes called indicator targeting, here termed agency targeting), or asked village groups to select beneficiaries (community based targeting), or used some combination of the two methods. Which method was used depended on the agency and the intervention. The final evaluation found that PEFSA agencies did successfully reach poor and severely flood affected households: 80% were poor or below poverty line before the flood; 90% lost their homes in the floods.

As compared to other stages of the project cycle, agencies cited the most challenges in beneficiary selection, including speed, communication of criteria to beneficiaries, minimizing inclusion and exclusion errors, targeting women, hijacking of processes by powerful groups, beneficiary dishonesty in surveys, and targeting impartially in conflicted communities.

Most agencies asked targeted communities to identify beneficiaries for cash for work; however, in targeting cash grants (both unconditional and enterprise grants), agencies were more likely undertake surveys to identify beneficiaries themselves. This is a more developmental approach than might have been expected in an emergency response; one contributing factor was the €100,000 cap on budgets for unconditional grants, required by ECHO. Had agencies had more flexibility with their budgets, they might have been more flexible with their targeting. Other contributing factors included the delayed start and subsequent loss of emergency momentum, and the strong developmental experience of agencies in country. Box 2 highlights some of the advantages and disadvantages of agency and community selection processes gathered during the online survey on interview process.

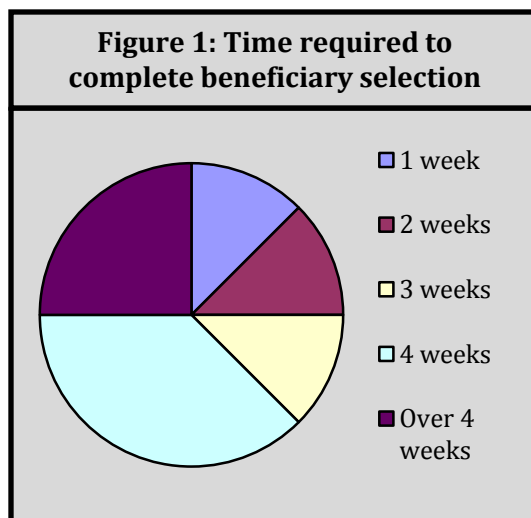


Figure 1 contains survey answers to the question, how long did beneficiary selection take? The question did not differentiate between different interventions, but the majority of respondents indicated that selection took four weeks or more. According to the survey, community selection was slightly faster (around 3 weeks) while agency selection generally took over 4 weeks. Targeting is a constraint to rapid emergency response, and begs the question, what can we do to speed up the process? Community selection processes were generally faster than agency process, but were more prone to manipulation and error. Another option is to target at the geographic level, and not to target at the household level (ie, to blanket distribute within certain “worst affected” districts or villages). Within PEFSA, some staff expressed concerns about leakages

from diversion or interference and large inclusion¹ errors in blanket cash distributions, while others did blanket distribute cash in the first phase response and said that under different circumstances (ie, different timing, no cap on unconditional cash grants) they would have blanket distributed cash under PEFSA. Universal targeting generally results in large inclusion errors and reduced impact on priority groups (Coady et al, 2004). The efficacy of targeting versus universality in delivering poverty reduction programs is dependent partly on targeting methods but also, in large part, on the indicative political economy: poor targeting, as a result of interference and

¹ The portion of targeted beneficiaries that do not fit the criteria is called the inclusion error.

manipulation, can actually result in programming with larger inclusion and exclusion errors than random targeting would (Coady et al 2004).

Box 2: ACTED's beneficiary selection by vulnerability scoring method

ACTED scored households against a range of criteria in order to prioritize potential beneficiaries for different interventions. First ACTED asked community groups to prepare lists of vulnerable households based on the general criteria discussed and agreed with them; then a household survey was undertaken by ACTED staff to all those identified by the community groups. Beneficiary data was entered into a database and households were given points according the vulnerability criteria they met. For example, a household living in the open air would receive 15 points; a family with a loan of more than PKR 10,000 would receive 5. The maximum score was 259, but in practice the median was close to 50. ACTED would then select the ones who would score higher and could then easily apply filters for certain programs, such as food security or shelter programming. Likewise, ACTED could easily expand program enrollment based on the continuous index created by scoring.

What importance do PEFSA agencies place on minimizing exclusion errors² in the aftermath of a disaster? Agencies have established complaint mechanisms, allowing for those who were somehow excluded to seek inclusion; however, it was not clear whether those that fit the criteria used the complaint mechanisms to gain access to assistance under PEFSA. In order to better measure targeting success, agencies should be measuring both inclusion and exclusion errors. Generally agencies check inclusion errors by sampling from their list and verifying that most of those within the sample group (the percentages range from 80 to 90% within PEFSA) fit the criteria. This sampling fails to measure how many were not included in the list that should have been. If agencies sampled not from the list but from the general population in the targeted villages, they could check both inclusion and exclusion rates. If exclusion rates are high, the selection process should be revisited. What constitutes an acceptable exclusion error in emergency food security is not defined in the literature review undertaken for this study. In a cash program, agencies might accept 3 to 5% for stable populations.

