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YOUTH IN AGRI-FOOD SYSTEMS LEARNING

GLOBAL FOOD SECURITY STRATEGY WHITE PAPER

USAID BUREAU FOR RESILIENCE AND FOOD SECURITY

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AWE	Advancing Women's Empowerment
CCIR	Cross-cutting Intermediate Result
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DDI	Bureau for Development, Democracy, and Innovation
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EAS	Extension and Advisory Services
FTF	Feed the Future
GFSA	Global Food Security Act of 2016
GFSS	U.S. Global Food Security Strategy
GFSS-R	U.S. Global Food Security Strategy Refresh
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labor Organization
IR	Intermediate Result
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
MHM	Menstrual Hygiene Management
MSD	Market System Development
MSME	Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprise
OVCs	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
PIRS	Performance Indicator Reference Sheets
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
PSE	Private-Sector Engagement
PYD	Positive Youth Development
RFA	Request for Application
RFS	Bureau for Resilience and Food Security
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
SO	Strategic Objective

SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
UN	United Nations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USG	United States Government
VSLA	Village Savings and Loan Association
WSSH	Water Security, Sanitation, and Hygiene
YP2LE	YouthPower2: Learning and Evaluation

Introduction

The Global Food Security Act of 2016 (GFSA), P.L. 114-195, and its subsequent reauthorization in 2018 codified the Feed the Future (FTF) Initiative and mandated the development and implementation of the U.S. Global Food Security Strategy (GFSS), a whole-of-government effort to promote global food security, resilience, and nutrition that also addresses intersections with water resources management and water, sanitation, and hygiene. The GFSS has guided United States Government (USG) investments in agri-food systems and food security, resilience, nutrition, and water, sanitation, and hygiene programming since 2016. The strategy contributes directly to the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 1 and 2 (end poverty in all its forms everywhere and end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture, respectively).

The GFSS recognizes that the contributions of youth are critical to sustainably reducing global hunger, malnutrition, and poverty, as well as the risk of conflict and extremism. It also recognizes that the global youth population is growing, particularly in developing countries in Africa and Asia, and with that growth come youth employment crises and disproportionately high poverty rates among young people. History shows these factors can contribute to unrest and a host of negative social consequences. The GFSS recognizes governments and donors must engage youth in solving these problems in their communities and countries. The GFSS includes increasing youth empowerment and livelihoods, with particular attention to adolescent girls and young women, as Cross-cutting Intermediate Result 4 (CCIR 4).

As the GFSS approaches the end of its strategy period, USAID's Bureau for Resilience and Food Security (RFS) is preparing for a GFSS "Refresh" (GFSS-R), a new, multi-year strategy that takes into account the current context, USG priorities, and evidence and lessons learned from the last four years of implementation of the current GFSS. It is, therefore, an opportune time to assess progress to date and to make recommendations for a new strategy period.

To that end, USAID RFS has contracted Making Cents International under the YouthPower 2: Learning and Evaluation mechanism to develop this white paper on Youth and the GFSS for internal USAID audiences. This paper examines how youth were included in the GFSS, assesses USAID approaches and contributions to improvements in relevant programmatic areas, and identifies areas of alignment and divergence among the GFSS and other relevant USG and USAID policy and strategy documents as concerns youth. It also reviews new evidence in the academic and practitioner literature around effective youth engagement in GFSS programmatic areas and the changing context for food security. Drawing conclusions from the wealth of information reviewed, the paper explores how the GFSS-R results framework might improve the Agency's understanding of and evidence base for the impacts on youth and youth contributions to food security, resilience, and nutrition in their households, communities, and countries.

Inclusion of Youth and Marginalized Youth in the GFSS

The GFSS missed a key opportunity to propose approaches that recognize youth populations (when supported through PYD activities) as development assets. It articulates a theory of change for each objective (discussed in more detail below), but references to youth (as well as women and other marginalized groups) are tokenistic and treat youth as a homogeneous population. The lack of focus and detailed attention to sub-populations of youth (and other participants) minimizes any incentive to address the needs of marginalized populations, which can be difficult and time-consuming. Because the achievement of the GFSS objectives largely depends on reaching a community's poorest and most vulnerable members, reflecting on how marginalized groups were included in the GFSS may yield important lessons for the GFSS-R. Therefore, a key question is: to what extent does the GFSS support conceptual linkages to inclusive development for youth (for example, pertaining to indigenous youth;

youth with disabilities; lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI+) youth; married youth under the age of majority; and youth who become parents under the age of majority)? The GFSS provides no segmentation of the youth population at all (encompassed by CCIR 4). Any vulnerable group, except for "the landless poor," is categorized as marginalized, and only limited reference is made to them.

Under Objective 1, the theory of change cites the importance of ensuring small-scale producers and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) can access inputs, assets, and services such that structural transformation is inclusive. Intermediate result (IR) 1 (strengthened inclusive agriculture systems that are productive and profitable) notes the acute challenges and obstacles facing women, youth, and marginalized groups, and the illustrative activities include (1) increasing access to productive resources, extension services, and cooperative membership and (2) increasing access to finance, financial inclusion, and financial intermediation throughout agriculture and food systems. Neither of these activities, however, considers segmentation of the participant populations or the specific supports needed by one group or another.

Similarly, under IR 3 (increased employment and entrepreneurship), the GFSS noted that firms along value chains created jobs, including for women, youth, and marginalized populations, but it provides no guidance or illustrative activities on how employers might be encouraged to engage more fully with these groups. The illustrative intervention suggested for youth and women is training in entrepreneurship, leadership, and workforce readiness, an entirely supply-side solution. Further, the metrics utilized by most activities did not include age-specific targets or benchmarks, and analysis plans rarely go beyond disaggregating metrics by sex.

Youth are absent from the theory of change for Objective 2 (strengthened resilience among people and systems), except for a brief mention that the CCIRs support the development of transformative capacity within systems and communities. Objective 2 recognizes the critical part that poverty plays in vulnerability to shocks and stresses, including climate variability, natural disasters, and environmental degradation on agricultural productivity, price volatility, population growth, health shocks, political fragility, conflict, and other threats. The only specific reference to youth under the discussion of the resilience objective comes under IR 6 (adaptation to and recovery from shocks and stresses), which includes as an illustrative activity "preparing men, women, and youth to take up new, different, and profitable income opportunities in and outside of agriculture, including those linked to migration" (p. 19). While the Objective 2 discussion notes the instability of livelihoods, food security, income, and nutrition as a result of these risks, it fails to note the intersectionality of vulnerabilities and how marginalization as a result of disability, sexual orientation and gender identity, ethnicity, or early marriage and childbearing may limit access to information, as well as resources that would foster resilience. Although the theory of change highlights the importance of social cohesion, women's empowerment, and access to quality social services, it also indicates that aspiration, self-perception, and other psycho-social factors are emerging as critical factors in transformative capacity. The omission of PYD, which addresses these factors, and thus, is an important strategy for achieving resilience is a clear gap in the strategy. This indicates there is an opportunity to examine marginalizing factors more critically and understand how poverty and other marginalizing factors interact and how resilience-related interventions can effectively meet the needs of diverse populations of youth (and adults).

Objective 3 (a well-nourished population, especially women and children) fails to take into account youth with the exception of pregnant young women, young mothers, and other women of reproductive age. Still, youth are not a target of this objective per se, and there is no focus on the nutritional needs of adolescents as they grow into their adult bodies. Diversity is even less of a concern, with no discussion of nutritional and dietary needs of youth with disabilities, for example.

Finally, the current GFSS does not include any discussion of its learning agenda (which was developed as a separate document), and it lacks guidance on the collection of data that would enable USAID to

analyze, learn, and adjust its activities to better meet the needs of specific populations. USAID's 2019 FTF learning agenda addresses this gap, including youth as a key area of focus. Specifically, it posits that FTF activities can support youth with increased incomes, resilience, and improved nutrition. It cites a range of key interventions to achieve that outcome, including skill-building, mentoring, network building, access to resources, targeting of employment and entrepreneurship opportunities well suited to youth, and a reduction in the age-related and socio-cultural barriers they face, all of which are well supported by the expanding knowledge base (see more below).

Implications for the GFSS-R

It is unclear whether the inclusion of youth as a CCIR was sufficient for ensuring activities addressed the needs of youth, particularly given decentralized activity planning. Moving forward, each objective of the GFSS-R should include a comprehensive narrative on how the objective intersects with and responds to the CCIRs. Incorporating sub-IRs focused on youth or a fourth objective focused on youth would be more effective in making youth central to future programing. Alternatively, including a learning agenda with key questions around youth engagement in food systems as an integral part of the strategy might also ensure the adoption of youth-targeted approaches.

In addition, activity designers may be better served by good practice criteria rather than illustrative activities under each objective. While illustrative activities can be helpful, they may not be appropriate to the specific country or community context in which the activity will be implemented. Good practice criteria may be more effective in ensuring USAID implementing partners undertake needs assessments and other analyses and identify context-specific barriers and issues. These criteria should focus on scale and sustainability, among other aims, as many of the illustrative activities listed in the GFSS may not be sustainable without donor support.

Given the limitations of the GFSS in these areas, a key question follows: How was the GFSS operationalized, and what were the programmatic approaches to youth engagement and empowerment through agriculture-led growth, resilience, nutrition, and water security, sanitation, and hygiene (WSSH) programming? The next section explores the answers to this question.

Programmatic Approaches to Youth Engagement and Empowerment

Effective inclusion of youth is required to achieve the goals of GFSS 2017-2021 and the new 2022-2026 GFSS Refresh. As youth populations continue to grow, it is imperative youth are meaningfully engaged as leaders, partners, and beneficiaries in activities supporting agriculture-led economic growth and food security. Youth play a multitude of roles in the market systems. Beyond being consumers, youth are already working—and proving successful despite a multitude of youth-specific barriers—on and off the farm, as producers, processors, service providers, wholesalers, traders, and retailers. They are integral to the development of agri-food systems. The futures of youth and agriculture in developing economies are closely intertwined.

To better understand how best to engage youth as drivers of change and resilience in agri-food systems, especially in ways that benefit both sustainable systems and youth, RFS commissioned an inventory of USAID-funded investments that include youth in agri-food systems, nutrition, resilience, and WSSH practice areas. To identify strategies, map pathways, and assess the evidence for youth contributions to the achievement of their country's development objectives in these areas, the review considered activities implemented between 2015 and 2020 in 28 focus countries. Ultimately, the review focused on 140 activities that met threshold criteria, including relevant strategic objectives, a threshold level of youth inclusion, and adequate availability of public documentation.

Youth-targeted vs. Youth-inclusive Approaches

Youth engagement in programs can be fall along a spectrum, ranging from "youth-targeted" to "youth-inclusive," as described below.

- *Youth-targeted programming:* Youth are the target population, and, thus, programming is intentionally designed to be youth-responsive or transformative to increase youth empowerment or employment. The activity design reflects the specific context of a targeted youth segment, the youth-specific and general barriers to economic inclusion, and how youth interact with adults and institutions. These programs increasingly use a PYD framework, which positions youth as agents of and resources for development in their own and their communities. In programming that authentically utilizes PYD approaches, youth are engaged as implementers and decision-makers throughout the program cycle.
- *Youth-inclusive programming*: Youth are a subset of a broader participant population, and, thus, the activities are principally designed for and targeted to adults. While these "adult-focused, youth-inclusive" programs are designed for and driven by adult participation, they invest in some interventions to mainstream youth participation. In some cases, projects establish sub-activities specifically designed to address unique barriers to youth participation or to leverage unique market opportunities that align with youth skills and aspirations. In many cases, youth are considered under the umbrella of "marginalized populations" along with the landless, women, and other excluded groups.

Overview of RFS Portfolio of Youth Activities

The 140 youth activities considered by the inventory represent just over $4.4 billion in investment in agri-food systems, nutrition, resilience, and water security, sanitation, and hygiene. Of that, $423 million (9.6 percent) was dedicated to youth-targeted activities, while $4.0 billion was expended on "adult-focused, youth-inclusive" activities. **More than one-third of that ($1.8 billion), however, was expended on activities that, according to their solicitation documents, should have some youth component to them, but for which the team was unable to identify specific youth strategies or activities in publicly available documentation.**

The greatest levels of youth participation (both youth-inclusive and youth-targeted combined) and financial investment were in the agri-food systems portfolio, which included seven youth-targeted programs ($108.2 million) and 63 youth-inclusive activities ($1.5 billion). Resilience programming represented the second-largest investment, with 15 youth-targeted ($314 million) and 14 youth-inclusive ($556 million) activities. While almost $5 million of nutrition programming was identified as youth-inclusive, there was neither evidence of the scale or impact of youth engagement nor a focus on youth-specific nutritional needs. Similarly, the inventory was unable to find adequate information to determine the nature of youth involvement in WSSH programs to determine the nature, depth, or breadth of youth engagement. **Of note, at least 28 activities with stated youth involvement (valued at more than $1.78 billion) did not provide adequate documentation to determine the scope, depth, or breadth of youth activities**.

Although the inventory attempted to identify and quantify the sources of funding and implementation across USAID and USG, this proved difficult due to the dearth of publicly available information and the prohibitive cost of isolating the sources of multiple funding streams across implementing years.

