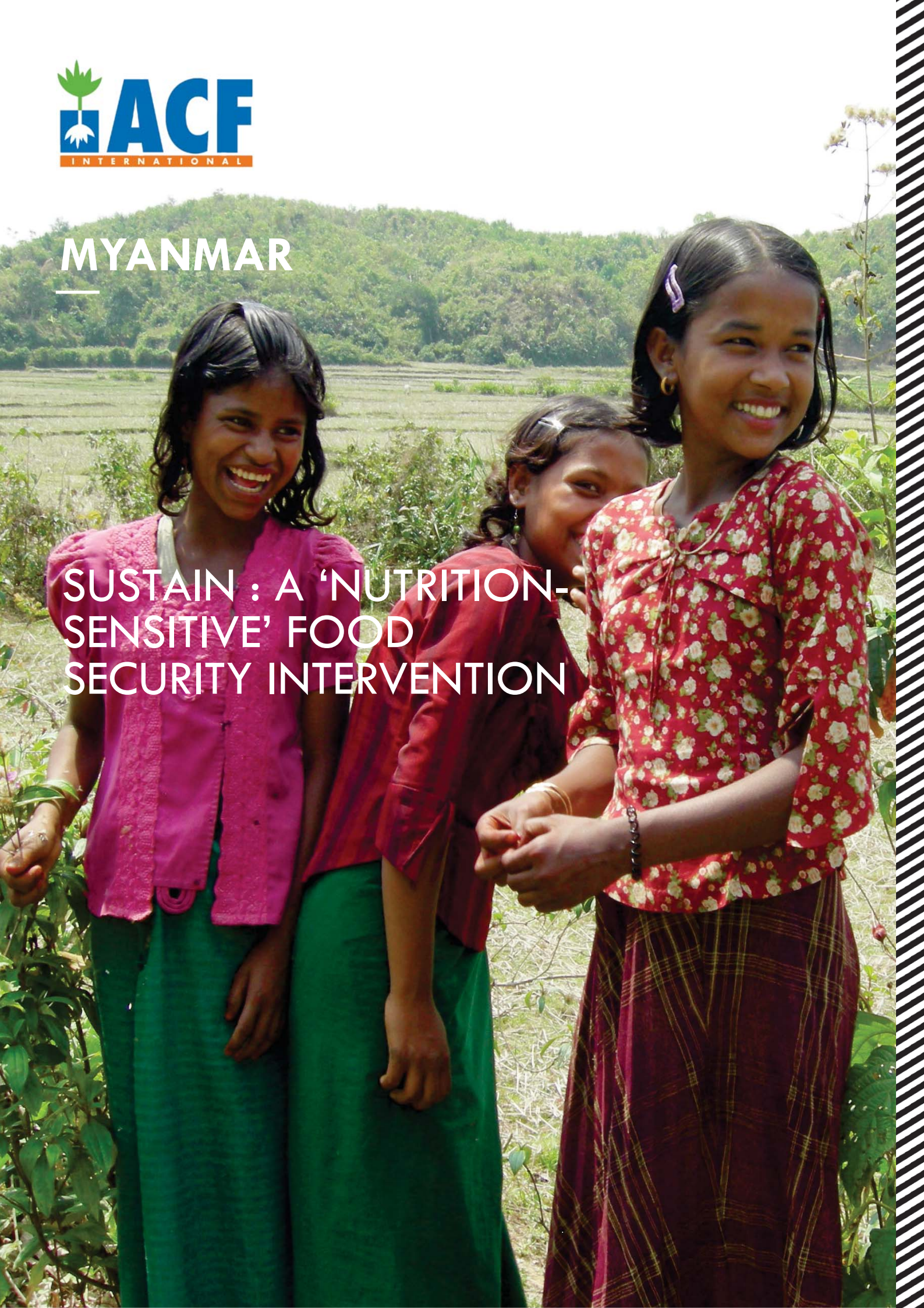




MYANMAR

---

SUSTAIN : A 'NUTRITION-SENSITIVE' FOOD SECURITY INTERVENTION











## Humanitarian context

### Background

Although Myanmar is considered a food-surplus country with high agriculture potential and an abundance of natural resources, it is one of the poorest countries in Asia and ranks 132 on the 2010 HDI<sup>1</sup> classification.

Chronic food and nutrition insecurity is the consequence of a number of situations: unfavourable economic policies, rural underdevelopment, vagaries of weather, and the marginalisation of some sectors of the population. As a consequence, the ability for many households to access sufficient levels of food as well as basic services such as clean water, health and education has been affected and is particularly pronounced on the borders and among ethnic minorities.