Box 3: Agency lead versus community selection processes

	Agency lead	Community lead
House to house survey required?	Yes	Not necessarily
Verification required?	Yes	Yes
Speed	4+ weeks	3 weeks
Do beneficiaries understand the criteria and process?	Inconsistent	More likely
Do those selected match the criteria?	More likely	Inconsistent
Danger of beneficiary dishonesty?	Yes	No
Danger of hijacking by powerful elites?	Less	More
Inclusion/exclusion errors	Smaller	Harder to address

² Those who fit the criteria who have been excluded from the list.

Can it work in divided communities?	Yes	No
Can it work in camps? ³	Yes	Yes

In Sindh tribal divisions were a particular problem. Some communities, said the agencies that work there, were homogenous, but where communities were heterogeneous, targeting was more complex and conflicted, and required special measures such as separate community committees for each group, as well as greater attention to communication, transparency, and equitable targeting. Under such circumstances, agency lead targeting maybe comparatively efficient, more effective and ultimately more accountable and transparent to beneficiaries. One agency had previously experienced hijacking of their community targeting process by local power groups, and had shifted almost entirely to agency selection using house to house surveys. While the process was slower, they felt it was worth to ensure the independence of their selection processes, particularly in the highly political distribution of cash.

Agencies developed a number of different measures to include individuals who did not have CNICs – individuals who are generally the most marginalized in society. These methods included:

- Issue an agency ID (requires that banks agree to accept the ID);
- Pay cash for work team leaders who distribute payments to their teams (requires monitoring of primary and secondary payment process);
- Maintain capacity to pay some in cash (requires additional admin);
- Issue checks to third party selected by the target beneficiaries (requires monitoring).

In PEFSA II, IRC will take the lead in supporting agencies to include individuals without CNICs, and should disseminate referral information for those who wish to obtain a CNIC. This capacity should be a minimum standard across the Alliance.

Targeting women, consistent with agency commitments to equitable programming and respect for cultural norms, was also challenging. About half of the women targeted under PEFSA were reached through unconditional cash grants (women’s preference, according to the final evaluation); however, due to the ECHO cap on unconditional cash grants, agencies had to be innovative in identifying conditions that women could meet. Quilt making as cash for work, cash for hygiene promotion training, and grants for women’s home based businesses were just some of the interventions. Any concerns that women would be marginalized by the use of cash assistance were not played out in PEFSA’s experience; on the contrary, agencies reported that women were empowered when they were targeted directly, and were involved in decision making over expenditures even when their husbands were targeted (although the extent to which this was true this varied by location; in one location, 65% of households responded that both husband and wife were involved in decision making; in another, almost 70% said that husbands were the primary decision maker). This is particularly interesting given that in Pakistan, it is mostly men who make all household purchases, including for food due to restrictions on women’s mobility. Where agencies targeted households due to the presence of chronically ill or disabled individuals, those individuals felt their position in the household improve. However, it was also true that agencies that targeted male heads of households with livestock support (livestock traditionally falling within women’s duties) found that women ended up controlling this

“I was the decision maker! ...I felt that because I earned the money I was the person to spend the money. I had that right...” – Female beneficiary

³ While PEFSA programming was not implemented in camps, agencies within PEFSA worked in camps outside of the PEFSA program

resource, and the products and profits. Therefore, is it necessary to target women directly in order to ensure that they benefit? This question needs further research, perhaps under PEFSA II.

Box 4: Targeting women IDPs with cash for work: Oxfam’s quilt making

Limited livelihoods option in camps combined with agency commitments to ensure gender equity in programming lead Oxfam to target women with a very specific cash for work program involving quilt making. Cloth and other materials were distributed to women in camps who made quilts that were then collected and distributed as part of Oxfam’s winterization kit. Each quilt took about one day to make, so women were paid the local daily wage per quilt, PKR 300 (\$5). They received checks on a weekly basis but often cashed multiple checks at once to save on transportation to the bank. Women who did not possess CNIC cards were able to nominate someone to receive the check on their behalf. Oxfam notes that the program was more logistically heavy than other cash for work programs, and that expenditures on materials were substantial. Implementation was complicated by the return process, which started soon after the program. However, the less tangible benefits of targeting women directly with employment opportunities were many: the activity was inclusive of women with limited mobility, for example, those with health problems or keeping purdah; women felt and were empowered in decision making; and many gained familiarity with banks for the first time.

Recommendations in targeting

- Consider blanket distributions of cash in “worst hit” areas in the immediate aftermath of a crisis to ensure speed and minimize exclusion; this will only be possible once ECHO removes the cap on conditional cash grants;
- Check inclusion and exclusion error rates by sampling from the general population of targeted villages, rather than sampling from the agency list;
- Use community or agency selection processes as the situation demands, but ensure communication of criteria, lists and details of the complaints response mechanism to beneficiaries;
- Target women at the design stage;
- Document geographic and household level targeting processes at the agency level.

4. Cash and other forms of assistance

All six PEFSA agencies implemented cash grant programs, including unconditional and restricted grants, and cash for work in their programs; two also used vouchers (one used commodity vouchers, the other used cash vouchers for food); three employed distributions (one for food, two for agricultural inputs).