Youth Inclusion in the Theories of Change of the RFS Portfolio

The theory of change, strategic objectives (SOs), and IRs outlined in publicly available solicitation and project documents should reflect and drive each program's approach to working with youth

populations. Unfortunately, the inventory exercise found that 57 percent of projects reviewed did not include a theory of change in publicly available documents. In many cases, even if youth were included in a strategic objective, they were not addressed in the theory of change or project documents.

The inventory identified several trends related to the treatment of youth in project theories of change:

- More than a quarter of the 156 agri-food systems, resilience, and WSSH programs reviewed (43) had no youth-specific strategies articulated in available documents.
- The 43 percent of projects with stated theories of change often overlooked youth participation and failed to consider how youth-specific constraints impacted the objectives, context, targeting, and underlying assumptions. As a result, the theories of change and resulting activity designs did not reflect how the needs of youth differ from those of the general adult population.
- In 89 percent of the youth-inclusive activities for which theories of change were identified (48 of 54), no reference was made to youth in the theories of change.
- The six youth-inclusive theories of change that referred to youth (four in agri-food systems activities; two for nutrition activities) lumped youth into a social-inclusion category comprising women, youth, people living with disabilities, and/or other marginalized populations.
- None of the theories of change addressed the differing individual-level resilience of members of the youth population.
- None of the theories of change recognized the possible unintended, negative outcomes that could result from youth's limited ability to take on risk and recover from shocks. Some of the programs operating in areas where gang activity or violent extremism is an issue incorporated "Do No Harm" as an operational principle, but the use of the principle is not well documented and, therefore, is not part of the narrative that emerges in the successes and barriers in programming for youth.

Primary Project Intervention Approaches for Agri-food System Activities That Engage Youth

The review identified 92 activities with a combined value of $2.03 billion focused on agri-food systems, of which seven ($108 million) were categorized as youth-targeted and 63 ($1.4 billion) as youth-inclusive. Another 22 ($435 million) indicated youth engagement but contained too little information to gauge the degree or type of youth engagement.

Strategic Objectives

Youth-inclusive and youth-targeted projects both acknowledge that a pure market system development (MSD) approach inherently excludes economically marginalized groups (including youth) because of the trade-offs between inclusion and the MSD goals of increased productivity and competitiveness. Youth-targeted programs generally prioritize inclusion, as well as the economic and personal empowerment of youth. Projects sought to overcome the constraints or barriers to youth economic participation and develop "livelihood pathways" in a specific agri-food system including on-farm, off-farm, and non-farm opportunities. In comparison to adult-focused/youth-inclusive projects, youth-targeted projects focused less on catalyzing change at the market system level.

Adult-focused, youth-inclusive projects focus on increasing competition and productivity as the key levers to accelerate economic transformation and agriculture-led economic development. Youth are viewed as market actors similar to adult market actors—consumers, producers, service providers, processors, retailers, traders, etc.—with limited consideration of how their needs and opportunities differ from those of adults.

Common Approaches

The inventory identified differences between youth-targeted and youth-inclusive agri-food system interventions and developed a typology of objectives, approaches, and outcomes. The discussion below focuses on one of the most fundamental factors in MSD programming—MSD facilitation intensity—while Table 1 provides a summary of additional typological differences,

In the MSD framework, facilitation is defined as "working through market actors to stimulate sustainable change, minimizing an Activity's direct role." **Facilitation intensity reflects the degree to which implementers intervene directly in the market system versus facilitating outcomes through market actors.** Youth-targeted programs tended to use high-intensity approaches to address the supply-side constraints that prevent youth from participating effectively in a market system. Adult-focused, youth-inclusive programs tended toward low-intensity facilitation to mainstream youth into existing adult-focused activities to increase economic inclusion and productivity at a system level. A subset of agri-food programs uses a "quasi-facilitative" approach that combines intensity approaches: discrete high-intensity activities target specific youth barriers to inclusion while low-intensity strategies address general market development.

- ***High-intensity facilitation:*** Heavy project direction and direct implementation, often through non-market channels such as community-based facilitation and peer-to-peer models; products and services are often subsidized.
- ***Low-intensity facilitation:*** Low levels of project direction and direct implementation; activities are co-designed and co-implemented through private and public sector market actors using market-based incentives (financial investment, technical assistance, capacity building, and business development support) rather than subsidies.
- ***"Quasi-facilitative"***: Use of both high- and low-intensity facilitation in targeted ways; discrete high-intensity activities target youth-specific barriers to inclusion while low-intensity strategies address general market development; allows for tailored interventions to reflect the heterogeneity of different youth segments; higher-intensity facilitation and direct implementation used to address youth-specific barriers and supply-side constraints that prevent youth from participating effectively in a market system, while low-intensity strategies apply MSD to drive productivity increases and promote sustainable changes.

Facilitation intensity is driven by numerous contextual factors such as the project objective (youth livelihood versus market system development):

Table 1. Programmatic Differences between Low- and High-intensity Market Systems Development Activities

Activity Element	Low-intensity Faciiation	High-intensity Facliitation
Intervention objective	Market systems development (productivity, efficiency, competition, and cooperation).	Youth development objectives including livelihood and personal development; address system-level root causes of youth exclusion (enabling environment, educational attainment, time-use, proximity, and unique factors such as sexual and reproductive health (SRH), and household gender dynamics).
Role of implementer	Low-level of project direction; facilitates co-design and co-implementation.	Heavy project direction and direct intervention deliver activities where appropriate services (content, proximity, cost, timing, etc.) are unavailable and market actors are absent or unresponsive to market-based incentives.

Activity Element	Low-intensity Faciiation	High-intensity Facliitation
Delivery channel	Through private and public sector market actors incentivized by investment and technical and business development support.	Direct implementation or through non-market channels, sometimes subsidized, community-based facilitation, and peer-to-peer models.
Youth engagement	Youth inclusion is mainstreamed across activities, with minimal youth-targeting beyond targeted activities to overcome specific constraints or achieve youth development goals.	Youth-targeted approaches put youth at the center of activities and are actively engaged; interventions are designed to fit the needs, challenges, and strengths of youth rather than the market.
Business case	Strong business case for youth inclusion at different entry points of value-chain nodes. Youth as market actors (formal and self-employment, consumers of goods and services) can increase productivity and quality of or expand the market for goods/services.	Weak business case. Constraints to youth inclusion are not aligned with market interest or the capabilities of market actors due to high-risk and/or low gains.
Incentives vs. subsidies	Use of market-based incentives designed to buy down risk or increase returns to market actors increase demand for youth inclusion. Investment/grant funding, capacity building; little to no subsidy.	Subsidies are used to engage the private sector where market actors do not respond to incentives or risk is high. Subsidies are time-bound with the objective to overcome intractable root causes or demonstrate the business case for youth inclusion.
Examples of activities	• Technical and business training through market actors • Private sector delivery of extension and advisory services (EAS) and business support services • Investment or grant funds to buy down risk, attract market actors, demonstrate business case, or catalyze innovation • Co-design of financial services with microfinance institutions, cooperatives, and commercial financial institutions • Subsidized design and launch of youth-friendly technologies • Embedded market services • Scalable business models, often run by youth entrepreneurs, for delivering value chain-specific and cross-sectoral services and products (inputs, EAS, business development services, technology, raw materials, intermediate/final products) to/from youth and other value chain actors.	• Integrated wrap-around employment packages delivered through public or private education entities, civil society organizations (CSOs), peer-to-peer models, or community-based facilitators • Transferable/Soft skills training (life, leadership, work-readiness) • Free or subsidized agricultural and business support services • Behavior change efforts to address root causes • Health and wellbeing support including SRH and the prevention of gender-based violence • Subsidized services (EAS, inputs, etc.) in "thin markets" with few market actors, or remote, challenging locations • Basic literacy and numeracy, alternative basic education • Parental and community engagement • Childcare

Table 2 below summarizes other key differences in the approach to youth inclusion in the inventoried agri-food system interventions.

Table 2: Key Differences between Youth-inclusive and Youth-targeted Activities

	Adult-focused, youth-inclusive activities	Youth-targeted activities
Youth segmentation	Youth are treated as a homogenous population. This results in participation by older, most educated youth who most closely match the adult profile and, therefore, are most easily mainstreamed. The younger (15-21 years old) and more marginalized youth are often excluded.	Heterogenous consideration of youth regarding gender, life cycle, educational attainment, demographic, location, skill level, etc. Approaches can be tailored to meet these different profiles and needs.
Role of youth	Youth are market actors receiving development assistance.	Youth are development agents integrated across the project implementation cycle whose preferences and needs influence program design (see the section on PYD approaches).
Market approach	Demand-side interventions to increase productivity, competitiveness, and inclusion. Facilitate changes in the enabling environment at the system level through legislative and regulatory policy.	Supply-side interventions to improve youth ability to participate in the market; build capacities and assets of or reduce barriers to youth economic participation. Minimal focus on increased sector productivity. Limited focus on policy and/or regulatory environment beyond youth-specific issues including education reform, the land tenure system, addressing legislative, cultural and social norms including early-marriage, inheritance laws, and gender-based exclusion and violence.
Contextual understanding	Inclusive market systems development lens: Strong analysis of market and value chains focus; limited understanding of youth segmentation and constraints to youth participation.	PYD Lens: Strong analysis of youth support systems and the biophysical, socio-cultural, and political-economic contexts that impact youth objectives; limited understanding of labor and agri-food market system or private sector landscape, thus activities often lack sustainable economic entry points for youth employment or entrepreneurship and thereby reducing the likelihood of systems-level impact.
MSD facilitation intensity	Low-intensity facilitation	High-intensity facilitation

Primary Project Intervention Approaches for Resilience Activities That Engage and Serve Youth

"Strengthened resilience among people and systems, as increasingly frequent and intense shocks and stresses threaten the ability of men, women, and families to sustainably emerge from poverty." - GFSS, p. 8.

The review identified 35 activities with a combined value of $1.3 billion that focused primarily on resilience objectives, of which 15 projects ($314 million) were categorized as youth-targeted, 14 ($555

million) as adult-focused, youth-inclusive, and another six projects ($435 million) indicated youth engagement but contained too little information to gauge the degree or type of youth engagement. While the 14 adult-focused resilience activities engaged youth at some level, there is a dearth of reporting on the specifics of youth interventions, the numbers of youth involved, and the impact of youth involvement on individuals, their households, and communities. Projects were geographically concentrated in USAID Resilience Focus Countries including Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Mali, Niger, South Sudan, and Zimbabwe, as well as countries prone to conflict, migration and displacement, and gang and criminal activity.

Strategic Objectives

The GFSS strategic objective for USAID's resilience portfolio is inextricably linked with that of the agriculture-led economic development portfolio: facilitate poverty alleviation through more inclusive and resilient market systems. Because resilience is a dynamic concept that operates at multiple levels to build the adaptive, absorptive, and transformative capacities at the individual, household, community, and systems levels, the inventory categorized objectives and activities according to the level at which projects sought change, specifically whether an individual/household-level or a systems-level approach was taken to prevent, mitigate, and respond to shocks and stresses. Resilience programs align with inclusive market system objectives to improve food security and also support oft-excluded populations, such as youth, with access to opportunities, assets, and capabilities "to engage with and influence these systems to reap the benefits that arise from the upgrading process."

Though it was not possible to calculate the resource allocation within projects with publicly available documents, the inventory exercise suggests that USAID resilience programs, both youth-targeted and adult-targeted/youth-inclusive, invested more heavily in household-level interventions than in system-level objectives.

Household-level resilience objectives sought to build the multi-sectoral capacities of individual youth and their families/communities to prevent, mitigate, and respond to shocks and stresses at the individual/household, community, and national levels. As with youth-targeted agri-food system programs, resilience programs improved youth livelihood opportunities and increased youth economic inclusion. Another common objective was support for vulnerable youth populations (orphans and vulnerable children or OVCs), youth living with disabilities, ex-combatants, and victims of gang violence, human trafficking, irregular migration to exit and recover from dangerous and traumatic environments. Projects often focused on the agri-food systems and/or rural and peri-urban communities to support both agriculture-led economic development and food security objectives.

System-level objectives sought to improve the ability of national and sub-national systems to more effectively draw on systems-level resources such as social safety nets, early-warning systems, and emergency relief systems to support the response to risk trends and the prevention and recovery from shocks and stressors related to environmental degradation, climate-related shocks, violence, and health. Much emphasis is placed on the importance of prioritizing economic inclusion in agri-food and other market systems and using an "inclusive" MSD approach.

Common Resilience Approaches that Support and Engage Youth

USAID resilience programs that engage and benefit youth implement cross-sectoral activities to build capacity at either or both the individual/household level and the systems-level (village, city, country, region, etc.) (see Table 3). Interventions were strategically sequenced and layered interventions that increased income and information/knowledge while strengthening coping and risk-mitigation mechanisms to move out of extreme poverty.

Youth-inclusive, household-level resilience approaches sought to increase on-, off-, and non-farm income and strengthen household-level coping and risk-mitigation mechanisms. Interventions typically provided social protection (consumption support, health, and social integration), livelihood promotion (market linkages, asset transfers, technical skill development), financial inclusion (savings, financial literacy, linkages to formal financial inclusion), and psychosocial support. Youth-targeted approaches mirror "workforce development approaches" that build the transferable skills (leadership, confidence, decision-making, communication) and employability skills of youth and support asset accumulation, diversification of sources of income, and social protection.

