

Management Response & Recommendations Action Plan

Evaluation Report Title:

Independent Evaluation and Strategic Review of the South Asia Food and Nutrition Security Initiative (SAFANSI)

Response to Evaluation Report (overarching narrative)

The South Asia Food And Nutrition Security Initiative (SAFANSI) is a four year programme, implemented by the World Bank, that aims to help government and development partners develop more effective and better integrated food and nutrition-related policies and interventions.

The South Asia region has some of the highest rates of undernutrition in the world, with 17% of the population - some 295 million people - routinely going hungry. Tackling this is fundamental to achieving progress on MDG1 of ending extreme poverty and hunger, and is an important priority for DFID.

The SAFANSI programme recognises that progress is dependent on wide-spread reform and innovation in policies and programmes. SAFANSI aims to generate innovative and more evidence-based approaches which could then influence how governments and other stakeholders make policy and allocate budgets.

An independent mid-term evaluation of SAFANSI was commissioned by DFID and took place between December 2012 and April 2013 in collaboration with AusAID (who co-fund SAFANSI with DFID). It was delivered by HEART (the Health and Education Advice Resource Team) as part of OPML (Oxford Policy Management Ltd). The European Commission also sent their own specialist to work alongside the HEART team to provide the EC with an assessment of SAFANSI's progress. The evaluation also benefitted from a professional external review of its Terms of Reference and draft report as part of DFID's independent quality assurance process for evaluations ('SEQAS').

The evaluation found that SAFANSI is "well on track to achieve its purpose; substantive outputs and outcomes are starting to emerge from the short period of its operations; and SAFANSI exhibits good principles of development effectiveness in its management and operations". It also found that: Analytical work is of a uniformly high and rigorous standard, and is starting to influence broader policy formulation; Operations are efficient and provide value for money; And SAFANSI demonstrably targets the poorest and most vulnerable, especially women and the socially excluded.

However, it identified that further improvements were needed and made a number of specific recommendations, to which DFID now responds below. Of the 20 recommendations, one is rejected, two are accepted in part, one is not applicable to DFID and 16 are accepted in full, and are in the process of being incorporated into programme planning. The World Bank has been consulted on these responses.

Action is being taken to incorporate the recommendations. The DFID 2013 Annual Review of SAFANSI builds on a number of these recommendations in its own proposals for the remainder of the project. A second phase of SAFANSI (provisionally entitled SAFANSI II) is now under preparation and the issues flagged by the evaluation are being responded to in the design of SAFANSI II.

The full evaluation report, its Terms of Reference and the DFID 2013 Annual Review are available on the DFID Development Tracker website.

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Recommendations	Accepted or Rejected	If “Accepted”, Action plan for Implementation or if “Rejected”, Reason for Rejection
1. “If SAFANSI wishes to track its influence right through the results chain, then it should consider monitoring the actual <i>implementation</i> of policies”	Accepted	<i>Agreed - including monitoring of government and World Bank programmes. There will be implications for the SAFANSI II programme monitoring and evaluation resources and timeframe.</i>
2. “The Evaluation [therefore] recommends that consideration be given to having more differentiated Theory of Change (TOC)s: a separate TOC for approaches and changes expected at the household level; another for approaches and changes expected at the national and sub-national level; and a third at the regional level.”	Accepted	<i>Agreed – we also recognise that the different levels of the system interact (e.g. evidence from household behaviour will be deployed at the national level).</i>
3. “The Evaluation recommends that consideration be given to linking the TOC to rising problems of obesity and non-communicable diseases, noting that under-nutrition in the mother can predispose her children to such increasing problems that also undermine development.”	Accepted	<i>Agreed – the evidence will be reviewed by the World Bank and inform the remaining work of SAFANSI and the design of SAFANSI II.</i>
4. The Evaluation recommends that, as the regional approach is one of the defining characteristics of SAFANSI, it should have a more explicit TOC	Accepted	<i>Agreed – although some caution is needed on the scope for regional action (as distinct from lesson sharing across the region).</i>
5. The Evaluation therefore recommends that the SAFANSI Results Framework be expanded – and resourced – to better capture how the inputs, activities and outputs from SAFANSI are actually being used subsequently.	Accepted	<i>Agreed – there will need to be specific SAFANSI resources dedicated to this for the remainder of the programme. For SAFANSI II, this will need to be addressed at the more detailed design phase.</i>
6. The Evaluation recommends that the results framework synthesise the more strategic findings and developments	Accepted	<i>Agreed. This will be done as part of the World Bank’s Annual Report to DFID and the subsequent DFID Annual Review of</i>