Choosing and comparing the modalities

Choosing which modality to use to deliver assistance was based on a number of often competing interests. The online survey indicated that they were prioritized thus:

Box 5: Priorities when choosing modalities	Rank
The modality was an efficient way to deliver assistance to my target group	1
The modality addressed a critical need identified in the assessment	2
The modality ensured beneficiary and staff security	3

Our agency had a great deal of experience with this activity	5
The modality took into account the constraints identified in the assessment	5
The modality ensured beneficiaries obtained/spent on certain items (food or agricultural inputs).	6
The modality was recommended in the EMMA	7
The modality allows for beneficiary choice/control	9
The modality was preferred by beneficiaries	9
The modality was conditional, and thus allowed us to meet the ECHO cap for unconditional cash	10
Our beneficiaries had a great deal of experience with this activity	11
We chose cash because the objective of PEFSA was to demonstrate cash programming.	12

In reality, there were many trade offs between the different priorities. For example, efficiency, in terms of the cost of delivering some benefit to the beneficiary in line with the expected result, might be sacrificed due to constraints such as difficulty in targeting women or labour poor, market weakness, or conditionality requirements⁴. Some commented that conditionality requirements were an important constraint in deciding what modality to use, and that without this, the agency would have increased their budget for unconditional cash grants significantly, most likely enhancing efficiency. Likewise, investments in ensuring the durability of community schemes in cash for work increases expenditures on materials, and takes away from expenditures on labor. This tradeoff between maximizing expenditures on labor and investing in sustainability and disaster risk reduction (DRR) is a tension for both agency and donor. Most agree that in the immediate aftermath of a shock, an emergency food security program should maximize expenditures on labor, while in an early recovery program, investments should and can be made in ensuring the sustainability of physical works. Every agency must make these choices based on their own capacity and the particular situation on ground. However, agencies should be explicit about the trade offs and how they contribute or detract from the desired result, as stated in the logframe.

In deciding if cash is the right intervention, it must be determined if it is both appropriate and feasible. Cash can be appropriate if markets are functional, if objectives can be met using cash, and if the situation is not so exploitative or insecure that beneficiaries or staff are at risk from the intervention. Cash is feasible if the agency has capacity, and if the financial systems exist to support

Box 6: ACF's vouchers for food

While the EMMA assessment in Sindh found that markets in the areas visited were functional and recommended cash, Thatta, at the mouth of the Indus, was still underwater, and ACF's own assessment showed that people had limited physical access to markets, and that village traders were unable to immediately respond to demand. 5,000 food insecure households were identified through a community selection and agency verification process. Following two months of food distributions, ACF moved to food vouchers. Cash vouchers valued at PKR 5,000 (calculated to meet a basic food ration) were issued to households on a monthly basis. Beneficiaries were free to spend vouchers at any local food vendor - a total of 57 vendors selling a range of food stuffs eventually redeemed vouchers, most of them within one week of voucher distribution. While administratively heavy, ACF felt that the program effectively ensured food security and dietary diversity for the most vulnerable households while strengthening local markets. Based on experiences elsewhere ACF focused significant energy on ensuring that vouchers were not counterfeited, a risk they later considered exaggerated. On staff commented, "In my last post vouchers were being counterfeited across the border days after they were issued! In Thatta that wasn't a risk, because they have no experience with vouchers, because they have no access to printing shops, and maybe they're just more honest!"

a system of cash disbursement. In planning for PEFSA's programming, the Alliance placed strong emphasis on assessing markets, and in some cases neglected to look adequately at the other issues. The degree to which the EMMA contributed to decision making around whether to use cash varied from agency to agency depending on area of geographic focus and markets examined by the EMMA. The EMMA methodology provides not just a picture of the current market status, post shock, but also a baseline, critical to understanding how markets normally impact livelihoods and vulnerabilities. Agencies felt that market assessment was necessary, but that the EMMA undertaken by PEFSA targeted too many markets (and perhaps not the right markets) and was thus too heavy and too slow. In order to address the issue of timeliness arising from PEFSA's experience, ECHO suggests that a baseline market assessment be performed for critical food markets in areas prone to disaster and conflict and updated on a more or less annual basis. After a shock a rapid market assessment, looking only at the market since the shock, can be undertaken. Logically, any food security surveillance should examine how markets impact food security and vulnerability to shocks, thus their recommendations falls within what food security agencies should be doing already.

Agencies felt that for PEFSA's purposes, a rapid assessment addressing the following would be sufficient to decide between food and cash assistance:

- Are road and other normal transport networks functioning?
- Are goods moving along these transport networks?
- Can traders in the affected areas purchase goods if their customers have cash?

Evidence thus far suggests that cash programs have not resulted in dreaded price inflation (Maxwell et al, 2008) but a much larger or longer-term program would require further investigation.

Each agency undertook it's own emergency food security assessment (EFSA) and felt that this was essential to planning emergency food security programming, particularly in determining if there was a critical food shortage or a protracted livelihoods crisis. Only if this is clear can program managers adequately determine what their objectives should be, and thus whether cash can achieve those objectives. A lighter emergency market assessment that includes the analysis methods from the EMMA, as suggested by ECHO, could be incorporated into an EFSA.