Systems-level approaches build the capacity of indigenous systems, the public and private sectors, and civil society to effectively and equitably manage resources and respond flexibly to shocks within the constraints of weak, existing structures. In parallel, the approach builds a more proactive and sustainable shock-responsive system in the form of social safety nets, early-warning systems, natural resource management, and climate adaptation approaches. Systems-level resilience programs primarily targeted the general population, with benefits intended to accrue to youth in much the same way as for other groups.

A small number of youth-targeted programs addressed system-level issues. Common approaches included research and advocacy around youth-specific policies related to land tenure, education policy, infrastructure investments, and national employment programs. Other programs support system-level changes in how youth can participate in and be heard in the governance process.

At both the individual/household and system levels, youth-targeted and youth-inclusive programs focused on preventing, adapting to, and reacting to the impact of climate change through improved access to climate-sensitive inputs, techniques, and technologies.

Table 3. Resilience Approaches by Level

	Household approaches	**System-level approaches**
Objectives	Build adaptive, absorptive, and transformative capacities of youth and households for greater resilience to external shocks through interventions that prevent, mitigate, and respond to shocks and stresses.	Strengthen "the ability of market systems to allocate resources, draw on system-level resources (such as social safety nets, social capital, the financial system, or government assistance), and innovate to solve problems in the face of shocks and stresses."
Common approaches to youth	• Skills development • Workforce and entrepreneurship development • Climate-smart production • Savings through village savings and loans associations (VSLAs) • Youth-friendly business models • Social capital development • Technology transfer • Natural resource management • Income-generating activities and microenterprise support	• Improved access to and quality of services Increased government accountability • Climate-smart regulations and regional early warning systems • Strengthened social safety nets • Public works programs • Climate change adaptation policies • Youth leadership development • Youth voice and representation • Youth networks and organization

Primary Project Intervention Approaches for Nutrition Activities That Engage and Serve Youth

"A well-nourished population, especially among women and children, as undernutrition, particularly during the 1,000 days from pregnancy to a child's second birthday, leads to lower levels of educational attainment, productivity, lifetime earnings, and economic growth rates." - GFSS, p. iii

Despite the intersectionality of nutrition and the needs of youth populations, the inventory identified no nutrition programs that specifically targeted youth without consideration of gender. Only three RFS projects were targeting populations categorized as youth: one program targeted orphans and vulnerable children and two adult-targeted nutrition programs had specific youth targets and reported on children from birth to 24 months old and pregnant or breastfeeding women below the age of 35. An additional nine adult-targeted programs ($4.8 million) targeted vulnerable households and included youth in an expanded target population comprising children, all women of reproductive age, poor households, and local service providers. Another $3.6 million in programming mentioned youth participation but there was inadequate public documentation to validate.

Strategic Objectives

Although nutrition programs typically seek improved nutritional outcomes, which align well with youth employment and income generation activities, the unique nutritional needs of adolescents and young adults were rarely addressed. Nor were youth populations intentionally targeted as market actors (consumers, producers, processors, retailers of nutritious foods).

The projects with a primary focus on nutrition sought the following objectives: a) improve households' food and income security, b) prevent under-nutrition, particularly among children from conception to 24 months old, c) improve the health status of women of reproductive age, and d) change knowledge about the consumption of nutritious, diverse diets. While youth inclusion is referred to as a primary focus for most USAID nutrition programs, activities generally focus on children (under the age of five) and have a secondary focus on young mothers under the age of 35.

Nutrition Approaches That Engage and Serve Youth

There are key considerations for nutrition programs through the youth lens. The two adult-targeted, youth-inclusive nutrition programs included in the inventory could offer lessons and models for future nutrition programs, including the engagement of youth as "community-based solution providers," i.e., self-employed entrepreneurs who serve as the primary link between local producers and leading input suppliers ; the leveraging of existing networks of mother-to-mother groups as the backbone for asset building, revenue generation, VSLAs, and advocacy activities; and integration of employment skills building into nutrition programs.

Primary Intervention Approaches for Water Security, Sanitation, and Hygiene That Engage and Serve Youth

The inventory exercise identified only a few examples of WSSH efforts that intentionally include youth or target youth as beneficiaries or development actors. A total of 15 adult-focused, youth-targeted activities ($291 million) had a primary focus on WSSH, of which eight ($29 million) focused on water security and seven ($265 million) were focused on sanitation and hygiene. An additional 20 activities included WSSH as a secondary or tertiary focus. All activities typically focused on the general population with youth benefitting much the same as other participants with none including specific strategies for engaging youth, conducting a youth assessment, or reporting in publicly available documents on participants by age group.

Only one youth-targeted activity was identified that touched on water security: the USAID Development Lab's global program "Mapping for Resilience – Community Solutions Through Student-Led Open Mapping Initiatives." The activity built the capacity of tertiary students to develop geo-maps to support solutions to problems related to agriculture, including water. No information was available on the involvement of youth in designing, implementing, monitoring, or evaluating these activities.

Strategic Objectives of WSSH Projects That Engage and Serve Youth

WSSH projects focused on addressing the following water security-related challenges: (a) watershed stability (i.e., protection from flooding and sedimentation in the rainy season and increased water supplies in the dry season), (b) management of communal water resources in pastoralist communities, (c) access to safe drinking water, and (d) alleviation of crisis-induced water and food insecurity. Given the range of challenges addressed, the locus of activities varied by project—on-farm, off-farm, and non-farm.

Sanitation and hygiene activities were more concentrated on a discrete set of challenges than some of the other RFS programming areas: addressing a lack of water, sanitation, and hygiene services in targeted areas (urban and rural).

Approaches to WSSH That Engage and Serve Youth

WSSH activities implemented key approaches that generally engaged and benefitted youth the same as the general population, including sustainable water provision, improved natural resource management, increased access to water sources for beneficiaries' communities, improved hygiene awareness and access to sanitation among beneficiaries, and improvement of rangeland management practices among communities.

Existing documentation of youth engagement through WSSH programs indicates that there is a degree of youth engagement; however, the type of engagement and the number of youths engaged remain unclear. Several programs with a primary focus on nutrition and agri-food systems and a secondary or tertiary focus on WSSH do provide some examples of youth engagement in discrete activities such as hygiene promotion.

A number of shared approaches emerged in the review of sanitation and hygiene activities. While only a few activities focused on governance or policy reform, all activities included capacity-building components for local government agencies or private sector water suppliers in targeted communities, localized water supply and management, and the enhancement of community engagement in the management of their environment. Social behavior change communication was a common approach to understand sanitation preferences and to develop the most appropriate approaches to move targeted populations from unimproved to improved water and sanitation practices. Several activities also included infrastructure and access components—access for households, schools, and health facilities—and the design and construction of water and sanitation infrastructure. Finally, four activities undertook economic-focused approaches: improving the business environment for service and product providers and increased access to irrigation and nutrition services that would improve agricultural production in targeted areas.

Strategies for Youth Inclusion

Utilization of PYD Approaches

Programs that incorporated integrated PYD approaches (i.e., those focused on three or four of the PYD domains) totaled over $1.2 billion in funds obligated and expended. Many of the programs that

incorporated PYD did not report targeted or actual numbers of youth participants. Only 19 programs reported information on youth targets between 2010 and 2024, which totaled 4,764,654. Across the 11 that reported actual participants, USAID programs assisted more than 465,000 youth between 2011 and 2020.

Overall, 37.8 percent of the activities reviewed (59) employed one element of PYD, and 25 percent (39) employed integrated PYD approaches, which incorporate three or four of the PYD domains (described below). More than half of those using integrated PYD approaches were youth-targeted activities (22); one was a youth-inclusive nutrition activity; and the remainder were youth-inclusive agri-food systems and resilience activities. One noteworthy trend that the team identified is that more recent programs—from 2016 onward for youth-targeted activities and 2018 onward for youth-inclusive activities—had more robust and integrated PYD efforts than earlier ones, which tended to focus just on one or two elements of PYD (typically assets and enabling environment).

Activities that targeted or included youth using PYD approaches principally invested in asset-building (primarily skills and financial assets) and youth agency. The focus on the enabling environment for youth and youth contribution to development and project activities was limited.

Private-Sector Engagement Approaches to Youth Inclusion

Private sector engagement (PSE) is a critical part of the RFS portfolio of youth projects, with 90 percent of projects inventoried demonstrating varying elements of PSE. Most examples of private-sector linkages and public-private partnerships (PPPs) are found in the agri-food sector projects, followed by resilience and nutrition.

Adult-focused/youth-**inclusive** and youth-**targeted** projects both used similar PSE approaches to incentivize private-sector partnerships to leverage resources and co-create market-based development solutions. However, the inventory exercise suggests that adult-targeted programs that were youth-inclusive not only integrated a greater number of PSE approaches and private-sector partners in a given program but also used PSE as a tool to solve a wider range of youth-targeted and general challenges. Projects used public-private sector dialogue, financial incentives, and technical assistance to incentivize and buy down the risk to private sector actors to engage in the co-design of mutually beneficial interventions.

PSE strategies addressed myriad objectives using different models to achieve the following:

- Create employment and business opportunities for youth and other marginalized populations.
- Address value chain challenges and market inefficiencies to establish resilient markets for goods and services that support agri-food system productivity, youth inclusion, nutrition, food security, WSSH, and natural resource management objectives.
- Drive price reduction and stability through increased competition.
- Meet consumer preferences and price points in order to increase uptake of user-friendly development solutions.
- Support the development, transfer, and scaling of modern technology and innovation through competition and co-financing of innovative technologies, business models, and products and services designed to reach underserved geographic markets and consumer segments.
- Improve enabling environment through public-private sector dialogues on policy and regulatory issues and societal norms impacting inclusion.
- Research, catalyze innovation, and provide technical assistance. These models are generally centrally funded and global or regional and, therefore, do not have an MSD focus on any particular market.

Implications for the GFSS-R

USAID activities have generated lessons learned during the GFSS strategy period that should inform the GFSS-R as follows:

- Both youth-targeted and youth-inclusive programming should begin with a theory of change and SOs that acknowledge the importance of engaging youth as producers, innovators, and consumers through a tailored approach that carefully segments the youth population.
- The theory of change should specify how the intervention will interact with the context and target populations to achieve the changes expected.
- The GFSS-R should include more robust data capture and reporting requirements so that USAID can understand the impact of its activities on various sub-populations of youth.
- The GFSS-R should recognize that youth engage economically in agri-food systems through a multitude of intersecting and overlapping pathways and are often engaged in multiple pathways at the same time.
- Good practice guidance should recommend focusing on those competitive value chains that include nodes or entry points that can support youth participation.
- A "quasi-facilitative" MSD approach may successfully bridge the programmatic tension between a pure MSD approach to catalyze sustainable agriculture-led economic transformation at scale and the unique needs and opportunities of youth actors in the agri-food system. The approach expands the MSD toolbox: discrete high-intensity activities target specific youth barriers to inclusion while low-intensity strategies address general market development.
- Youth as consumers are the fastest-growing market segment, thereby creating an opportunity to positively change consumption patterns and achieve improved nutrition among all youth.
- USAID should consider how youth might be more intentionally engaged in WSSH activities, drawing on lessons from the evidence base.

USAID Policy and Strategy Coherence

The 2016 GFSS was intended to be implemented in tandem with an array of other USAID policies, strategies, and initiatives rolled out between 2016 and 2021. This section of the paper provides an update on how the 2016 GFSS and other youth-related USAID documents align, complement each other, and diverge. The discussion below is organized in three sections reflecting the target of the policy, strategy, or initiative: (1) sector-focused, (2) population-focused, and (3) programmatic approach-focused.

Sector-focused Policies, Strategies, and Initiatives

This paper considers seven sector-focused documents: (1) USAID's Economic Growth Policy, (2) the Global Water Strategy, (3) the Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Strategy 2014-2025, (4) the 2016-2025 Food Assistance and Food Security Strategy, (5) Over the Horizon: Snapshot, 6) Over the Horizon: Strategic Review, and (7) Over the Horizon: Focus Countries. **A key finding is that none of these documents clearly defines youth, and only one refers to the Youth in Development Policy or any other foundational document for engaging youth.** Only three of these documents, the Economic Growth Policy, the Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Strategy 2014-2025, and Over the Horizon: Snapshot, note any specific approaches for engaging youth in USAID's work. The 2016-2025 Food Assistance and Food Security Strategy refers to the Youth in Development Policy, defines youth, and undertakes to identify specific approaches for working with youth.

USAID's Economic Growth Policy aligns well with the GFSS in the following areas: the importance of trade, the need for an effective and transparent regulatory environment, the support for markets, and the goals of employment growth, microenterprise development, and financial inclusion. It has two critical differentiators, however. The first is a **specific focus on firm- or enterprise-level growth and labor productivity. This approach departs from the MSD approach central to the GFSS in that it does not include a focus on poverty reduction.** The second area of divergence is that the Economic Growth Policy identifies **human capital and technology as key drivers of growth**. These areas are critical to youth and point to the need for effective linkages to other sectors, including formal and nonformal education, communications and logistics-related infrastructure, and legal frameworks to facilitate foreign direct investment, which is a key driver of technology transfer. Other important elements of the Economic Growth Policy include a focus on urban environments, which is not where most youth live, and on work in the formal sector. While wage employment in the formal sector is certainly a key aspiration among youth, it does not reflect the reality of many youths living in countries in which structural transformation is yet to be realized.