### Assessment

The last 2011 WFP VAM surveys estimated that 45% and 33% of households are severely and moderately food insecure, respectively, in the Northern Rakhine State (NRS). In the Shan State and in the dry zone, almost half of the population was considered food insecure (18% severely food insecure and 24% moderately food insecure). Although modest improvements have been made, the country is far from reaching the MGD-1 of halving extreme poverty and hunger by 2015.<sup>2</sup>

The percentage of children underweight remains high, with prominent disparities between states (see the table below). The official data related to chronic and acute malnutrition indicate that 41% of children under five years are chronically undernourished while 11% suffer from acute malnutrition.<sup>3</sup>

The release of the Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey (MICS) carried out in 2009<sup>4</sup> provided further data for analysis. Specifically, poor access to food with the increased price of food commodities, a lack of land access, effects of climate change and the lack of basic knowledge on Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) practices resulted in protracted high rates of undernutrition.

#### Percentage of underweight in 2005 & 2010

State/Union	2005	2010
Ayeyarwaddy	36.2%	33.4%
Rakhine	60.5%	52.8%
Shan (N)	26.5%	17.2%
Sagaing	28.5%	33.4%
Yangon	27%	27.3%



© ACF - Myanmar, Courtesy Victor Kiaya

<sup>1</sup>Human Development Index

<sup>2</sup>The UNDP released in 2011 a partial Millennium Development Goal (MDG) report, based on the 2009-2010 Integrated Household Living Conditions Assessment in Myanmar (IHLCA).

<sup>3</sup>According to WHO Crisis classification, Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) between 10% and 14% are serious.

<sup>4</sup>UNICEF, Myanmar Ministry of Health, Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development, Myanmar Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, 2009-2010, issued in October 2011



## Programme overview and rationale

ACF has started a 40 month “nutrition sensitive” food security programme (SUSTAIN <sup>5</sup>) in 2012 in order to fight against the underlying causes of undernutrition. The programme is implemented in five agro-ecologically and culturally distinct regions of Myanmar: Northern Rakhine State (Maungdaw and Buthidaung Townships), Northern Shan State (Lashio, Namtu and Theinni Townships), Ayeyarwaddy Region (Bogalay Township), Sagaing Division (Monywa Township) and in the Yangon Division.

The objective of this programme is:  
**To improve the nutritional status of vulnerable populations**

Through

**A sustainable increased consumption of micronutrient-rich foods/products, and enhanced practices of optimal nutrition and care.**

The SUSTAIN project involves applying a “nutrition lens” at each step of the project cycle and an extensive “do no harm approach”. The action aims to tackle undernutrition from different angles, and to establish actionable linkages and levers between agriculture, food security, nutrition and health sectors (see the UNICEF Conceptual Framework on Malnutrition).

The action will be implemented by a consortium which includes Action Contre la Faim (ACF), Groupe de Recherche et d'Echanges Technologiques (GRET), and Welthungerhilfe (WHH). The consortium will pilot and adapt three innovative approaches which integrate essential activities to promote nutrition awareness, IYCF<sup>6</sup> and care practices as well as practical components such as the production of diverse, nutrient dense food, the production of complementary foods for children under two, and a range of ‘nutrition-sensitive’ livelihoods.

By increasing availability of and access to nutritious food through their own production, the collection of wild foods or ability to purchase, targeted beneficiaries will improve their food/nutrient intake.

This intervention benefits from the cumulative experience in the country and the expertise in food security and nutrition of each partner.

<sup>5</sup>Sustainable Approaches for Improved Nutrition.

<sup>6</sup>Infant and young child feeding





© ACF – Myanmar, Courtesy Victor Kiaya

## Implementation

### The MAIN, LANN and Nutridev innovative approaches

The Maximising Impact on Nutrition (MAIN) approach developed by ACF, consists in the application of a 'nutrition lens' at each step of the project cycle. ACF will field-test the MAIN approach in the context of the NRS.

The Nutridev programme has been implemented since 1994 by the GRET and the IRD (Institut de Recherche pour le Développement) and will develop and promote qualitative and affordable complementary food for children 6-23 months in the market in Sagaing and Yangon divisions.

The Linking Agriculture, Natural Resource Management and Nutrition (LANN) community-driven approach aims at changing community and household preferences and practices for improved nutrition. It does so by strengthening the social mobilization patterns and capacities and may lead to platforms for future service providers and market access. WHH implements it in the Northern Shan State and the Ayeyarwaddy Delta.