Agencies were generally in agreement that each modality positively contributed to immediate food security and/or to protection/recovery of the asset base. However, the secondary benefits and drawbacks were numerous, and sometimes secondary objectives seemed to eclipse the primary expected result in conversations with staff. Box 4 compares the different modalities against a range of advantages.

In comparing the modalities, conclusions were broadly based on staff feedback, post-distribution monitoring (PDM), program methodologies and other related documentation, as well as the online survey. In subsequent interventions, indicators and data collection methods should be standardized, so that stronger comparisons can be made. Any research on issues such as cost-benefit, targeting of women, or targeting inclusion and exclusion error rates would need to be planned for from the beginning.

Box 7: Comparing the modalities

	Cash grant	Cash for work	Voucher	Distribution
Immediate food consumption	+	+	++	++
Protects/ builds assets	Variable	Variable	+	+
Speed	++	+	-	+
Efficiency	++	Variable	+	+
Ease of implementation	++	=	-	++
Market strengthening	+	+	+	Variable
Sustainable livelihoods	Variable	-	Variable	Variable
Beneficiary self reliance ⁵	-	++	-	-
Beneficiary choice	++	+	=	-
Inclusive targeting	++	-	+	+

Learning about cash

What did agencies learn about how to scale up cash interventions? Learnings on cash programming center around the following issues:

- How much to give,
- When,
- To whom,
- For what,
- Through what mechanism?⁶
- Preventing leakages
- Preparedness

On the first issue, this review found that one-time, large cash transfers compared favorably with smaller, periodic cash transfers in allowing households to invest and meet a range of recovery needs, and crucially, to regain some measure of independence (See Box 7). The larger sum, crucially, allowed for investment in expensive productive or other essential activities, investment that might not otherwise have been possible. Saving is not typical of the culture in Pakistan, particularly not in Sindh or Punjab. Therefore in order to expend larger sums families incur debt, with all the risk and costs that that involves. Monthly transfers (totaling a similar amount as the large transfers) were spent in large proportion on food (50%) and other day to day items, and were generally successful in ensuring short term food consumption for highly vulnerable households. Of smaller, one-time cash grants (PKR 5000 or \$59) agency staff said, “Beneficiaries received it and the same day it was gone”. Expenditure patterns should be examined in greater depth in PEFSA II, requiring that collection of data around this is standardized.

⁵ Here “self reliance” is distinct from having a “sustainable livelihood”; rather it refers to a sense of self reliance and independence that staff saw in

⁶ On the subject of payment mechanisms, Oxfam’s recent review of the topic “Payment mechanisms used by the {EFSA Alliance in Pakistan: A comparative learning study”, by Asif Nawaz, is an excellent resource.

Box 8: Comparing expenditures from large cash grants and monthly supplements

Save the Children identified some 8,748 highly vulnerable women to receive PKR 17,000 (\$200) cash grants (for hygiene promotion training) under the PEFSA. This amount was calculated to generously cover food needs for two months. IRC gave a similar amount of money (a total of PKR 20,000) over four months to 600 vulnerable households. PKR 5,000 per month is estimated to cover basic food needs for a family of six to seven people.

A substantial sum compares favorably with smaller sums, periodic sums in assisting households to invest, while the monthly supplements contributed to food purchases. A cash utilization survey determined that funds from the Save the Children cash grants were spent on a range of goods and services, including: agricultural inputs (21%), health care (18%), educational expenses (18%), food (17% or \$34 on average), non-farm livelihoods (9%), other (7%), debts (5%), family obligations (3%), and utilities (2%). Meanwhile, IRC's monthly supplements were spent on smaller day-to-day items, such as food (50% or \$29 per month/\$116 total), health care (25%), debt servicing (9%) and home repair and household items (16%). A larger portion of the monthly supplements than the large grant was spent on food. Beneficiaries said that monthly cash supplements increased the quantity of food consumed (76%) and to the quality of food consumed (57%) "to some extent". An additional 26% said that cash supplements helped increased food quality a lot.

Thus where the objective is household economic recovery and sustainable livelihoods, a larger, one-time cash grant is more appropriate; where ensuring food security of highly vulnerable families who are perhaps unable to engage in productive activities is the objective, a smaller, monthly cash supplement works well.

Targeting involves not only who but when, and the utility of assistance can be wholly dependent on timing (take for example food assistance delivered during the hunger gap, versus two months after the harvest). PEFSA was not as timely as anyone would have wished, but certain conclusions can be drawn from the experiences. A large one-time transfer would be useful quickly following the shock to protect assets, or if the household is displaced, following return, in order to promote a return to normalcy. Monthly transfers designed to supplement income for the most vulnerable (who will take the longest to recover) are appropriate if targeted properly, and may help to prevent sale of assets if initiated immediately maintained until livelihoods have recovered. PEFSA experiences suggest that cash and other interventions can be complimentary, and can be effectively targeted to the same households during different phases. Some agencies purposively targeted the same households on a repetitive basis, and felt that this was necessary to address a range of different objectives during differing phases, as well as to adequately support complex livelihoods and coping strategies. Box 9 suggests some options for phasing cash transfers in emergencies.