The Global Water Strategy is also well aligned with GFSS. It highlights its complementarity with the GFSS and several other USAID strategies and policy documents. The Global Water Strategy aligns specifically with GFSS IR 4 (increased sustainable productivity, particularly through climate-smart approaches), IR 7 (increased consumption of nutritious and safe diets), and IR 9 (more hygienic household and community environments). However, the Global Water Strategy is more comprehensive, focusing on decreased mortality/morbidity from causes linked to lack of drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene; improved preparedness for and resilience to water-related disasters and future hydro-meteorological changes; well-functioning international institutions, organizations, and partnerships that build global capacity and support the sustainable development and sound management of water resources; and greater capacity of the United States to anticipate and meet domestic and global water challenges. Neither document focuses on the importance of water in food systems or the specific roles youth may play in advancing water-related goals of the strategies.

The Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Strategy 2014-2025 aligns well with the nutrition and sanitation and hygiene elements and, to a more limited extent, the agri-food systems and resilience elements of the GFSS. It has both a broader and narrower focus than the GFSS. For example, the concept of livelihoods includes not only earned income and goods produced but also social services and transfers (childcare, cash assistance, etc.). **It also specifically addresses food safety, family planning and reproductive health, education, and social and behavior change communication as critical elements of the nutrition strategy.** While this sector-specific strategy focuses exclusively on nutrition, the skills, processes, and structures it aims to build are relevant for broader results (for example in empowerment and income generation). Its results framework shares some elements with GFSS, but **it includes other areas that GFSS does not, including country capacity and commitment, multi-sectoral programming, and leadership.** A key difference in the approach of the Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Strategy is the focus on household-level outcomes rather than the systems-level outcomes integral to the GFSS results framework. It also tracks some impact and outcome indicators that differ from FTF indicators, specifically the number of anemic and HIV-positive malnourished clients receiving support.

Both the GFSS and the Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Strategy, however, missed a key opportunity around adolescent nutrition. The Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Strategy classifies adolescent girls as a vulnerable group and focuses primarily on adolescent girls and young women in their role as current or future child bearers. Taking into account the key risk factors for adolescent pregnancy, the strategy supports activities such as keeping girls in school, educating communities about the risks of early marriage and adolescent pregnancy, and strengthening access to contraceptives for sexually active youth. **Neither strategy, however, provides guidance on how USAID activities should assist countries in**

meeting the specific caloric, macronutrient, and micronutrient needs of adolescents or how youth can play a role in improving nutrition outcomes.

The goal of the 2016-2025 Food Assistance and Food Security Strategy is to achieve sustained improvements in food security. The strategy expands on earlier approaches to food security, which focused largely on subsistence-oriented production for household consumption, to include income-oriented production, reductions in real food prices resulting from increased production, and empowerment of women to achieve household food security and nutrition goals. **It also specifically addresses the situation of youth, highlighting the vicious cycle linking food insecurity to inadequate investment in health and education for young people as well as the dearth of employment opportunities for youth.** The strategy goes on to require that activities develop theories of change that reflect the challenges and opportunities youth face (including access to services and employment on- and off-farm). It also requires a participatory or PYD approach that enables youth to engage in the decision-making processes that influence their life outcomes, noting that poor governance not only exacerbates food insecurity but also alienates youth. Youth are specifically included in discussions of IR1.2 (nutrition and WSSH practices), IR1.4 (on- and off-farm livelihood opportunities and income expanded), and IR2.4 (agricultural, market, and financial systems strengthened). It is one of the only documents to identify the education of youth as a key approach to disrupting the intergenerational transfer of poverty. It also notes gender and household dynamics that may affect youth and encourages partners to examine these factors carefully. Finally, although it does not incorporate a learning agenda specifically, the strategy does call for increased coordination with relevant USG units to disseminate best practices in supporting youth, women, and displaced and refugee populations. Despite these positive points about the integration of youth in the strategy, the results framework collapses gender equality and youth engagement into one cross-cutting IR, and without further review of activity reports, it is not clear that the greater focus on youth in the narrative is, in fact, ensuring more inclusive or youth-targeted programming on the ground.

The Over the Horizon: Snapshot document describes USAID's priorities in assisting countries as they continue to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic and focuses specifically on how the youth bulge in many USAID partner countries may exacerbate existing development challenges. The GFSS programming largely fits under Over the Horizon SO2: Respond to dramatic increases in food insecurity, extreme poverty, and loss of educational opportunities in communities most impacted by COVID-19. The Over the Horizon approach provides a more holistic vision of development than other documents in that it includes democracy and rights-related activities (SO1) and health-related activities (SO3) to interact with GFSS-related interventions. Two SOs are particularly relevant for youth: SO1.5 (promote the participation and leadership of women and young people in pandemic relief and recovery efforts, conflict-prevention, and stabilization) and SO2.3 (invest in education plans, tools, training, strategies, and digital solutions, so learners are safe, well, and have learning opportunities, despite shocks and stressors related to COVID-19). **Over the Horizon SO1.5 is similar to the cross-cutting IR approach used in GFSS to encourage youth participation, however, a lack of specific targets in a results framework is likely to yield similar results.**

Finally, the Over the Horizon: Strategic Review was broader than the GFSS footprint of programming (as noted in the discussion of the Snapshot document above), but its findings align with the current GFSS or are complementary to it in other programmatic areas. The Over the Horizon: Focus Countries document, however, potentially reflects a significant shift in geographic focus. See Table 4 below for a comparison of country priorities.

Table 4. Comparison of GFSS and Over the Horizon Priority Countries

GFSS Only	**Shared Priority Countries**[1]	Over the Horizon **Only**
• Ethiopia • Ghana • Nepal • Senegal • Uganda	• Nigeria (all SOs) • Guatemala (all SOs) • Honduras (all SOs) • Mali (SO1 & SO2) • Niger (SO1 & SO2) • Kenya (SO1) • Bangladesh (SO2 & SO3)	• El Salvador (all SOs) • Burkina Faso (SO1 & SO2) • Colombia (SO1 & SO3) • Peru (SO1 & SO3) • Venezuela (SO1 & SO3) • Ukraine (SO1) • Mozambique (SO2)

Population-focused Policies, Strategies, and Initiatives

The GFSS defines youth as "a life stage that starts in adolescence and continues through young adulthood. The specific age range associated with those stages may vary by the socio-cultural context, programmatic context, and the organization funding or implementing the program." Therefore, the GFSS provides a good deal of latitude to define youth at the activity level in terms relevant to the local context. This approach is aligned with USAID's Youth in Development Policy, which defines youth broadly as 10- to 29-year-olds, noting that "the transition from childhood to adulthood is not finite or linear and varies across and within countries."

This definition aligns with the intent of other documents, including USAID's Child, Early, and Forced Marriage Resource Guide (particularly the section on agriculture and food security) and the U.S. Global Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls. Both focus on adolescent girls, and the latter notes that "approaches [should be] calibrated to be appropriate for the different ages of adolescence, in particular the youngest adolescents (10 –14), whose needs are distinct from those of older adolescents [(15-19)] and young women." Both documents emphasize the importance of collecting, analyzing, and reporting sex- and age-disaggregated data. The only mention of data collection in the GFSS, on the other hand, is related to investing t in digital technologies for real-time data collection and analysis to improve agricultural practices and yields. While the GFSS emphasizes the use of evidence-based approaches, **the GFSS does not prioritize the role of the learning agenda in expanding the knowledge base, in contrast with the aforementioned strategies**.

Although the Youth in Development Policy and the U.S. Global Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls note the diverse needs of youth (including impoverished, rural, and indigenous youth, as well as youth who are marginalized or isolated as a result of a mental or physical disability, early marriage, or early motherhood), the Advancing Protection and Care for Children in Adversity Strategy takes a more intensive approach, recommending the use of a "positive-youth-development approach to engage young people directly in action to promote their own safety; specific guidance to adapt approaches for age, developmental stage, disability, gender, and environment" in intervening with vulnerable youth up to the age of 18. It also addresses **the critical issue of child labor, particularly hazardous child labor, which is a common issue in the agriculture sector, and which is absent in the GFSS.** The

[1] Over the Horizon categorizes priority countries under one or more of the strategy's strategic objectives. GFSS does not associate IRs or SOs with priority countries.

Advancing Protection and Care for Children in Adversity Strategy also aligns with the GFSS in its focus on the multidimensional needs of families and individuals, systems strengthening, the generation and use of evidence-based approaches, and strategic partnerships. The Advancing Protection and Care for Children in Adversity Strategy is written from a child protection perspective, however, and families are the critical unit of action or intervention, which differs from the GFSS systems approach. It complements GFSS in its express intent to leverage existing programs in child protection, maternal and child health, nutrition, basic education, HIV/AIDS, household income strengthening, and humanitarian assistance to advance its objectives. This approach has inherent links to intersectionality and integrated approaches that incorporate PYD, which relates to the high- and low-intensity facilitation issues noted above, as well as the approaches used in resilience and nutrition programming.

The GFSS notes the key roles women play in households and agri-food systems, which is broader than most other documents reviewed. The Women's Entrepreneurship and Economic Empowerment Act of 2018 takes a similarly broad view on the critical roles women (from adolescent girls to adults) play. Its goal is to achieve equal status for women and men and equal access to and control over assets, resources, opportunities, and services. The Act is also aligned with the GFSS in its support for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), savings groups, linkages to formal financial institutions, land tenure, and inheritance rights. Its focus on financial access for women and girls, including the use of innovative credit scoring models, savings, financial technology, financial literacy, and insurance, complements the GFSS. The Women's Entrepreneurship and Economic Empowerment Act of 2018, however, takes a rights-based approach, and the economic lens is secondary. Further, the Act more effectively links gender and age than the GFSS does, noting an evolution of an individual's ability to engage with systems in their communities at different stages of development. The Women's Global Development and Prosperity (W-GDP) Fund focuses on the economic lens, including on women succeeding in the workforce (Pillar 1) and as entrepreneurs (Pillar 2). Pillar 3 focuses on the legal and regulatory environment, access to finance, land rights, and governance of natural resources. W-GDP is broader than GFSS, however, as it includes all economic sectors. None of the documents, however, segments the female population, calls out varying needs at different stages of the life cycle, or stresses the need to ascertain how vulnerability factors may intersect with gender norms to inhibit full participation by women in economic activity.

Another set of documents taking a rights-based approach is the Advancing Disability-inclusive Government and USAID's Disability Policy. These documents focus specifically on access to education, entrepreneurship supports, and job training and internships, which align with GFSS's intent to build the capacity of vulnerable populations to meet their needs. The documents have a specific focus on entrepreneurship and engagement with employers to orient them to supporting employees with disabilities and provide internships, which largely aligns with the GFSS. They also contain an approach to resilience that is specific to the needs of people with disabilities (at the individual level focused on activities of daily living), which differs somewhat from the GFSS approach to resilience (household and community levels).

The Policy on Promoting the Rights of Indigenous Peoples also features a rights-based approach, and while there is no specific approach to working with youth, it notes the need for differentiated approaches to engage with women and men or with youth and elders. According to the policy, the key feature of engagement with indigenous populations is free, prior, and informed consent, particularly around any intervention that risks adverse impacts on their human rights, livelihoods, culture, lands and territories, natural resources, or sacred sites. It complements the GFSS in that it cites a typically higher rate of malnutrition among indigenous populations than among the general population; however, the policy does not acknowledge that addressing that need might adversely affect livelihoods and culture by introducing new varieties of foods or production and preparation approaches that diverge from cultural tradition.

The Policy also highlights the value of indigenous knowledge about traditional approaches to managing shocks and stresses, but it fails to address how new approaches may be required if/when climate change renders those approaches ineffective and other populations may be affected by ineffective management of shocks and stresses by an indigenous population**. Most references in the policy signal that the private sector is a malignant actor, along with the government, as one that causes problems for indigenous populations. There is no acknowledgment of how indigenous populations might interact with market systems and the private sector to bolster their livelihoods and resilience, which is a significant divergence from the approach to market systems and the private sector in the GFSS and numerous other USG policies and strategies.** The policy also focuses on engagement with indigenous persons organizations to implement activities directly rather than using a systems approach. In the absence of legal autonomy, working through civil society intermediaries may be the most effective approach to ensure that indigenous communities have provided free, prior, and informed consent for any activities that might engage them, but **the GFSS market systems approach does not contemplate engaging with CSOs such as indigenous persons organizations.**

Programmatic Approach-focused Policies, Strategies, and Initiatives

The remaining documents relate to specific programmatic approaches to achieving USAID's goals. The Private Sector Engagement (PSE) Policy and the Employment Framework Playbook apply to all economic sectors, but they are highly relevant to the GFSS. The Private Sector Engagement Policy is fairly well aligned with the GFSS. It is based on the premise that market-based approaches can lead to greater scale and sustainability of outcomes, and it focuses on for-profit, commercial entities and their affiliated foundations as USAID partners, which is consistent with the view of the private sector in the GFSS. However, it goes on to note that the country context represents a key influencing factor on opportunities for youth employment, and this is true in the food system as it is in other sectors. The policy encourages co-creation and the use of creative finance mechanisms that stimulate private sector investment. It also focuses on the ability of local systems to sustain desired outcomes, which complements the GFSS approach. Finally, the PSE Policy indicates that learning loops should encompass private-sector partners, local stakeholders, donors, and implementing partners, signaling the need for a robust monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) system and, in doing so, going beyond GFSS guidance.