### Initial surveys

Intervention details will be determined after the completion of a comprehensive baseline survey and additional informative survey to gain in-depth understanding on the following topics:

- Agro-biodiversity inventory:
  - What wild/indigenous food (plants and animals) is available?
  - To what extent are wild food considered?
- Crops and food nutritional contents:
  - What nutrients are available in which food?
  - How to improve crop's nutrient content?
- Food consumption patterns/dietary intake/micronutrient adequacy:
  - What do household members eat? Do they eat together?
  - What is considered a good meal? In which season?
  - How is the food prepared and preserved? What is eaten together?
  - Costs vs. income and overall household expenditures?
- Care given to children:
  - How are children fed? How long are they exclusively breastfed?
  - Is their food complemented?
- Household members roles regarding food/Gender considerations:
  - Who is involved in food production (and how)?
  - Who is involved in selecting the food to be eaten?
  - Who is involved in food purchases?

- What barriers are there on food consumption?

The comprehensive baseline survey will help to better understand food consumption patterns, dietary intake and micronutrient adequacy, seasonality, nutrition needs of the group at risk, gender considerations, and feeding habits in the five areas of intervention. This will allow for data comparisons from one agro-ecological and cultural area to another and serve as a common pre-survey to monitor the intervention's progress. The design of the methodology and related tools as well as the roll out of the baseline survey will be done in collaboration between all three agencies.

The Behaviour Change Strategy (BCS) targeting mothers, caregivers, family members including children, decision makers and community agents are central to strategies aimed at improving nutrition and care of infants and young children and women of childbearing age. BCS is a much longer-term strategy that seeks to change deep-rooted behaviours and requires time and a thorough knowledge of the context, beliefs, norms and traditions.



© ACF - Myanmar, Courtesy Victor Kiaya

Formative research<sup>7</sup> will be conducted to gain insight into the barriers and opportunities to change behaviour and to define an appropriate BCS. It is crucial to have a thorough understanding of why people behave the way they do and what they are willing to change

#### Beneficiary selection and targeting

ACF focuses on areas with high rates of undernutrition and within these areas will target 5,300 households (26,500 individuals) from vulnerable communities paying specific attention to women of reproductive age, pregnant and/or lactating women, and children under two years of age.

In this programme, ACF, the GRET and WHH have developed three complementary approaches (refer to box page 5) which involve:

- 1,000 households for the 'MAIN approach' (ACF)
- 1,900 households for the 'LANN approach' (WHH)
- 2,400 households for the 'Nutrivedv programme' (GRET)

The targeted groups include vulnerable communities from different ethnic groups (Shan, Lahu, Palaung, Rohingya, Rakhine). These are farmers with no or restricted land access, former poppy producers, victims of

forced migration, households with limited access to income, and those chronically food insecure. The two first approaches integrate vital activities on nutrition education, child health and practical components such as healthy cooking or production of diverse and healthy food into the participatory learning experience.

The Nutrivedv approach focuses on pregnant and lactating women, children under two years old and their mothers because they are the most vulnerable to malnutrition. It aims at improving the availability of low cost and qualitative complementary food for children under two and raises awareness on IYCF and care practices. Relatives (caregivers, mother-in-law, and decision-makers within the household) of the mother will also be targeted to ensure sustainable behavioral change.

Beneficiaries will be identified through participative consultations with communities and according to standard targeting procedures. A range of stakeholders (e.g. community health workers, nutrition volunteers, women, nurses, trained and traditional birth attendants etc.) will also benefit from the intervention through capacity building.

The final beneficiaries selected will broadly cover the different communities and the next generation, private actors involved in infant feeding, health, nutrition and food security stakeholders as well as the whole Myanmar population.

#### Nutrition-sensitiveness

Food Security, Nutrition and Health interventions have for the most part been implemented as individual approaches with limited consideration in how they overlap.

The combination of the three approaches in Myanmar is unprecedented and requires field-testing and adaptation to the local needs and culture to generate evidence and lessons learnt.

Working in five culturally as well as agro-ecologically distinct areas (e.g. rural/urban, upland/marine) increases the chances of replication and scaling up of identified best practices.

Each approach includes a pilot phase with a limited number of beneficiaries and activities, regular external inputs and expertise, a robust component of Behaviour Change Strategy (BCS) to suit the cultural context and well-tailored Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) systems.

This is also the opportunity to develop new collaboration and partnerships with stakeholders.

<sup>7</sup> Formative research consists of assessing the behaviours, attitudes and practices of a community, and understanding the target group's perspective, which influence their behaviours, and determines the best ways to reach them. Several formative research methods may be used to develop BCS including barrier analysis, trials of improved practices, positive deviance, focus groups, in-depth interviews, supporting groups for accompanying the change, reinforcing the positive practices, and finding coping strategies.