One agency's experience with cash for work suggests that cash can be effectively used as a draw for return. When they initiated cash for work programming, they found that most were still in camps, and their program was undersubscribed. However, when IDP households discovered the cash for work program, they returned. In the absence of any assistance to enable a return to normalcy, displaced households preferred to remain in camps. In the end, the agency found its program oversubscribed – with returned IDPs.

There is an expanding school of thought that the flexible nature of cash (it can be used to achieve a range of objectives such as food security, shelter, asset protection, etc) is exactly why it should be blanket distributed in emergencies (Harvey 2007) though agencies concerned exclusively with food

Box 9: Suggested timing of cash interventions

Timing of transfer	Type of transfer	Objectives
Immediately following a shock	Larger cash grants	To ensure immediate food consumption, protect assets
Upon return of displaced populations	One time, larger cash grants or cash for work	To promote recovery and a return to normalcy
On a monthly basis	Grant equal to monthly income/food gap	To supplement household income and ensure food consumption for vulnerable households

security will find this flexibility a drawback (Maxwell et al, 2008). PEFSA agencies felt that the flexibility of cash was both an advantage and a drawback: assistance is effectively tailored at the household level from an almost unlimited range and combination of goods and services, but there was less security that cash would contribute efficiently to any given household's food consumption, a tension reflected in much of the food versus cash literature. While agencies accepted that individuals are rational and prioritize expenditures on a rational basis, they worried that households might rationally forego a sufficient or diverse diet in order to service debt, invest in their livelihoods or construct shelter, thus decreasing programmatic impact on food consumption. Likewise, where malnutrition is due to micronutrient deficiencies, cash may have little to no impact on nutrition outcomes, and thus clarifying objectives and the logic of achieving them is critical.

“Agencies are not mind readers. They cannot know what every single person wants and needs.” – PEFSA Staff

Conditionality is sometimes imposed in order to control the outcome of cash transfers, especially where incomplete information may hinder optimal beneficiary decision making, or to enable secondary benefits (through works schemes, etc). Conditions generally dramatically increase administration costs and the evidence about the efficacy of conditions themselves is inconclusive (DFID 2011). PEFSA agencies had strong, positive experiences with unconditional cash transfers, and were unsure conditions always added value. Because of the ECHO cap on unconditional cash grants, agencies had to be creative in imposing conditions: work requirements were the most common form, but training requirements (hygiene promotion) and other mechanisms (submission of business plans) were also used. Work requirements and business planning increased administration substantially over cash grants, while cash for training (hygiene promotion) was the most simple condition to implement.

Cash for work was administratively intensive but popular, due to the strong secondary benefits, including feelings of self-worth and self-reliance (which feel staff strongly emphasized), reduced risk of malaria, dengue and other disease after community clean up, economic benefits due to the restoration of productive infrastructure, promotion of return, and etc. Experiences suggest that in the immediate aftermath of a disaster like the floods, labor markets do not stop but are severely depressed, while cash needs at the household level are great. Harmonizing wage rates around the minimum wage immediately following a shock worked for PEFSA; as time went on, and labour markets recovered slightly, cash for work began to compete with other types of employment. Harmonizing wage rates lower than the minimum wage, close to or below agricultural wage labour in rural areas, was logical and necessary during the recovery period. Doing this will promote self-targeting.

In both stable and returning populations, agencies found they required flexibility in the number of cash for work beneficiaries and the number of days they would be employed. In situations where the labor market is severely depressed, agencies guarantee a minimum number of days of employment to food insecure households in order to ensure that households can afford the basic food basket; however, PEFSA agencies found that flexibility was required due to: the enormous number of potential beneficiaries who met the targeting criteria; population movements; and the recovery of labour markets. In one case, an agency was told by the local community that they would rather there was broader coverage for a shorter period of time than the reverse. Allowing for flexibility must be balanced with ensuring that vulnerable beneficiaries obtain the intended benefits, and depends on the situation of the labor market and the degree of food insecurity.

Determining a payment mechanism for cash grants and cash for work, in particular, was challenging for agencies, even given the relatively strong financial services available in Pakistan. Capacity of financial institutions in rural communities was a constraint; in some cases, only a certain amount of cash was available from day to day, despite disbursement requirements of agencies. In other cases, banks limited the number of checks that could be cashed per day, or limited the number of checks that could be issued on an account. Negotiations with banks were extensive and often agencies had to appeal to regional or capital city offices in order to negotiate the services they needed. The Oxfam study of payment mechanisms provides a much more complete analysis of this.