The Employment Framework Playbook, which similarly covers all economic sectors (not only agri-food systems), aims to make employment more accessible. The Playbook complements the GFSS in its focus on wage jobs, family farms, and household enterprises, recognizing that all forms of employment are important. The Playbook also aligns with the GFSS in promoting reforms to relevant regulations to facilitate employment and trade (specifically those that support agriculture), increasing agricultural market access (roads, electricity, infrastructure), organizing producers, and supporting the adoption of effective legal measures to protect land rights and land acquisitions. It complements the GFSS by recommending strategies for increasing employment, particularly management consulting in existing firms, innovation, and technology adoption. It goes beyond the GFSS, however, to focus on labor productivity (in alignment with the Economic Growth Policy) and cites microcredit, apprenticeships, and soft skills development as key investments, all of which are frequently included in interventions focusing on youth. One of the key challenges with these types of investments, however, is they must be designed and implemented in contextually appropriate ways.

The New Partnerships Initiative is a partnership incubator intended to promote local leadership. While it claims to work through local actors and systems in all sectors of society, one of its goals is to identify sources of funding to sustain partnerships and scale impact, which indicates it is largely concerned with the private sector. It emphasizes linkages at the local level and the inclusion of the private sector in a broad array of programmatic interventions. It deviates from the GFSS, however, in its acceptance of

making strategic decisions at the firm or sector level about potential partners and approaches, which may ultimately constrain market access and make access more difficult for new entrants. This approach is at variance with the GFSS market systems approach, through which USAID tries to expand the accessibility of markets.

USAID's Digital Strategy acknowledges "the risks young people, women, and religious and ethnic minorities face, through the creation of new platforms that enable bullying, hate speech, sexual abuse, exploitation, victimization, recruitment into trafficking, and radicalization to violence." It also cites the opportunity digital technology has created to empower youth to drive change in their communities as entrepreneurs and civic leaders. The Digital Strategy complements the GFSS focus on access to markets and information, as well as the development of MSMEs. It also incorporates youth, women, and marginalized populations into its results framework, particularly in sub-IR 3.2 (the secure and responsible use of digital ecosystems increases the effectiveness of civil society and the media, including organizations led by women, youth, people from religious and ethnic minorities, and Indigenous Peoples) and sub-IR 5.3 (local innovators, especially women, youth, ethnic and religious minorities, and indigenous peoples, participate in the digital economy). The strategy also has specific linkages to the GFSS, as it advocates for properly deployed and regulated communications networks that enable smart applications to improve the management of natural resources, strengthen land tenure systems, and increase agricultural productivity.

Implications for the GFSS-R

Overall, the GFSS largely aligns with other USG and USAID policy and strategy documents. Based on the key issues identified above, the GFSS-R should:

- Clearly define youth and identify the linkages with the Youth in Development Policy, as well as the importance of using PYD as a key approach to fostering inclusive systems and resilient households and communities.
- Continue to focus on inclusive markets but strengthen the emphasis on productivity and profitability, which are key issues for youth as well as most adult participants.
- Take a more nuanced approach to inclusivity, particularly concerning gendered barriers, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity, and engagement of indigenous populations. Further, it should clearly indicate that within those populations, youth and its various sub-groups may benefit from different services and activities. Needs assessments and targeting based on country context and community resources will be critical elements of all activities.
- Clarify the role of the learning agenda and make the learning agenda an integral part of GFSS-R

USAID and USG documents are not the only ones that guide programming. The academic, donor, and practitioner communities have expended significant effort and resources in building the evidence base for effective programming over the past several years. The lessons documented are also relevant for the GFSS-R, and this is the focus of the next section.

Expanding the Knowledge Base

As USAID was developing lessons learned and adapting programs on the ground, USAID, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the International Labor Organization (ILO), MasterCard Foundation, and academics studying youth development were also generating new evidence and building the knowledge base about successful youth engagement in RFS-related programmatic areas. As a first step in drafting this white paper, the team undertook a limited initial literature review, followed by a broader review of available evidence from the Johns Hopkins University library databases as well as publicly available databases, including the 3IE Development Evidence Portal, Academic Search Premier, Africa-Wide Information, AgEcon Search, Agriculture & Environmental Science Database,

EBSCO (AGRICOLA and CAB Abstracts), Econlit, Google Scholar, and JSTOR. The team focused on publications from 2015 to the present and filtered for those that presented data from USAID partner countries or similar settings.

The findings of the literature review are discussed below. The discussion is organized around (1) agriculture-led economic growth, (2) resilience, and (3) nutrition, water security, sanitation, and hygiene.

Agriculture-led Economic Growth

The first approach the GFSS offers to reduce poverty is agriculture-led economic growth (Objective 1), which can be two to three times more effective at reducing poverty than the same amount of growth in other sectors (Yeboah and Jayne 2018). Productivity drives growth, and the key factors supporting productivity improvements in agriculture (and indirectly on poverty reduction) are human capital transformation and innovation. While innovation and access to and uptake of appropriate technology are essential to increase productivity, it is also important to recognize the potentially unequal impacts of new technologies, which large enterprises can more easily access and roll out faster than smallholder farmers, MSMEs, and marginalized populations such as youth and women, who may lose market share and revenue as a result. Innovation, therefore, is critical but not a panacea (Singh, et al. 2020). Education is also assuredly a foundational asset for youth, but it does not guarantee that youth will lead or benefit from the rise in the rural non-farm economy. As such, investing in education is necessary but insufficient. Investments in infrastructure and market development are also critical to ensure that youth (and adults) can participate in the agricultural transformation process (Mueller and Thurlow 2019). Evidence suggests that backward and forward linkages between agriculture and subsectors of trade and retail that multiply the impact. For example, increased productivity in transport and trade reduces the costs and increases margins on all goods and services, including agriculture. Similarly, transport and trade have a direct poverty reduction impact because they are dominated by low-skilled, low-wage workers, including youth (Dorosh and Thurlow 2018).

The poverty-reducing advantage of agriculture over other sectors is greatest in poor countries with a large share of GDP held by agriculture. The impact of growth in agriculture weakens as GDP increases and as the workforce shifts from agriculture to more productive sectors (Ligon and Sadoulet 2018), a phenomenon known as structural transformation.

Structural Transformation

One of the overarching goals of the GFSS is to support structural transformation, moving from low productivity to higher productivity (reallocating across sectors as needed) and shifting production from households to enterprises (employment transformation). Youth are a critical asset in this transformation, as they represent one of the key labor pools for non-farm enterprises, and, indeed, demographics drive the pace of structural transformation. The agriculture sector also typically employs the largest proportion of the workforce. Agricultural transformation (within the sector) can drive economic growth, creating additional jobs in supply chains and diversified income in rural areas. A key determinant of employment growth as a result of that transformation is the growth of the labor force—the more entrants to be absorbed, the more workers will remain in household production and lower productivity activities. Therefore, the demographic trends of a country play a significant role in determining the speed with which structural transformation can occur (Fox 2019).

Although the pace of change may vary, structural transformation is occurring through many USAID partner countries. Over the past 20 years, the percentage of the labor force whose primary source of earnings is agriculture has dropped precipitously in nine African countries. At the same time, employment in off-farm areas of agricultural value chains has increased, although non-farm activities rank

second to farming. Despite the rapid shift in sources of income, youth remained a substantial portion of the agricultural labor force over this period and farm productivity grew (Yeboah and Jayne 2018).

Youth Employment

As noted above, structural transformation is occurring (at varying rates), and agricultural transformation is a key part of that. In the early stages of agricultural transformation, most rural occupations are classified as unskilled; as the transformation progresses, the need for skills increases. Youth in rural areas often begin school later (often in poorer-quality schools than their urban peers) and begin work earlier than their urban peers. The quality of their higher-level technical and academic skills may not be the biggest challenge. Socio-emotional skills are the most critical gap cited by employers in Africa, as without those, work-based and other learning opportunities may not be accessible. These skills are gained through experience and interaction with others. Work-based learning approaches are more effective than training alone, as they foster social-emotional skills, as well as other "tacit" skills that are learned by doing rather than in a classroom setting. Young women may need separate or additional support to gain the needed skills depending on the socio-cultural context (Fox 2019).

Community-based youth development programs can generate positive employment and earnings outcomes, as well as positive impacts on physical health, mental health, agency, network building, and individual agency. Peer-to-peer mentoring such as extension training can also be an effective approach (Fox 2019).

Multiple sources indicated a dearth of evidence on youth employment impacts from a variety of programmatic approaches (ILO the Lab and MasterCard Foundation 2020; Fox 2019). A USAID-sponsored study (Markel, Hess and Loftin 2015) reached a similar conclusion, finding a dearth of youth-focused MSD programs compared to women-focused in USAID's agri-food systems portfolio. Further, most of the women-focused programs reviewed did not include approaches or interventions to explicitly address the factors impacting young women.

Further exploration of why youth employment programs failed revealed that many—especially those that are small, local, or headed by a charismatic leader—did so because they are not scalable (for example, recruiting, matching, and deploying mentors for thousands of youths) or because they are too expensive to scale. The few that have worked have been in urban areas. It is likely, however, that their success came at the cost of displacing other youth who might have gotten jobs in their absence. The last 10 years of evidence indicated that employment and earnings gains were only slightly higher for intervention groups than for control groups and that success was significant in only about 30 percent of cases. Finally, the control groups typically catch up to intervention groups over time (Fox 2019).

Market Systems Development and Youth

A key feature of the GFSS was the use of a market systems development approach, particularly in its goal of achieving agriculture-led economic growth. ILO the Lab and the MasterCard Foundation (2020) conducted a significant study of MSD activities in sub-Saharan Africa, analyzing what strategies worked best for youth and contrasting these experiences with those in the Balkans. The study concluded that MSD activities in sub-Saharan Africa had not yet yielded the scale and sustainability that they theoretically promise. The authors attributed this shortcoming partially to sector selection; they also noted that, in the Balkans, past MSD projects supported growth industries and, therefore, were able to ride the wave of wider economic transformation. They posited that there is also a trade-off between immediate poverty alleviation and longer-term structural transformation. At the individual activity level, six key lessons emerged:

1. Sector selection must be adapted for the youth population. Sectors that are promising for adult-targeted activities were not always a good match for youth. Conversely, niche opportunities

may be an excellent fit for youth job seekers, particularly young women. The report provided an example of the childcare services sector as a ripe opportunity for young women in urban areas in Tanzania and Ethiopia, though this is an example of gendered roles and potential barriers to youth who want to break out of those roles.

2. Scale and innovation come more rapidly in urban areas than in peri-urban or rural areas. Thus, while rural employment opportunities are critical, they are not likely to scale, which is a key goal of the market systems development approach. An ancillary finding to this was that as young men migrate to urban areas in search of jobs, other youth and many young women remain in rural areas relying on the agriculture sector for their livelihoods, and it may be necessary to shift social norms to enable young women to fully take advantage of those opportunities.
3. Youth aspirations matter. Youth have their own goals and desires about where they want to work (geography, sector) and/or the conditions under which they are willing to work. The study found that "Factors such as having a say in management decisions, on-going skills development opportunities, free lunches, childcare, and transportation can be easily overlooked, but can be highly impactful on the attraction and retention of youth when done right" (p. 7). Balancing youth aspirations against the realities of the labor markets is another factor. Some youth unemployment is caused because they have unrealistic expectations and sufficient household resources to turn down positions they view as undesirable.
4. Successful programs take into account youth incentives and opportunity costs. For example, several projects found that youth were not interested in long-term crops because of the time required. Youth valued short-term cash returns more highly. Similarly, interest in training was highest in short-term courses (one to six months) rather than long-term courses.
5. The perceived youth risk profile might not be accurate. Potential employers, customers, value chain partners, or others might perceive youth as higher risk due to lack of experience. Part of creating pathways for youth requires dealing with the perceptions as well as the reality.
6. Finally, it is most effective to work with proven partners and outreach channels. Leveraging existing networks of local youth groups or youth-serving organizations is highly effective as long as they are open and inclusive. In situations where they were not, it was more effective to work through religious institutions and local government. It was also critical to provide flexibility to be responsive to emerging opportunities.

The findings of a landscape review conducted by ACDI/VOCA (Markel, Hess and Loftin 2015) under the Feed the Future Advancing Women's Empowerment (AWE) program did not fully align with those of the ILO the Lab and MasterCard Foundation (2020). The AWE evidence suggested that intentionally designed MSD programs have the potential to create transformative opportunities for youth through mainstreamed and targeted approaches. In particular, MSD programs are effective at facilitating public-private collaborations, such as the provision of childcare services, that produced "win-win" outcomes for youth, women, the private sector, and market actors. In addition, strong private sector engagement was valuable in efforts to change mindsets. This was accomplished through their support of youth participation, especially young women, in non-traditional, adult male-dominated jobs. Evidence suggests this remains a gap in market inclusion programming, and more must be done to effectively incentivize market actors to address unpaid care work, lack of access to land, and the age and gender gap.

