



## **2021 GAFSP Knowledge Forum**

### **Summary Note**

**April-July 2021, Virtual**

The fifth GAFSP Knowledge Forum (KF), GAFSP's biannual flagship learning event, took place virtually as a series of sessions between April and July 2021. The sessions focused on Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), the 2021 Sixth Call for Proposals, and the annual GAFSP Portfolio Review (PR). The KF brought together project teams and partners involved in the design and implementation of GAFSP-funded projects, as well as government representatives from Project Implementation Units (PIUs), [Civil Society Organization \(CSO\)](#) and donor representatives of the GAFSP Steering Committee, [Supervising Entities](#) (SEs), and GAFSP Coordination Unit (CU) members.

This virtual event provided a robust platform for learning from operational insights and experiences drawn from GAFSP public sector and Missing Middle Initiative (MMI) projects. In addition, the cross-institutional, cross-regional, and cross-project participation enabled the sharing of a broad range of perspectives on developmental challenges across the entire agriculture and food security ecosystem in different countries and highlighted the overall portfolio quality and development impact of GAFSP programs, especially in the light of COVID-19.



## Session 1: Monitoring and Evaluation Learning Week – April 26-28, 2021

GAFSP held a three-day learning session focused on M&E, bringing together over 70 participants from SEs, CSOs, Producer Organizations, project team members, and others.

Project teams from Haiti, Senegal, and Uganda, as well as representatives from the World Bank's Geo-Enabling Initiative for Monitoring and Supervision (GEMS) teams, presented their experiences using the tools and methods on remote supervision during COVID-19. Project teams from Nicaragua and Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR) spoke about the design and implementation of impact evaluations, particularly how to balance the methodological rigor and practical challenges in conducting impact evaluations. For more details, visit: <https://bit.ly/37X75L5>



### Key takeaways:

#### M&E specific:

- There is a need to continue providing information and resources to the project teams on M&E fundamentals and requirements to ensure a results-based monitoring system is integrated at project design through to completion.
- The roles and responsibilities between the GAFSP CU and SEs need to be further defined and communicated.
- Project teams should be provided with the knowledge and resources on how to use remote sensing and third-party monitoring, given the challenges posed by COVID-19. This will allow operations to enhance the transparency and accuracy of M&E and increase the accountability in post-COVID era, especially in fragile, conflict, and violence (FCV) affected situations.

#### Impact Evaluations:

- Making the impact evaluation operationally relevant and effective requires task teams to harness relevant tools and technologies, ensure government ownership and institutional buy-in, and be creative in mobilizing resources.
- When facing constraints in conducting sophisticated impact evaluations, the team should still conduct some impact studies with minimum quality standards and reasonable coverage of activities as part of the completion report. It is better to be conducted by a reputational local/regional firm than an individual consultant to ensure the quality.

#### Communications:

- Project teams expressed interest in learning how to collect and write effective communication materials that highlight project results.

## Session 2: 2021 Sixth Call for Proposals – June 10, 2021



The second KF session focused on the 2021 [Sixth Call for Proposals](#)<sup>1</sup>, bringing together over 150 participants from over 40 countries. This session provided information regarding the Call's process and requirements, as well as an opportunity for potential producer organizations, country applicants, and SE teams supporting eligible applicants to ask questions directly to the CU. Watch the session recording here: <https://bit.ly/3qs4T71>

### Key takeaways:

- The anticipated demand for funding is high, judging from the number and the composition of attendees, as well as the initial signal from the SEs on anticipated proposals.
- The questions during the discussion were diverse and focused on every aspect of the Call, from preparing submissions, selecting a SE, eligibility criteria, proposal timeline, selection criteria, logistical details, and others. The list of frequently asked questions can be found on the GAFSP website: <https://www.gafspfund.org/FAQs-2021-CfP>

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<sup>1</sup> The latest Call for Proposal grant funding will support medium- to long-term COVID-19 response efforts for a more sustainable, inclusive, and resilient recovery of agriculture and food systems in a changing climate. The Call closed on September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

### Session 3: GAFSP Portfolio Review – July 20, 2021

This session focused on the Fiscal Year 2021 (FY21) PR, and informed project teams about the findings of the public sector and MMI projects, including project strengths, weaknesses, and recommendations for current and future projects. This session also offered an opportunity for participants to hear from the African Development Bank (AfDB), which is the SE with the largest portfolio of GAFSP projects under implementation, on how they manage their GAFSP project portfolio as well as the CU on its intent to address some of the findings in FY22 and beyond. The session brought together over 35 people from various stakeholder groups.



The PR is an annual exercise carried out by the CU to inform the Steering Committee of the overall health of the GAFSP public sector portfolio. The FY21PR included 33 projects (24 investment + 4 Technical Assistance (TA) + 5 MMI). The data sources used included the six-monthly project progress reporting data (from December 31, 2020), SE documents, technical reports, project manuals, and 45-minute phone interviews for each project. The final FY21 PR report has been shared with the Steering Committee and with the SEs. However, given its deliberative nature, it is not posted publicly on the GAFSP website.

#### Key takeaways:

- Suggested areas for improvement include strengthening outcome reporting, increasing technical focus in CU M&E team, paying close attention to infrastructure scope in project design, and applying lessons from MMI to GAFSP 2.0<sup>2</sup>, especially on project M&E.
- Responding to the FY21 PR report findings, the GAFSP CU made various commitments for FY22:
  - Provide additional support to SEs and new project preparation teams.
  - Organize a KF and potentially an MMI Workshop in the summer or fall of 2022.
  - Encourage and provide support to relevant SEs to organize joint annual/biannual portfolio workshops to address generic and SE-specific portfolio challenges.

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<sup>2</sup> GAFSP 2.0 is the revised operational model, approved in 2019 by the GAFSP Steering Committee, the new operational model better links public and private sector activities and offers additional, flexible tools to help reach the SDGs and empower smallholder farmers in low-income countries. Under this revised model, the Program has adopted a dual-track funding model: (i) Grant-based Financing, and (ii) Business Investment Financing. The first track will fund public sector or producer organization-led proposals, while the second track will offer multi-year budget envelopes to be managed by existing SEs to support business-led private sector financing.

- Strengthen the CU's capacity to provide additional technical support to Francophone project teams.
- AfDB shared its extensive experience and lessons learned from managing its GAFSP portfolio, particularly for infrastructure-heavy projects. Some notable findings related to project designing and preparation were as follows:
  - Detailed feasibility reports and designs should be submitted to AfDB for review before incorporation into project components.
  - Issues of infrastructure sustainability, including ownership, operation, and maintenance, should be mainstreamed into project design.
  - Environmental assessment and categorization issues should be addressed before project formulation.

## AGENDA

<b>April 26-28, 2021</b>	<b>Monitoring and Evaluation Learning Week:</b>  <b>Day 1: April 26, 2021: GAFSP M&amp;E Overview</b>  Presentation from the GAFSP Coordination Unit  <b>Day 2: April 27, 2021: M&amp;E Under COVID</b>  Project examples from Haiti, Senegal, and Uganda, and a presentation from the World Bank's Geo-Enabling Initiative for Monitoring and Supervision (GEMS)  <b>Day 3: April 28, 2021: Impact Evaluation</b>  Project examples from Nicaragua and Lao PDR
<b>June 10, 2021</b>	<b>Call for Proposals Information Session</b>  Presentation from the GAFSP Coordination Unit
<b>July 20, 2021</b>	<b>GAFSP Portfolio Review</b>  Presentation from the FY 2021 Portfolio Review Consultants, reaction from GAFSP CU, and presentation from the African Development Bank Steering Committee representative.