Some PEFSA agencies had had previous experiences with interference and found that cash was more political and prone to diversion than other forms of assistance; agencies were also keen to ensure that they minimized leakages and protection threats resulting from their own staff and program structures. Accountable, transparent targeting and secure and discrete transfer mechanisms were seen to be critical. Investment in monitoring (both process and post distribution) can also increase accountability (Gentilini, 2007). PEFSA agencies have generally strong monitoring and accountability strategies, but data must be routinely and uniformly collected to strengthen learned. Increased monitoring of targeting processes and outcomes would particularly add to PEFSA's knowledge base. The following is a list of some of the mechanisms used to ensure accountability in cash distribution:

- Community developed or agency developed beneficiary lists;
- Development and communication of clear and acceptable definition of "household";
- Publication of lists and criteria (or the opposite, to avoid interference)
- List verification
- Rotation of assessment/beneficiary identification and distribution teams;
- Double or triple checks on payment lists both prior to and after payment;
- Counter signature by staff and/or community representative at payment;
- Point of distribution and post distribution monitoring;
- Complaint and response mechanisms;
- CNIC requirements;
- Other community accountability measures.

Some of the most interesting lessons on cash have to do with organizational preparedness, and include staff and partner experience, organizational procedures, country specific SOPs and a priori identified payment mechanisms. Agencies took time to sign contracts with partners, hire new staff, identify appropriate banking services, or determine what procedures would be followed. Oxfam's study of payment mechanisms strongly recommends, as does the final evaluation, that MOUs

(rather than service agreements) with financial service providers reflecting services and cost structures be negotiated for the agencies' areas of operation prior to any emergency.

Some agencies with less in country experience struggled with operational procedures that were inappropriate to delivering cash (and were significantly more strenuous than procedures for delivering other forms of assistance). In order to respond rapidly with cash, organizations would ideally have the following in place:

- SOPs defined and tested in country;
- Staff and partners trained in the intervention methodology, rapid emergency food security and market assessment, and accountability measures;
- Market information/baseline;
- Emergency HR and logistics procedures (lead agency and implementing partners);
- Established payment mechanisms appropriate to the security environment and with capacity to scale up. These will vary from province to province in Pakistan.

Time and again human resource difficulties were cited as a principle constraint by PEFSA agencies; agencies lost staff to other agencies, had difficulty recruiting staff, and expended precious time training staff and partners after the emergency started. It is essential that agencies *and their partners* have emergency HR (and logistics) procedures in place prior to an emergency. It also seems to be helpful to have finance staff assigned to the cash program team in order to ensure adequate manpower and rapid implementation.

Box 10: CARE's cash for work program

CARE had just begun a cash for work program in flood affected areas of Punjab prior to the onset of the floods in July; they had been mapping financial services in the area, and when the floods began CARE finalized their negotiations and signed a contract with Tameer Bank, who offered mobile ATM services throughout their target area. The bank issued ATM cards to cash for work team leaders, who in turn were assisted to open bank accounts. In this way, there were no constraints to employing beneficiaries without CNIC cards. Beneficiaries included both men and women: men worked on traditional community works programs, while women worked on small schemes within the villages, to ensure consistence with cultural norms. Approximately 1.6% of the budget was spent on materials, largely tools. Every two weeks the team leader submitted attendance sheets for verification by implementing partners. On payment days, a bank van with a mobile ATM would visit villages, and team leaders would withdraw the salaries for the entire team. CARE partner staff monitored salary withdrawal and payment by team leaders. Distribution days were generally calm and well organized, and beneficiaries expressed satisfaction with the way they were treated. The mobile banking mechanism helped CARE to ensure increased participation of rural poor women (45% of total participants or 4500 women) by enabling them to obtain cash in their village in a safe way. CARE felt they were well prepared to implement the program, given their pre-emergency planning, but warn that partner capacity building and monitoring were time consuming. One unexpected outcome was that beneficiaries learned about the banking system, and most team leaders opened their first bank account.

Recommendations for cash and other programming

- Ensure preparedness to respond with cash by undertaking a baseline market assessment for staple foods and rapid emergency market assessments in the aftermath of a crisis;
- Ensure preparedness to respond with cash by developing and testing SOPs in country, training staff and partners, and identifying viable payment mechanisms prior to a crisis;
- Explicitly consider trade offs between efficiently achieving the primary expected result and secondary benefits when choosing a modality;
- Large transfers of cash serve in the aftermath of a crisis to promote investment and more rapid recovery; in the subsequent phases, targeted small tranches on a monthly basis can ensure a predictable income support for highly vulnerable households;
- Harmonize wage rates around the minimum wage in the immediate aftermath of a disaster; harmonize wage rates below the minimum wage (if legal), close to or below the price of agricultural labour in rural areas, in recovery periods to encourage self-targeting.
- Balance the need to deliver employment equivalent to the minimum food basket with flexibility in CFW targets where population movements or labour market recovery demand;
- In the immediate aftermath of a shock, focus on labour intensive schemes in cash for work programs; in recovery periods, allow for greater expenditures on materials, etc.
- PEFSA should agree to minimum standards including targeting of those without CNIC, targeting women, and data collection;
- Indicators and data collection methods should be standardized; indicators that should be used include: food consumption scores measured on a repetitive basis), expenditures on food and other items, materials to labour ratio in cash for work, and household economic indicators of beneficiaries.