However, it is unclear if and how MSD can address broader youth developmental needs (e.g., sexual and reproductive health, life skills) or sufficiently address the root causes of youth exclusion (e.g., cultural norms, limited access to resources). Furthermore, programs tended to focus support on older male youth. Importantly, the report emphasized that MSD as a strategy for youth inclusion involves risks that should be assessed and addressed in activity design and monitoring. Specific risks cited were unequal power relations between youth and other market actors and the potentially oversized impact of market

cycles and changing trends on youth market actors. Other challenges included those related to building buy-in through PSE, making a strong business case that youth inclusion equates to commercial benefits, acknowledging the time and financial investment required, and addressing unrealistic expectations about the sustainability and impact of PPPs. Finally, the report highlighted that the MSD framework was a long-term strategy requiring time to achieve systems-level impact.

The report presented "quasi-facilitation" as a promising approach to effectively addressing youth development needs within the MSD framework. Low-intensity facilitation—using a "light-touch" to nudge market actors—could affect systems-level improvements, while higher-intensity facilitation tactics would be used discretely to address specific youth barriers.

The report emphasized the importance of a thorough youth assessment and gender-focused market analysis to effective programming. Similarly, the report highlighted the MSD activities need to improve capturing impacts for youth, including specifically tracking and reporting on age-disaggregates.

Resilience

The second approach to poverty reduction in the GFSS is increased resilience at both household and systems levels (Objective 2). Most household-level activities focus on asset accumulation, diversification of sources of income, and social protection. The predominant programming model of economic inclusion, or social protection plus programs, is thought to be more effective and better leverage limited public resources when combined with agriculture and rural development investments that support both increased livelihoods, improved food access, and increased productivity (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations 2015). Some initial critiques have cited these as costly, at least for individual donors, but current research is focused on increasing efficiencies and cost-effectiveness (Paul, Dutta and Chaudhary 2021). The impact of these programs on youth is not well understood at this stage, not least because current models of intrahousehold allocation do not yet robustly explain or predict the allocation of resources to children and youth (Chiappori and Meghir 2015).

At the household level, the only interventions shown to be effective are cash transfers and economic inclusion programs. Cash transfers support resiliency and poverty reduction at the household level by reducing liquidity constraints, smoothing and increasing consumption, and positively impacting investment, saving, and borrowing behavior (Bastagli, et al. 2016). Emerging evidence also suggests that economic inclusion programs show promising and potentially sustained impact on a wide range of outcomes, with a bundled set of interventions showing a larger impact on income, assets, and savings relative to stand-alone interventions (Paul, Dutta and Chaudhary 2021). One clear trend, however, was the localization and customization of economic inclusion activities based on the population served, including youth (Andrews, et al. 2021).

The efficacy of another common approach, economic diversification, remains contested. Livelihood diversification into non-farm or off-farm sectors, which can increase income and reduce risk, has long been considered important in building resilience. One body of evidence supports the value of households having multiple income streams, but context determines the poverty- and risk-reduction power of income diversification, specifically the individual or household age, level of education, and time allotted to nonagricultural activities (Osabuohien, et al. 2019). Other evidence, however, highlights the need for a deeper understanding of the benefits of specialization versus diversification. Diversification may not always be the best approach for the rural poor; in some contexts and livelihoods, it could be disadvantageous to divide full-time employment among multiple income streams (Liao, Barratt and Kassam 2014; Goulden, et al. 2013; Rapsomanikis 2015). A key factor in determining the utility of diversification is risk tolerance and decision-making processes within households, about which little information is available, particularly the extent to which youth have any voice or how their needs are taken into account (Chiappori and Meghir 2015). In addition, the decision-making and risk assessment

skills of youth may not fully develop until youth reach their mid- to late-20s, putting them in a suboptimal position to make informed decisions about their risk tolerance until that time (Harvard Medical School 2011).

At a systems level, interventions focus on three domains: (1) resilient and inclusive markets that support drive price stability and reduce prices through competition; (2) environmental resilience to external shocks from weather, natural disaster, and conflict through disaster preparedness and early warning systems; and (3) socio-political stability. Resilience interventions at the community, national, and international level generally take a systems lens to build the economic, social, and environmental ability of market systems to allocate resources, draw on system-level resources (such as social safety nets, social capital, the financial system, or government assistance), and innovate to solve problems in the face of shocks and stresses (Sabates and Devereux 2015; Roelen and Devereux 2019). Though there is limited disaggregation of information on the effectiveness of specific combinations of interventions at the systems levels, the documented outcomes are reduced levels of deprivation, community spillovers, and demonstration of positive socio-economic improvements in consumption, health, education, and social participation (Sabates and Devereux 2015; Roelen and Devereux 2019).

Another level of intervention is also important, though not the focus of GFSS Objective 2, which is the individual level. Positive Youth Development, another approach to resilience for youth, focuses on four key domains: (1) assets, (2) agency, (3) contribution, and (4) enabling environment. Most activities predominantly target youth assets, and only around one-third address all domains (Alvarado, et al. 2017). Youth in many countries face a range of shocks and stresses, and it is difficult to capture data amid crises. A recent study (Rosas, Acevedo and Zaldivar 2017), however, researched the short-term impacts of skill-building interventions on urban Sierra Leonean youth during the early days of the Ebola crisis. The study sought to build evidence, in the context of "lower-ability" necessity entrepreneurs and workers, about the following: (I) the skills-formation process, in particular, the role of non-cognitive ability; (2) the link between skill building and necessity entrepreneurship; (3) the implications for the design and targeting of skill-building interventions in low-income and fragile contexts; and (4) the linkages between skill-building efforts and resilience to external shocks and stresses. The randomized control trial measured the impact of the following treatments: (1) technical skills training, plus on-the-job training; (2) business skills training; and (3) a mix of (1) and (2). Importantly, participants in all groups received financial stipends and literacy and numeracy training.

The first key finding from this study was that packaging cash stipends with skills training produced positive impacts through increased employment and entrepreneurship. This, in turn, increased household consumption and investments in housing and assets, which was interpreted as building resilience to the Ebola shock. A second key finding was that the typical adolescent stage for skill-building may extend into early adulthood. Also, among youth with lower capabilities, the channel through which positive changes occurred depended on the foundational ability of the youth participant. Youth with higher skill capacity upon entering the program benefited through more positive labor market and entrepreneurship investment impacts. Alternately, less-skilled youth showed greater improvements in skill level, and then directed these gains toward increased consumption.

Overall, the evidence of PYD efficacy in lower- and middle-income countries is limited and, in many cases, of poor quality (Alvarado, et al. 2017). The key lessons that have been identified are that (1) a systematic approach that works with numerous stakeholders across multiple settings is needed; (2) transferable skills and knowledge are more critical than technical, vocational, or academic skills; and (3) successful activities include innovative, youth-led activities (Alvarado, et al. 2017).

One glaring gap in the literature on resilience is the lack of acknowledgment that **living in poverty may introduce stressors** (and physiological reactions) **that inhibit adolescents' cognitive and physical development**, which form the basis of two key asset pools at the individual level: knowledge

and skills. Experience with conflict, living without parental care, migration, or other life-changing events may exacerbate developmental delays, resulting in a range of mental health issues, including posttraumatic stress symptoms, depressive symptoms, anxiety symptoms, and externalizing behavior problems. Adolescent girls may be more prone to these issues than adolescent boys (Dorsey, et al. 2016).

It is also important to recognize that the attributes that serve as protective factors are contextually unique and socio-culturally bounded, meaning what is applicable in one situation may not be relevant in another (Klasen and Crombag 2013; Tol, Song and Jordans 2013). Thus, a supportive socio-ecological context may be equally or more important than individual attributes; however, community-level resilience approaches are highly dependent on context and risk. The extent to which and how youth are engaged varies, and evidence is context-specific and not readily generalizable.

Nutrition, Water Security, Sanitation, and Hygiene

Nutrition

The third objective of the GFSS is a well-nourished population, especially women and children. Nutrition is an important complement to the other objectives, as undernourishment can be addressed through the consumption of starchy staples that do not result in the best cognitive and physical development outcomes (Hoddinott and Horton 2014). Although the most critical period of human development is the first 1,000 days, adolescent and young adult nutrition provides an opportunity for catch-up growth and to support improvements in cognitive development at this critical juncture. In addition, stunting and suboptimal linear growth in adolescence, leading to short attained adult height, can also be a problem and is not recognized by any of the current nutrition intervention approaches that are promoted by USAID and other donors (Christian and Smith 2018).

The evidence base for designing adolescent nutrition programs is incomplete for developing countries. It is missing longitudinal dietary, anthropometry, and micronutrient status data, as well as global indicators for health and nutrition in adolescents. As a result, interventions are designed without the benefit of data on factors associated with the age of onset of puberty, peak height velocity, and duration of linear growth and bone mineralization in many low- and middle-income countries (Christian & Smith, 2018).

Four primary approaches have been advocated to address adolescent nutritional deficiencies: (1) nutrition education and counseling, (2) micronutrient supplementation, (3) food fortification, and (4) macronutrient supplementation. A meta-analysis of recent studies on these approaches concluded that the quality of the evidence was low, and very little of it included adolescent boys. None of the studies generated any evidence on nutrition education and counseling or macronutrient supplementation. The effects of micronutrient supplementation and food fortification were uncertain, which may have been a result of poor data quality or poor fidelity of implementation, and the authors determined there was a need for more studies in this area (Salam, et al. 2020).

The World Health Organization cites micronutrient deficiencies (particularly iron deficiency leading to anemia, as well as iodine and vitamin A deficiency) as a significant source of growth deficit and years lost to disability. While iron and iodine deficiencies tend to be more prevalent among adolescent girls, vitamin A deficiencies seem to be more common among adolescent males (Christian and Smith 2018). Undernutrition also affects the endocrine system, producing higher levels of stress hormones and lower levels of hormones that regulate growth (Lassi, Moin and Bhutta 2017). In addition, consumption of healthy foods, particularly fruits, vegetables, and lean meats is often insufficient, with adolescents consuming more foods high in saturated fats, trans-fatty acids, sugar, and salt (World Health

Organization 2021). These patterns have resulted in increasing obesity among adolescents worldwide (Lassi, Moin and Bhutta 2017).

Investments in nutrition are durable and appear to be cost-effective, but specific rates of return for adolescent nutrition interventions are not readily available. This evidence supports an expansion of nutrition education and micronutrient supplementation/food fortification focusing on iodine, iron, zinc, and vitamin A for adolescents. In addition, in communities and households where food insecurity is chronic, macronutrient supplementation may be appropriate. It is important to note, however, that nutrition alone is not sufficient to reduce poverty.

Finally, while nutrition is an important complement to other areas of GFSS programming, reforms to food systems will be necessary to achieve the GFSS nutrition goal. In particular, the consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables, legumes, coarse grains, and root crops must increase to achieve nutrition goals and reduce nutrition-related non-communicable diseases (Hawkes and Popkin 2015). This will depend on the expansion of rapid and cold storage supply chains to deliver these types of foods as opposed to heavily processed and packaged food items.

Water Security

Contributing to all three objectives, the GFSS also identifies water security as a critical area for improvement. Treatment of this topic is very light in the strategy itself, and none of the discussion around the relevant intermediate results identifies specific approaches or illustrative activities that involve youth.

Three key issues emerge in the literature around youth and water security. The first is the time burden of accessing water and on whom it falls, the second is the professionalization of the water sector, and the third is the limited access that youth typically have to decision-making bodies that oversee the management and allocation of water resources.

The importance of safe, clean drinking water for all is clear. In demographic and health surveys, a clear pattern emerges in which women, and often young women or girls, spend a significant amount of time collecting water for household usage (Graham, Hirai and Kim 2016); multiple indicator cluster surveys, however, indicate that outside of Africa, men or boys typically collect water, especially in urban areas (Geere and Cortobius 2017). Some researchers have linked the responsibility for fetching water to school absence and drop-out among girls (Agesa and Agesa 2019), reducing future opportunities for those girls and young women.

Increases in the time burden of fetching water can have the effect of reducing access to safe water sources, as a study across 17 countries found (Cassivi, et al. 2018). Therefore, mismanagement of water sources can have significant impacts not only on the women and girls who collect the water (in terms of opportunity cost, personal safety, etc.) but also on entire households and communities. Conversely, decreases in the time burden of fetching water may not only improve access but also improve the overall quality of life. A study that examined the outcomes in communities with new access to nearby water sources found that the time that had been spent collecting water was reallocated partially to market-related activities and partially to leisure (Mosa, Grethe and Siddig 2020).

Multiple studies proposed similar metrics for monitoring or evaluating access to water and fetching water. These included the number of trips required, the distance to the water source, the method of carrying water, the health and disability status of the water carrier, and the safety of water carriers in traveling to and from the water source.

The second issue that emerges for youth in the water sector is the professionalization of the sector. Key areas of work within the water sector include hydrogeology, drinking water and wastewater,

preservation of water, prevention of water and soil pollution, water purification and treatment, sewage treatment, conservation and reuse, and water reclamation. Rural areas frequently face a lack of trained personnel, and service delivery models are self-supply or community-based management (USAID 2020). Skills building for technical and professional staff in the sector is currently needed in many countries. The gender balance within the sector also needs attention, as the sector is currently dominated by men, but many of the users/customers are women who cannot or are unwilling to engage with men in community or business settings (DAI Global 2020). This indicates there may be a wide range of opportunities for young women to enter the sector.