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emerging from individual activities, perhaps by thematic groupings such as ‘community level lessons improving FNS’ that can be captured at the strategic level.		<i>SAFANSI in 2014.</i>
7. The Evaluation recommends the Annual Report be shortened; made more strategic; include more strategic analysis of financial expenditure; and be merged with, or otherwise made to avoid duplication with, other documents such as the Annual Donor Report	Accepted	<i>Agreed – this will be implemented from the Annual Report 2014.</i>
8. Consideration should also be given to what SAFANSI can reasonably claim as “impact”.	Accepted	<i>SAFANSI should and will only claim a contribution to impact in the current project. Impact indicators for SAFANSI II will need to be sensitive to regional and global commitments including the new global indicators which will succeed the MDGs in 2016.</i>
9. The Evaluation therefore recommends that the Bank track the extent to which genuine (not token) FNS sensitive indicators appear in the results frameworks of South Asia PADS over time, particularly in key sectors such as agriculture, gender, and water and sanitation.	Rejected	<i>While the World Bank agrees this is a good recommendation in theory, in practice there are limits to the number of indicators in WB results frameworks. In nutrition-sensitive operations priority goes to the lead sector (e.g. water and sanitation, social protection) and not necessarily to nutrition. More practical strategies would be to track the priority given to nutrition in WB Country Strategies. Further thought is needed on how to track the nutrition impact of Bank Operations, and the South Asia Regional Team in the Bank is considering this at present.</i>
10. The Evaluation therefore recommends that SAFANSI develop an engagement strategy with other multilateral and UN agencies with which it is already working so as to increase its profile and opportunities for sharing knowledge products and influencing their programs and policies. This engagement strategy should also particularly be extended to the Asian Development Bank, sharing SAFANSI knowledge products and insights that might influence the design and implementation of the ADB’s own large lending portfolio in South Asia in areas such as water and sanitation, education, and rural development.	Accepted	<i>Agreed it will be important to leverage the impact of others’ investments and to track and report on this.</i>

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<p>The engagement strategy should also extend to large NGOs and foundations such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.</p>		
<p>11. Consideration should therefore be given to ways of reinvigorating the TAC as a vehicle for region wide (and global) knowledge sharing and advocacy. Without wishing to have another layer of advice, or increase administrative costs, consideration could also be given to setting up a 'shadow' TAC of young, energetic, mid – career, (and female) opinion leaders who can 'make things happen" to supplement the work of the TAC on a more regular basis.</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p><i>Agreed – There are proposals under SAFANSI II for the TAC to be reformed to allow TAC members to work on a contracted basis in the region as ambassadors and champions for nutrition, as well as consideration given to a 'shadow' TAC.</i></p>
<p>12. If SAFANSI is extended beyond March 2014 consideration should be given to recruiting one locally hired person in each of the SAFANSI countries whose job it is to be a 'knowledge broker'.</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p><i>Agreed that this should be considered as part of the discussion on the need for increased human resources in the region working on SAFANSI's agenda.</i></p>
<p>13. Comments were made that it would be particularly useful to have a fast track process to allow "just in time" small seed money approved in a few days so as to take up suddenly opening windows of opportunity to influence debates and thinking within SAFANSI countries. This suggestion warrants further consideration within the Bank.</p>	<p>Accepted</p>	<p><i>Agreed that it should be possible for the World Bank to implement a 'fast disbursement' channel for SAFANSI by having larger groups of reviewers available to review proposals, to accelerate the approval process for small grants.</i></p>
<p>14. SAFANSI should be now extended, preferably for a further ten year period, provided at least three changes are made to improve its overall effectiveness (strengthen the results framework; increase the visibility of SAFANSI knowledge products and insights; either revitalise the TAC or abolish it).</p>	<p>Accepted in part</p>	<p><i>Agreed – a further phase of SAFANSI is currently under design - as part of this there should be more SAFANSI resources dedicated to knowledge management and strategic communication to support dissemination / advocacy around each SAFANSI II task, as appropriate. However it may not be possible to design or gain approval for a full ten year programme, but it is certainly our intention that any new programme is implemented and monitored for a significant period of time, to allow for outcomes to be delivered.</i></p>
<p>15. The SAFANSI budget does not necessarily need to be</p>	<p>Accepted in</p>	<p><i>Agreed that budgets do not need to be expanded very</i></p>

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expanded significantly, but there is a need to better resource independent evaluation of outcomes, and to improve visibility and knowledge-management.	part	<i>significantly although some expansion is needed to fund high quality proposals being generated. A robust evaluation of outcomes for SAFANSI I will be undertaken in 2015/16. Also agreed that it will be important to improve visibility and knowledge management for SAFANSI.</i>
16. While SAFANSI should continue to be essentially demand driven, consideration could be given to a more 'directed' funding stream supporting known, potentially high impact, interventions to support gender, girls' education, and sanitation.	Accepted	<i>Agreed that consideration should be given to this more 'directed' funding stream to these sectors in the planned SAFANSI phase II.</i>
17. There are arguments for, and against, opening SAFANSI to more applications from outside the Bank itself: a compromise would be to more systematically capture knowledge gaps by local stakeholders.	Accepted	<i>Agreed – the Bank's view is that in Phase II SAFANSI should deliver more through both grants and recipient executed 'windows' as well as through Bank executed activities. The option would be to canvas views on knowledge / analysis gaps through local stakeholders.</i>
18. AusAID should consider using its high profile and strategic commitment to maternal and child health to co-finance or otherwise support SAFANSI activities, even if it is no longer a formal member of the Trust Fund.	N/A	<i>N/A. Not applicable to DFID</i>
19. Whatever the outcome, it is important to make a decision – and announce it – as soon as possible in coming months: the current uncertainty is undermining SAFANSI operations. The <i>predictability</i> of funding is now more important than the actual quantum.	Accepted	<i>Agreed. The design of a second phase of SAFANSI funding is underway and well understood by the World Bank.</i>
20. A work program for the remaining year will then depend upon what decisions are made, but strengthening the results framework, and increasing the visibility of SAFANSI are priorities in any event.	Accepted	<i>Agreed – the annual report will be improved in line with recommendations, and the World Bank will allocate more resources to disseminating work funded by SAFANSI.</i>