Recommendations to ECHO and other donors:

- Ensure removal of ECHO cap on unconditional cash grants as soon as possible;
- Consider funding blanket cash transfers where appropriate and feasible with experienced cash partners as a first stage response, to address a range of needs including food security, shelter, household items and return; monitor and document learning.
- In highly strategic programs, ensure close collaboration in planning and transparent communication with partners to ensure that the specific objectives of both parties are met.

5. Working in Alliance

Working in alliance has been a fruitful experience for the PEFSA agencies; half way between working independently and forming a consortium, the alliance has some of the benefits of working in a full consortium, without the formal commitment.

Each agency, without exception, said that the PEFSA was a positive experience and that they would do it again. In terms of the benefits of working in Alliance, agencies appreciated the opportunities for learning from each other about food security programming, the coordinated response, the efficiency (presumably of shared technical resources, minimized overlap and accumulating impact) and the sense of “healthy competition”. The degree to which agencies were accountable to each other for programming put additional pressure to achieve quickly and technically excellent results. It was also noted that the Alliance coalesced almost spontaneously, and was driven by agency food security program staff in country. In comparison with other experiences in which interagency relations were defined at the headquarters level, or by management staff with less direct focus on programming, the PEFSA experience was seen as positive and appropriately narrowly focused.

Technical Leads

The Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) Team, housed within Save the Children, was an important contribution and while the final evaluation raised several areas of improvement, its also apparent that this was the most successful “lead” within the Alliance. See Box 5 for additional information on this.

In implementing the other lead roles in gender, child protection, and cash learning (through the appointment of a Cash Learning Partnership focal person) there were several challenges faced. These included:

- Inappropriate training delivery mechanisms (combined with...)
- Lack of engagement with field teams (combined with...)
- Services and tools were not targeted to the needs of specific agencies
- Inadequate resourcing
- Too many or unclear priorities (particularly CALP)

Mainstreaming was particularly challenging. It was noted by partners that mainstreaming, for example of gender or protection, is not the same as gender or protection programming, and is in fact much more difficult than programming. Buy in remained elusive, and awareness raising with staff is still necessary. There were positive outcomes as well: the visit by the IRC gender specialist to partners in Punjab was considered very useful, and more direct engagement with the field is a strong recommendation both of the PEFSA staff and this study. Staff identified formal training and accompaniment in the field as preferred support delivery mechanisms. Taking

learning from the MEAL team, services should more “client oriented” and should be tailored to the demands and needs of each agency, rather than “one size”. Teams noted that any mainstreaming had to include an element of sensitization, but that of paramount importance was a focus on what mainstreaming (of gender, protection, or other topics) in EFSL practically entails. The delivery is still too conceptually based, and not based in practical issues specific to EFSL programming.

The CALP focal point was seen as a useful resource that was not used by PEFSA. While it was understood from the beginning that the CALP focal point would support not just PEFSA but cash coordination in the humanitarian community as a whole, agencies were desirous of more extensive CALP support to PEFSA, and noted that areas where support would have been useful were: coordinated mapping of financial services and negotiation with service providers (something which is presently being taken forward very profitably) and technical advice and support for learning around cash. In the future, such a position should have defined ToRs including support for both the Alliance and the broader community in realistic measure. The study of payment mechanisms undertaken by Oxfam (who hosted the CALP focal point) was extremely useful to agencies.

Box 11: Accumulating impact: Save the Children’s MEAL Team

From the outset ECHO said they were interested to accumulate impact from the different interventions, and thus it was apparent the Alliance would need a common M&E strategy, and preferably a common MEAL team. MEAL activities were delayed by recruitment, but the team had drafted and workshopped a MEAL strategy by mid October. The following were some of the services and tools developed by the team for use under PEFSA I:

- MEAL Strategy
- Output tracker (compatible with ACTED’s GIS program)
- Monthly reports focused on learning and challenges
- Case studies
- Mid Term Review and Final Evaluation
- Lessons Learned study and workshops

The MEAL team gave several trainings on demand on topics such as monitoring and evaluation, and establishing beneficiary accountability mechanisms. The MEAL lead role was successful because the work was essential to program cycle management, and did not add much to already overburdened staff taskloads. Also, the MEAL team offered on demand services in the form of technical advice, visits, and trainings that were tailored to individual agency needs.

Areas for improvement or expansion identified were consistent with an ongoing process of maturation of the Alliance, and included:

- Greater engagement with the field teams
- Greater food security technical input into the MEAL work
- Greater focus on outcomes and impact
- Early planning for learning and research opportunities
- Standardization of indicators, data collected in PDM etc.

Interagency sharing and learning

Learning from each other both an unstated objective of working in Alliance and a very clearly stated expected result of the projects, but for several reasons, the group felt that opportunities were not fully realized, and thus the objective not fully met.