As the sector professionalizes, the service delivery model may shift to private operators, creating an opening for entrepreneurs, but it is not clear that those shifts provide the same opportunities for youth as for other entrepreneurs. A recent SDG Lab effort examined the intersection of youth, microfinance, and the water sector. They concluded that limited entrepreneurship opportunities exist in the water sector, but many youths are too risk-averse to be entrepreneurs. Further, water security, management, and governance require a higher level of preparation than many other fields, and local trainers may not be available. With appropriate (unspecified) strategies and supports, however, they concluded it would be feasible under favorable conditions (Leist, et al. 2017). Although the conclusion was largely positive, the details of how such opportunities might be made available are unclear.

The third issue raised in the literature is one of access to decision-makers. One of the key gaps or barriers identified for youth in the water sector was a lack of access to decision-making bodies (Leist, et al. 2017). A range of approaches of creating entry points for youth in decision-making bodies have been tested in other sectors, and those approaches are also applicable in the water sector. One significant effort to create entry points for youth was the establishment of the World Youth Parliament for Water, which has been an official partner of UN Water since 2013. Youth engagement in water security includes advocacy, awareness-raising, local action, and research (World Youth Parliament for Water 2021), the same tools used to gain access to decision-makers in other sectors.

Sanitation and Hygiene

The GFSS also identifies sanitation and hygiene as an important IR under the nutrition objective. While many sanitation and hygiene activities benefit both men and women or boys and girls (for example, water and sanitation infrastructure in schools and health settings), many activities include a menstrual health management (MHM) component targeted to adolescent girls and women. Many women and girls continue to find their professional and educational opportunities limited by inadequate sanitation and social norms or menstruation-related stigma in the workplace or school (USAID 2019). Effective MHM can be achieved when girls and women have the following: (1) awareness, information, and self-confidence regarding menstrual hygiene; (2) access to safe, hygienic, and absorbent materials or products and supplies; (3) access to safe and clean facilities that are equipped with water and soap to bathe oneself and clean or dispose of materials; and (4) a supporting environment that allows women and girls to manage their periods without fear of stigma or embarrassment. MHM programming therefore generally focuses on four key areas: (1) knowledge and skills, (2) materials, (3) supplies and services, and (4) social support (UNICEF 2019).

One recommendation emerging from both the USAID and UNICEF experience was the importance of introducing MHM-related indicators and shifting the focus from monitoring infrastructure to addressing the social norms and organizational cultures that continue to impede women and girls from full participation in work and educational opportunities. A key challenge for communicating achievements in sanitation and hygiene broadly, however, is that definitions, indicators, and data sources are underdeveloped and not always comparable between countries (Cronk, Slaymaker and Bartram 2015). While the limited comparability of data sets poses one challenge, multiple scholars have undertaken the use of photovoice to codify problems and priorities as identified by local youth. This approach can

generate very specific information on the sources of sanitation and hygiene issues. For example, a study in Zambia identified individual behaviors, community norms, and public policies as the sources of poor hygiene practices and also identified bottom-up solutions to those problems (Nyambe and Yamauchi 2021). A similar study in India was able to identify the attitudes (shaped by social structure, education, culture, and generation), norms, and service gaps that led to poor hygiene behaviors (Gold-Watts, et al. 2021).

This type of research suggests one way in which youth can be engaged, but youth are frequently engaged in sanitation and hygiene programming as community advocates and innovators, as well. For example, a program in Tanzania used a school-based science education and social entrepreneurship model with youth as the trainers to disseminate information about the importance of sanitation and good hygiene for health. Modes of dissemination included a science fair, mapping exercises, digital stories, and arts-based school and community events (Gold-Watts, et al. 2021).

Implications for the GFSS-R

The most common and significant themes reflected in the literature across RFS programmatic areas were a lack of scalability, cost-effectiveness, and sustainability of impacts. Scaling up economic inclusion is dependent on the demonstrated success and strong leadership and vision among decision-makers. Cost analysis is critical in planning for sustainability, particularly if local partners (governments and others) are intended to make policy decisions or assume responsibility for a program after a donor's activity ends.

Engaging youth effectively in interventions designed to reduce poverty may require some adjustments to how government, donors, and youth-serving organizations have engaged youth in the past.

- Agriculture-led growth is a critical strategy for alleviating poverty in countries where the GDP is low and the percentage of the workforce in the agriculture sector is high. The strategy should expand its current MSD focus to include explicitly increasing productivity through human capital improvements and inclusive innovation (rolled out with support to ensure small-scale actors in the food system are not left behind).
- The GFSS-R should include good practice guidance for activities supporting human capital improvements for youth. Such guidance should encourage implementing partners to apply a PYD lens and take into account physical and mental health, cognitive development, motivations and perceptions of self, and the enabling environment, particularly connections to others and activity in the public sphere.
- The GFSS-R should clarify that resilience is a dynamic concept that operates at multiple levels (e.g., the individual, family, peer, school, and community levels) and that promotive and protective factors are often socio-culturally and situationally dependent. Good practice guidance could further instruct partners to conduct appropriate assessments to determine what factors are relevant in a given context.
- Social protection measures provide short-term relief to poverty, but only multi-pronged economic inclusion activities resulted in longer-term poverty alleviation. Most examples of these activities, however, are too costly to scale.
- The GFSS-R could update the nutrition objective to complement and enhance the benefits of USAID's current focus on the first 1,000 days of life, including nutrition education for adolescents and communities broadly; micronutrient supplementation or food fortification of iodine, iron, zinc, and vitamin A; and targeted macronutrient supplementation.

- The GFSS-R could expand the focus on water security and incorporate the expectation that a reduction in time fetching water would translate to increased market activity. It could also recommend reporting on water-security-related indicators by age and sex as a good practice (number of trips required, the distance to the water source, the method of carrying water, the health and disability status of the water carrier, and the safety of water carriers in traveling to and from the water source).
- The GFSS-R could expand the focus on sanitation and hygiene and incorporate reporting on MHM-related indicators as a good practice.
- Across the RFS portfolio, opportunities abound to engage youth as advocates, innovators, and researchers. The GFSS-R learning agenda and individual activity monitoring, evaluation, and learning plans should incorporate appropriate metrics to capture the extent and impact of youth engagement in those areas.

This new evidence and USAID's lessons learned provide a useful framework for reflecting on the gaps in the GFSS and how the GFSS-R might approach youth differently. This will be the focus of the next two sections.

Changing Context and Emerging Trends

The GFSS identified the decade from 2007 to 2016 as an unprecedented time in which extreme poverty, hunger, and undernutrition decreased significantly. It seemed at the time that it might be possible to eradicate all three by 2030. The context has changed significantly in the past five years, however, and the GFSS-R must respond to a new reality.

Factors Influencing Food Systems from 2015 to 2020

From 2015 to 2019, global food systems continued to evolve as they responded to international economic, social, environmental, and political events. Despite the considerable progress across all global regions in SDG Goal 3 (ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all ages) (Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations 2021), an estimated 25.9 percent of the worldwide population—two billion people—were affected by moderate or severe food insecurity in 2019, up from 22.4 percent in 2014 (United Nations 2021). Food systems are vulnerable to conflict, climate change and environmental shocks, demographic changes, and global pandemics. These variations within the food system can reduce purchasing power and decrease the capacity of producers and food distribution, which particularly negatively affects people living in poverty and those close to the poverty line (United Nations 2021). This is especially important for youth since as of 2019, the UN's data on progress towards the eradication of poverty showed that youth workers were twice as likely as adult workers to be living in extreme poverty (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2021), which makes them an important target group for the GFSS-R.

The subsections below contain a brief analysis, framed within the SDGs, of factors contributing to changes within the global food system.

Demographic Changes

As populations grow, so does the demand for food. According to data from the UN Population Center, from 2015 to 2019 the global population grew from 7.3 billion (United Nations 2015) to 7.7 billion, meaning youth populations continue to grow (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2019). The 47 least-developed countries are among the world's fastest-growing—many are projected to double in population between 2019 and 2050—putting pressure on already strained resources. A key contributor to this growth is the continued high fertility levels in many sub-Saharan

African and Latin American countries, which often experience high adolescent fertility levels as well, with potentially adverse health and social consequences for both the young women and their children (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2019). This means that these economies least able to absorb new entrants will continue to have the most youth seeking work, and it is likely only rapid growth and structural transformation will enable those countries to realize demographic dividends from their youth bulges.

Not only do many developing countries have higher fertility rates and growing youth populations, but significant proportions of those populations still reside in rural areas as well. Africa and Asia are home to nearly 90 percent of the world's rural population. India has the largest rural population (893 million), followed by China (578 million). Africa, too, remains mostly rural, with only 43 percent of its population living in urban areas. While the motivations for migration to urban areas vary, youth migration to urban areas is a common response to disruptions in rural economies. Future disruptions, whatever the cause, are likely to result in increased youth migration to urban areas (and potentially out of the food system labor force).

Food Systems Transformation

Globally, small-scale farmers—those with less than two hectares of land—represent 84 percent of farms, and most youth engaged in agricultural production fall into this category. In contrast to their numbers, small-scale farmers produce only one-third of global crop production, with the remaining two-thirds produced by a small number of larger-scale operators (OECD 2021). Clearly, a focus on productivity and profitability is important for meeting increasing food needs and for improving the livelihoods of adults and youth working in small-scale agricultural production.

In many parts of the world, however, social, political, and environmental trends have decreased the stability producers need to ensure crop and livestock production. The conditions in which food is produced vary depending on soil quality, access to water, and weather (particularly with regard to the length of the growing season and the occurrence of natural disasters). Poor soil management practices also contribute to dependency on costly inputs. Agricultural producers commonly acquire these inputs through debt financing, leading to a revolving credit debit cycle (OECD 2021). In addition, most of the world's countries are also not on track to have sustainably managed water resources by 2030, making water usage for food production an ongoing concern (United Nations 2021). Finally, global average temperatures have been setting new records almost every year, with 2019 being the hottest year on record. Extreme weather events that destroy crops—like wildfires, floods, droughts, and large storms—have become more common. In addition, pests, weeds, viruses, and diseases move to new areas and affect crops, livestock, and aquaculture production (OECD 2021). While these challenges affect many producers in the food system, youth may be particularly affected, as they frequently have access to poorer quality land and lack the capital to invest in higher quality inputs.

The digital revolution also has a significant influence on the transformation of food systems as more commerce, inspection, and compliance systems are automated and brought online. Although almost 100 percent of urban dwellers have access to mobile broadband across the globe, in some regions, only about 80 percent of rural dwellers have any access, and for many, they are limited to 2G or 3G access. In the 47 least-developed countries, only 25 percent of urban dwellers and only 10 percent of rural dwellers have access to the internet. Lack of internet access remains a significant barrier for engaging in commerce and identifying new markets and opportunities for those in rural areas. Of note is that twice as many youth access the internet as adults in those countries (38 percent of youth compared to 19 percent of adults). This represents a potential asset for the transformation of the food system, particularly if access continues to expand and youth continue to adopt at a higher rate than adults. Although disaggregated data by sex and age are not available, overall, the gender gap in access to the internet (15 percent of women and 28 percent of men) persists and indicates that opportunities may not

be equally accessible to young men and young women (International Telecommunication Union Development Sector 2020).

COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected all populations and economic sectors. It has disrupted supply chains by increasing distribution times (as a result of social distancing protocols), reducing labor pools (particularly migrant labor and seasonal workers, many of whom are women or youth), increasing inspection and quarantine measures, and driving up costs. High-value, perishable crops and animal-sourced foods are some of the most affected products (Carducci, et al. 2021). In addition, COVID-19 exposed a lack of coordination and significant weaknesses in the governance of food systems (Bisoffi, et al. 2021). Cross-border trade, and sometimes internal trade in foodstuffs, was halted without regard for laws, treaties, and trade agreements. From a business perspective, these disruptions are particularly problematic for MSMEs and larger firms lacking storage, cold chain, and other critical capacities. From a nutrition perspective, the trade disruptions constrain the healthy food choices available, particularly for poorer households.

Though economic winners have surfaced during the pandemic, much of the global population, particularly the world's poorest and most vulnerable, have experienced hardships. An estimated 71 million people are expected to be pushed back into extreme poverty in 2020, the first increase in global poverty since 1998. Reduced or lost incomes, limited social protection, and rising prices mean that even those previously secure could find themselves at risk of poverty and hunger due to the pandemic (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2020). The UN estimates that 1.6 billion workers in the informal economy (including youth) have lost their livelihoods (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2020). This loss of employment and income, coupled with the highest prices for agricultural commodities since 2013, has increased food insecurity for poor households everywhere (World Bank 2021). Young children, adolescents, women of reproductive age, and the elderly have been most impacted in terms of reduced diets and nutrition (Carducci, et al. 2021), and although some catch-up growth for young children might be possible, malnourished adolescents will miss a critical growth window (Christian and Smith 2018).

In addition, the pandemic has reduced the availability of a range of community-based services. Limited access to health services leads to an increase in child and maternal mortality and reduced access to family planning tools. School closures have kept 90 percent of students worldwide (1.57 billion) out of face-to-face learning in schools and caused more than 370 million children to miss the school meals on which they depend.