© ACF - Myanmar, Courtesy Victor Kiaya

## Contact details and further reading

Victor Kiaya, Food Security and Livelihoods Advisor, ACF France  
[vkiaya@actioncontrelafaim.org](mailto:vkiaya@actioncontrelafaim.org)

Julien Morel, Senior Food Assistance Advisor, ACF France,  
[jmorel@actioncontrelafaim.org](mailto:jmorel@actioncontrelafaim.org)

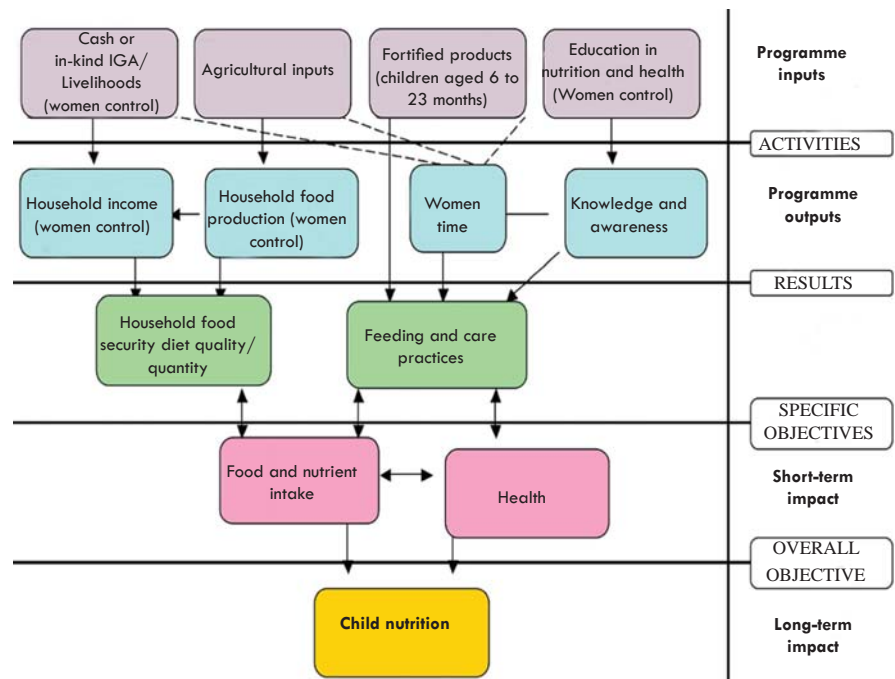
### Key activities

All the activities integrate a “nutrition-lens” approach.

Activities include the implementation and roll out of trainings following comprehensive baseline surveys; healthy gardens coupled with Income Generating Activities (IGA), demonstration plots with bio-fortified crops, and the production and promotion of high quality and affordable food for children between 6-23 months. Extra attention is given to results and outcome dissemination, achieved through publications, participation in forums, workshops and production of a movie. The intervention includes a wide range of participants from food security, nutrition and health sectors and is built on the local and traditional knowledge.

The community key stakeholders will receive training and Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials to foster the uptake of positive and optimal nutrition, care and hygiene behaviours. The design of the complementary product and the following stages will be carefully implemented in collaboration with local production companies.

Pathways through which the intervention is expected to affect nutritional status of children



### Particular added-value of the SUSTAIN programme

The SUSTAIN intervention aims at promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment, as women have a key role as the gatekeeper of household food security, health and nutrition . This includes support to women groups by giving them access to inputs, childcare, financial services, extension services, technology, markets and employment. Environmental concerns are addressed with the promotion

of agricultural biodiversity to sustainably increase the productivity of small-scale farmers and increase their resilience to climate change and shocks. It provides the opportunity to develop links with local private companies (i.e. Gold Power) and research institutes and/or universities (e.g Mahidol University). Lastly, the action targets members of marginalized ethnic groups.





© ACF - Myanmar, Courtesy: Victor Klaya

This document is part of a set of case studies on ACF Food Security and Livelihoods interventions which aim to reduce and/or prevent undernutrition. It has been developed by the ACF “Aligning Food Security and Livelihoods with Nutrition” Working Group, with the support of Elodie Ho in collaboration with ACF project managers. The layout was done by Verena Pandini. The aim of the “Aligning Food Security and Livelihoods with Nutrition” Working Group is to promote and scale up nutrition sensitive Food Security and Livelihoods interventions, within ACF as well as partner organizations. The Working Group promotes these interventions by gathering lessons, building evidence, developing tools and guidance and building capacity.

For more information on the “Aligning” approach, please refer to the ACF manual:

*Maximising the nutritional impact of Food Security and Livelihoods interventions. A manual for field workers.*

<http://www.actioncontrelafaim.org/fr/content/maximising>