Opportunities include: Alliance activities at the field level, including exposure visits, discussion forums, or trainings; engagement with the CALP

“The strengths of one did not become the strengths of others.” – PEFSA Stakeholder

focal point; and consistent electronic sharing of methodologies, tools, guidelines and etc. There are underlying factors for this: one, the lack of coherence across agency projects decreased the relevance of sharing; while each agency undertook cash grants and cash for work, the issues of how much, when, to whom, and for what were not discussed within PEFSA because cash was not the only focus. Two, the pressure to implement quickly was great, because what had been proposed as a six-month program had been reduced to a three and a half month period by the contractual negotiations in the beginning. It has also been noted by some that trust between the agencies had to be built, and that after some time, transparent sharing increased significantly. Many of the documents and tools that were shared at the Islamabad level did not trickle down to the field, again, mostly because managers felt that field teams had tasks enough without adding more. Last, agency staff in the field were often new to their posts and did not know each other at all, thus diminishing the possibility that they would seek each other out on their own.

In every emergency, staff workloads are going to be a constraint. For this reason, if learning is to happen, it must be prioritized and specifically planned for. An Alliance must set out a joint workplan that includes technical trainings and visits, learning events, and other Alliance commitments, as soon as possible. Ideally this information would be presented as and integrated into agency level Gantt charts.

Coordinated programming

The program proposal did not, as previously mentioned, define the interventions to take place, but rather a process of assessment and *potential* responses. As an Alliance, each agency was free to determine its own emergency response program. This allowed each agency to plan and implement according to its experience, mandate and capacity, but also allowed for a proliferation of modalities, and necessitated, from ECHOs side, a review of modalities prior to implementation. PEFSA submitted a letter detailing 36 modalities of intervention, which contributed to a delay in the approval. This delay was one of the major shortcomings of PEFSA program, from a technical and implementation perspective. First, it meant that the interventions were not first or second stage emergency responses, but rather more akin to early recovery interventions. It also turned a six-month program into a three and a half month program.

While there are recommendations, articulated earlier, about the substance and timing of market assessments like the EMMA, the agencies felt that the coordination around the implementation of the EMMA was highly successful, and pointed to joint assessment as an area of opportunity. This is one area in which PEFSA has a great deal to offer, in terms of agency technical expertise in food security assessment, contextual understanding, and geographic scope. It may be that there is substantial niche in food security surveillance to be filled as well. PEFSA must maintain relevance in order to secure ongoing funding. This will require an assessment not just of the status and structural causes of food insecurity in Pakistan, but an assessment of the sector, and where PEFSA can effectively add value.

Box 12: SWOT Analysis of PEFSA

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An alliance is faster to set up than a consortium • More coordinated, coherent response than six separate programs • More efficient use of expensive technical resources • Agencies bear only the financial and programmatic risk of their own program • Agencies can implement according to their own methodologies and experience • An alliance may have more long term relevance and broader scope than a project based consortium • Organic, narrowly focused, country based Alliances are more likely to be relevant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Alliance is based in the capital and does not reach the field • Slow decision making • Mainstreaming methods have not yet had impact • Not enough sharing of ideas • More work than individual programming • Reduced program coherence versus a consortium • Greater need for ongoing coordination versus a consortium • More administration for the donor than a consortium • Duplicates the work of the cluster
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for learning, including sharing of methodologies, exposure visits in the field, and research • Aligned programs, geographic overlap and coordination will increase cross fertilization • More extensive field based use of technical advisory resources • Broad geographic coverage and available technical resources should contribute to a strong assessment of needs • Food security surveillance and examination of structural causes of food insecurity seem to be gap areas in the sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No accountability to the Alliance or clear lines of authority • Risk of disparate programming choices • Donors can still pick and choose projects, which means the Alliance can be broken up • Non-aligned programming and a lack of geographic overlap reduces the scope for cross fertilization • Donors may seek out alternative mechanisms with less administration

Recommendations for working in Alliance:

- Establish objectives of the Alliance (what are we going to do) and objectives of *working in Alliance* (why is an Alliance a good way to do that) as early as possible;
- Establish with the donor a vision of what the Alliance contributes to food security at a national level in the medium term (one – two years);
- Identify, plan for and schedule activities of the Alliance, including research and learning, so they can be incorporated into agency implementation plans;
- Establish functional leads and bring on other technical/mainstreaming support as need arises; ensure that technical support is demand driven, appropriately resourced and tailored to the different needs of the agencies;
- Ensure that technical leads have clear ToR that reflect the priorities of the Alliance;
- Standardize indicators and data collection for important process and impact monitoring;
- Joint assessment of needs is critical to moving towards harmonization of program strategies; ideally an Alliance should undertake a joint assessment throughout the areas of geographic coverage and target those that are worst affected;

- PEFSA must identify a niche in the food security sector in order to maintain relevance going forward;
- PEFSA is a unique opportunity to undertake research; this should be planned for from the beginning.

Recommendations to ECHO and other donors:

- Ensure frequent, close contact with Alliance agencies especially during the planning stage;
- Be clear and transparent regarding donor objectives for the Alliance programs and for the Alliance itself.

6. Conclusions

The PEFSA agencies have implemented a range of EFSL programming in cooperation and collaboration, and there are significant opportunities to engage in high quality food security surveillance and programming, and action research about the same. As the Alliance matures, the agencies must look to maximize efficiencies and learning and ensure the Alliance becomes more than the sum of six agencies programming. To this end, it is hoped that that this review will help PEFSA to look take advantage of the lessons thus far, from seeing examples of best practice and mistakes made, and put them to use.

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