Conflict and Displacement

Conflict and resulting displacement threaten all development efforts. Over the past decade, the number of displaced individuals has doubled globally. In 2019, the number of people fleeing war, persecution, and conflict exceeded 79.5 million, the highest in recorded history. This total number consists of over 45 million internally displaced people and 26 million refugees, 40 percent of whom are under the age of 18. Almost 70 percent of the total displaced population originates from five countries: Syria, Venezuela, Afghanistan, South Sudan, and Burma (in descending order) (UNHCR 2019).

Recent studies have found that in the face of conflict, businesses in the agriculture sector try to minimize their risk, as do enterprises in other sectors. For example, in Colombia, small farmers diverted to other farm activities with short-term yields and lower profitability, and some even shifted their focus toward subsistence activities. The prevalence of violent shocks, therefore, was connected to less land used for seasonal crops and more land used for mixed crops and cattle ranching (Arias, Ibáñez and Zambrano 2019), which reduces the availability of products in the market. Another study showed similar results in Uganda. As the risk of violence increased, households reduced their livestock holdings and shifted

toward smaller, less-risky animals that could be kept within villages. These results were consistent when controlling for individual and community exposure, remoteness, and the availability of inputs and output markets. The reduction in livestock holdings was roughly 65 percent of the average value of livestock holdings and 25.5 percent of the mean annual consumption (Rockmore 2020). Some conflicts also produce less direct impacts on households. A recent study in Gaza found that household food security was not directly affected by conflict, but household resilience capacity, which is key to resisting food insecurity, decreases due to conflict. The reason is that a household's adaptive capacity is reduced through increased income instability and decreased income diversification (Brück, d'Errico and Pietrelli 2019).

The impacts of conflict on youths in agri-food systems specifically have been less well documented than on enterprises and households. The primary trend that has emerged is massive migration, and in the case of rural youth in Nepal, this migration has led to longer-term food shortages and most cultivable lands being allowed to go fallow every season (Upreti, Sharma and Paudel 2014).

Implications for the GFSS-R

The current global trends underscore the urgency of the need for youth engagement in food systems at scale. Rising poverty and high fertility rates combined with high food prices diminish the standard of living and potentially set the stage for civil or political unrest. Food system transformation must accelerate to meet countries' demand for food and profitable employment opportunities for youth and other populations. The prospect of mass migration out of rural areas without accelerated productivity and profitability in the food system would exacerbate the current problems. The GFSS-R will need to adopt an integrated development approach, coordinating on multiple fronts to ensure the rapid, sustainable development of the food system with youth involvement on a large scale.

Conclusions

The GFSS was a critical document in setting programmatic priorities and guiding implementation throughout its strategy period. The urgency of the issues it was designed to address and its clear goals made it a compelling framework for USAID and other USG agencies. It did not incorporate youth as intentionally as it might have, though, and that lack of focus was reflected in the resulting programming. The results of the inventory and lessons from project-level learning systems indicated that in its current form, the GFSS did not provide sufficiently robust guidance on youth inclusion (particularly of marginalized youth). The lack of youth strategies for WSSH and a single-minded approach to young women in nutrition activities likely missed important opportunities to assist countries in leveraging all their assets in the journey to self-reliance, as indicated by some of the recent literature reviewed. While the resilience and agri-food systems activities were more inclusive and included some youth-targeted activities, the approaches selected were not equally useful for youth, and particularly for more vulnerable segments of the youth population who require greater support.

The GFSS is generally well aligned with the other USG and USAID policies, strategies, and initiatives discussed above, although there are some areas of divergence with the population-focused strategies and policies. For example, the GFSS emphasizes a market systems approach while the 2021 Economic Growth Policy focuses on enterprise-level growth and labor productivity and uses a different approach to inclusivity than the GFSS. The GFSS-R offers an opportunity to refine the focus of the USG food security strategy and to be more intentional about youth and other populations it is meant to serve. As the strategy and its results framework were silent as to the segmentation of participants or beneficiaries (for example, infants in the first 1,000 days of life), unless activity contracts/awards specify intended participants or set parameters for inclusion, marginalized populations are likely to remain underserved. This also highlights one approach to bringing the GFSS more into line with the population-focused

policies and strategies—specifically including youth in IRs or sub-IRs and embedding the learning agenda into the strategy document to indicate its importance to USAID partners.

The GFSS-R also represents a significant opportunity to influence how USAID and other USG agencies, their implementing partners, multilateral institutions, partner countries, and international civil society organizations choose to engage youth in their agri-food, resilience, and nutrition programming for the next decade.

Overarching Recommendations

In light of the evidence presented in this paper, USAID may wish to consider the following recommendations when developing GFSS-R:

- Segment youth and target poorer youth (and youth vulnerable to poverty) more intentionally rather than using a single cross-cutting IR. Ensure the theory of changes considers both the heterogeneity of the youth population and the intersectionality with other characteristics (gender, marital status, educational attainment, culture, class, location, health, etc.).
- Update the results framework to effectively overlay the PYD framework of assets, agency, contribution, and enabling environment.
- Continue to engage in agriculture-led growth and resilience as primary areas of intervention as long as GDP is low and the percentage of the workforce in the agriculture sector is high, recognizing that recent trends may slow or reverse the progress that had been made in years prior to 2020. Maintain a focus on inclusivity, but ensure the MSD focus includes productivity and profitability as key metrics for firm-level interventions.
- Consider developing a framework for resilience outcomes at the individual, household, and community levels and, within that, tailoring resilience indicators for specific socio-cultural contexts to accurately identify critical resilience outcomes and their predictors.
- Consider expanding the nutrition objective to incorporate adolescent nutrition to support the pubertal growth spurt, and particularly nutrition education and micronutrient supplementation.
- Consider including support to partner countries in gathering data on the current gaps in the adolescent nutrition evidence base as a good practice (youth dietary, anthropometry, and micronutrient status, as well as data on factors associated with the age of onset of puberty, peak height velocity, and duration of linear growth and bone mineralization).
- Consider including research on how factors associated with vulnerability affect poverty, as measured by income and consumption, and patterns of intrahousehold allocation to explain or predict the allocation of resources to children and youth in the GFSS-R learning agenda.

Recommendations for Updates to the GFSS Results Framework

The GFSS results framework is meaningful and concise, and the linkages between the objectives and the intermediate results are quite clear. Its brevity, however, may come at the cost of its effectiveness in communicating to implementing partners requirements of activity-level MEL systems and the data granularity required to respond to the strategy's learning agenda. In its next iteration, four approaches could make youth more central to the strategy and to the learning that comes from it: (1) use of youth-specific sub-IRs, (2) adoption of a fourth objective focusing on inclusion, (3) inclusion of a narrative for each objective that specifically addresses how it intersects with and responds to each CCIR, and (4) adaptations to the reporting requirements in the Performance Indicator Reference Sheets (PIRS) for

mandatory indicators. For this discussion, we assume that the overarching goal will remain to sustainably reduce global hunger, malnutrition, and poverty.

In its next iteration, the GFSS results framework could reduce or eliminate the cross-cutting IRs and add sub-IRs to each IR to ensure that the intended results are achieved and that activity MEL systems support the learning agenda effectively. If that were the case, youth-specific sub-IRs could be added to most of the current IRs (1, 2, 3, 6, 7, and 9) to capture the specific impacts on youth and contributions by youth. Adding these sub-IRs would provide the opportunity to overlay the principles of positive youth development on the GFSS framework. A list of illustrative sample sub-IRs follows.

Sub-IR 1.x: Youth small-scale producers and entrepreneurs (male and female, ages 15-29, including marginalized populations) have equal access to market-relevant information, financial services, technical services, and secure land and marine tenure.

Sub-IR 2.x: Youth small-scale producers and entrepreneurs (male and female, ages 15-29, including marginalized populations) have more and stronger connections to local, regional, and international markets.

Sub-IR 3.x: Male and female youth of all ages, particularly young women, ethnic minorities, indigenous youth, youth with disabilities, and LGBTQI+ youth, have increased access to age- and developmentally appropriate livelihoods preparation, increased access to age- and developmentally appropriate work opportunities, increased employment in safe and decent working conditions, and increased success as entrepreneurs.

Sub-IR 6.x: Male and female youth of all ages, particularly young women, ethnic minorities, indigenous youth, youth with disabilities, and LGBTQI+ youth, have increased resources and strategies at the individual level that enable them to recover quickly from shocks and stresses in ways that do not undermine current and future well-being.

Sub-IR 6.y: Male and female youth of all ages, particularly young women, ethnic minorities, indigenous youth, youth with disabilities, and LGBTQI+ youth, play an integral role in building resilience to shocks and stresses at the community level.

Sub-IR 7.x: Male and female youth of all ages have adequate diets with diverse and nutrient-rich foods to meet their caloric, macronutrient, and micronutrient needs for growth from puberty through adulthood.

Sub-IR 9.x: Male and female youth of all ages have increased access to clean and safe drinking water, food, and sanitation services in their communities.

Sub-IR 9.y: Male and female youth of all ages are an integral part of managing clean and safe drinking water, food, and sanitation services in their communities.

In the examples above, sub-IRs 1 and 2 focus on youth ages 15 to 29, though reporting for specific activities may be adjusted as youth under the legal age of majority cannot engage in contracts. Other sub-IRs are relevant to all youth, but activities should segment the youth population to ensure their needs are met appropriately. One risk to this approach is that in a summary results framework document, sub-IRs may not be omitted for space considerations, leaving youth less visible than in the current one.

Alternatively, if USAID decides to maintain the cross-cutting IR approach, the cross-cutting youth IR should be more specific in requiring segmentation of participating youth using appropriate PYD approaches and in the data collection, analysis, and reporting requirements for youth.

Using the second approach, USAID could adopt a fourth objective that supports its strategy to sustainability reduce hunger, malnutrition, and poverty. The fourth objective would focus specifically on

the most vulnerable among the populations of USAID partner countries, with a title along the lines of "Improved well-being and access to resources for the most vulnerable segments of the population." This objective very clearly aligns with each of the other objectives but creates an imperative to reach the most vulnerable segments of society, which in many cases would include youth, but would also bring the GFSS into better alignment with USG and USAID policies and strategies to meet the needs of people with disabilities, indigenous people, and children in adversity (see below for further discussion). IRs under this objective could focus on specific populations of participants or on specific approaches to meet the needs of underserved populations.

The final approach does not involve changing the IRs or indicators, but rather focuses on increasing analysis and use of data already collected and available. As USAID instituted a requirement to capture individual participant age information in 2018, the PIRS for relevant individual-level indicators could be updated to require reporting by age bands. To capture critical information on youth by development stage and legal status (i.e., whether they are treated as minors or adults), USAID should consider the following age bands: 10-14, 15-17, 18-19, 20-24, and 25-29. Data can then be further aggregated into five-year age bands, adult/minor age bands, or another grouping, as appropriate for analysis for a given indicator. The PIRS should note, however, that actual age should be collected (as best it can be estimated) and then reported in age bands, as participants may pass through two or more age bands over the life of a project.

Annex 1: GFSS Crosswalk Resources

Document Title	Link
2016-2025 Food Assistance and Food Security Strategy	https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1867/FFP-Strategy-FINAL%2010.5.16.pdf
Advancing Disability-inclusive Government	https://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/democracy-human-rights-and-governance/protecting-human-rights/disability; https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/Mainstreaming_Disability_Across_The_Program_Cycle_and_Beyond_Toolkit_Digital_revised_9_5_2019.pdf
Advancing Protection and Care for Children in Adversity Strategy	https://www.childreninadversity.gov/docs/default-source/default-document-library/apcca-strategy-final-web.pdf?sfvrsn=4
Digital Strategy	https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/15396/USAID_Digital_Strategy.pdf
EG Policy	https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/EG_Policy_Final_1.12.2021.pdf
Employment Framework Playbook	https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1865/Employment-Framework-Playbook-Final.pdf
Global Food Security Strategy	https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1867/USG-Global-Food-Security-Strategy-2016.pdf
Global Water Strategy	https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1865/Global_Water_Strategy_2017_final_508v2.pdf
Landscape Analysis	https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/UPDATED_EXTERNAL_Landscape_Analysis_paper_-_Over_the_Horizon_Strategic_Review_-_09.02.2020.pdf
Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Strategy 2014-2025	https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1867/USAID_Nutrition_Strategy_5-09_508.pdf
New Partnerships Initiative	https://www.usaid.gov/npi
Over the Horizon: Focus Countries	https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/EXTERNAL_USAID_Over_the_Horizon_Focus_Countries.pdf
Over the Horizon: Snapshot	https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/USAID_Over_the_Horizon_Snapshot.pdf
Policy on Promoting the Rights of Indigenous Peoples	https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/USAID-IndigenousPeoples-Policy-mar-2020.pdf

Private Sector Engagement Policy	https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1865/usaid_psepolicy_final.pdf
U.S. Global Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls	https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/254904.pdf
Women's Entrepreneurship and Economic Empowerment Act of 2018	https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/5480/text
Women's Global Development and Prosperity (W-GDP) Fund	https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/W-GDP-Annual-Report-2020-2021.pdf
Youth in Development Policy	https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1870/Youth_in_Development_Policy_0.pdf

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