Key Insights from Early Adopters of the Food Security Solutions (FSS) Prioritization Process

MUMBAI, INDIA

🌐 Global Application

The Food Security Solutions (FSS) Prioritization Process can be applied globally. No matter the community or program, it is imperative to take time to prioritize and identify solutions that offer the best expected impact for the required resources. For instance, in Mumbai, India, a coalition working to create a hunger-free community used the FSS Prioritization Process to focus their efforts, helping them to prioritize and identify solutions that offer the *best expected impact* given the available resources.

Mumbai, located on the west coast of India, is one of the most populous and wealthiest cities in the world. While it is considered a global economic hub, there is also significant income inequality, widespread poverty and high rates of unemployment. A substantial proportion of the population lives in substandard housing and lacks access to clean water, food or electricity.

An Advisory Panel, led by Freedom Wellness Management, sought to improve the food security and nutritional status of those living in extreme poverty in areas of Mumbai with some of the lowest human development index scores. The Advisory Panel, with support of the Research Center at Nirmala Niketan College and the Academy Foundation, assembled experts in research, community nutrition, pediatrics and social work. Additionally, two key stakeholders engaged: the Kotak Education Foundation (KEF), a bank that improves school services for underprivileged children, and Able Disabled All People Together (ADAPT), a non-profit organization that provides services to children with disabilities.

As the project launched, the Advisory Panel determined that completing Step One (**Community Assessment**) was going to be challenging due to a scarcity of reliable, available data. Without an evidence-based assessment, it was impossible to adequately describe the current state of food security or to narrow the scope of work. Therefore, the decision was made to first collect this data on

- The FSS Prioritization Process can be applied globally by adapting to the local context.
- When the need is great, taking the time to prioritize is imperative.
- Without documented, objective information, true, unmet needs cannot be identified.
- Assessment data can focus the scope of work to areas within the influences of the stakeholders.

Learn more about the impactful work of the **Kotak Education Foundation (KEF)** at https://www.kotak.com/ and **Able Disabled All People Together (ADAPT)** at http://adaptssi.org/.

the children in Dharavi and Mankhurd, specifically from the young children who attended either KEF's Mohite Patil School in Mankhurd or ADAPT's preschool in the Sultan Noorani Memorial Karuna Sadan Urban Health Centre in Dharavi.

While the **Community Assessment Worksheet** suggests information for the panel to consider, the Advisory Panel decided to leverage its adaptability and changed approximately 40 percent of the indicators to more locally relevant ones. Over a six-month period in 2018, the team collected anthropometric, sociodemographic, household expenditure and dietary intake data from more than 200 families.

Once the data were collected, the breadth and depth of the unmet needs in this community was able to be fully, objectively described, allowing the Advisory Panel to show external funders areas in which they could engage or provide financial support. The evidence provided a baseline from which to measure progress over time and narrowed the focus of the project at hand. While lack of access to clean water and unsanitary conditions were identified as the most urgent needs, addressing them was outside the influence of these experts. Instead, the Advisory Panel focused on areas they could directly and immediately impact.

The initiatives that were ultimately selected aimed to improve food access, nutrient density and nutrition education. For example, low-cost, nutrient-dense fruits and vegetables were added to the school-based meal to improve micronutrient status. During school, cooking demonstrations and nutrition education were provided to caregivers. Most recently, a training module empowering mothers to earn money by preparing and selling nutritious meals was launched.

The long-term goal is to repeat the FSS Prioritization Process over time in order to understand which programs have the most impact in this community. In the interim, the evidence collected continues to garner support for the work and show others how they can help.

Key Insights on Global Application from Mumbai, India
The FSS Prioritization Process helped to fully describe the needs of the community, which resulted in strong external support and identification and implementation of specific initiatives where stakeholders could readily engage.

"When we looked at all these difficult problems, we didn't know where to begin. We had to ask, "What is within our reach?" and, using the data we collected, we narrowed our focus to where we could make a difference. Never before have we had so much objectivity in deciding where to start."

- Naaznin Husein, RD
Freedom Wellness Management

Some of the indicators in the community assessment were adapted to be site-specific:

- The color of the ration card – Ration cards entitle families to reduced prices on grains. The color of the card issued considers annual income (a social determinant of health) and the number of people in the household (an indicator of how far the food needs to stretch).
- The type of housing – Those who live in government housing likely have better food security and basic amenities, such as clean water and electricity for cooking, compared to those who live outside in shelters made of found materials such as wood, cardboard or cloth or who are homeless.

Find the **Food Security Solutions Prioritization Toolkit** at www.eatrightFoundation.org/FSSToolkit or email FSS@eatright.org