

# Community Labs

## AN INNOVATION OF THE SEQOTA DECLARATION, ETHIOPIA'S COMMITMENT TO END STUNTING

10

Existing  
Community Labs

2

Community Lab  
masterclass trainings  
conducted

20

Average group size  
for a Community Lab

### THE PROBLEM

In Ethiopia, 38% of children under the age of five suffer from stunting and about 45% of all child deaths are associated with undernutrition.<sup>1</sup> For those that survive, stunting can lead to poor physical development and lifelong limits on education, health and productivity.

Achieving nutrition's full impact on health and development outcomes requires a coordinated multisectoral approach because the complex and multi-dimensional nature of stunting cannot be addressed by one sector alone - nor can its underlying causes be solved using conventional approaches and techniques. This is why the Government of Ethiopia has mobilized an unprecedented multisectoral effort paired with a commitment to 'learning by doing' during the Innovation Phase of the Seqota Declaration.

### KEY FACTORS OF THE COMMUNITY LAB



#### EMPATHY-DRIVEN SOLUTIONS

Those who are closest to problems generally have the strongest motivation to solve them. This is why community labs are positioned at village and woreda (district) level, encouraging the labs to derive solutions that reflect a deep understanding and empathy with the problems these communities face.



#### BALANCING IMPLEMENTATION WITH INNOVATION

Sometimes, we know the answer to the problem already and have the resources to solve it. The Learn-Reflect-Implement/Innovate (L-R-I) methodology accommodates this by encouraging implementation in situations where an entirely new solution is not needed.



#### BOTTOM-UP RATHER THAN TOP-DOWN

The Regional Program Delivery Units (PDUs) offer support and guidance, but the priority setting, identification of solutions to the problems and implementation of the various lab activities are driven by its members.

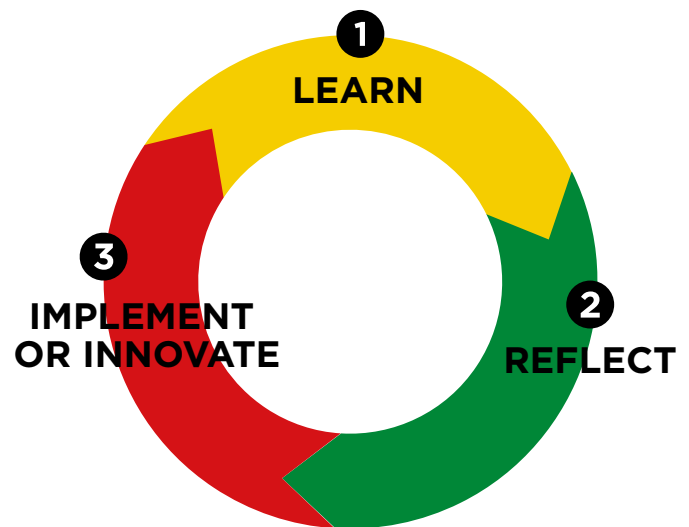
### THE SOLUTION

A community lab is a powerful, multisectoral platform that convenes a diverse set of stakeholders in the community to work collaboratively in identifying key challenges and designing and implementing solutions to address complex and multi-dimensional problems such as stunting.

Seqota Declaration Community Labs comprise administrators, school principals, religious leaders, healthcare workers, farmers, and lay community members. They convene meetings to discuss and address problems in their community related to stunting. From a place of empathy and enthusiasm, these community members come up with some creative ideas that can be tested. Through testing and learning, the Community Lab eventually lands on sustainable, innovative solutions that can subsequently be replicated at scale. Community Labs now exist at both woreda (district) and kebele (neighborhood) level.

### L-R-I METHODOLOGY

Community Labs are mechanisms for testing innovative solutions before scaling up the successful ones. To do so, they follow the Learn-Reflect-Implement/Innovate (L-R-I Methodology), a simple three-step process for identifying and prioritizing nutrition-related problems in their community, deriving potential solutions, and testing those solutions before scaling the successful ones.



<sup>1</sup> Mini Demographic and Health Survey 2019

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## PROCESS LEARNINGS

One of the emerging prototypes of a monitoring and evaluation system is the establishment of Learning Journeys and Open Days. A learning journey provides an opportunity for regional, zonal, woreda (district) and kebele (neighborhood) leadership and community lab members to conduct joint visits to households. During the household visits, the nutritional status of children can be assessed, and nutrition-smart activities can be promoted by the community lab members. Moreover, the community lab members can identify innovations implemented by the households, community, school, or health facility. Open Days are a marketplace learning environment where community lab champions share their best practices with fellow community members and gain recognition. These activities allow for a monitoring and evaluation system to be implemented at the household level.

## NUTRITION SMART INTERVENTIONS

Intervention	Problem	Community Lab Solution	Woredas (Districts)
Home Garden	Residents did not have access to fruits and vegetables.	Students who had access to school gardens were encouraged to transfer their knowledge to the home. This resulted in the establishment of home gardens in 87 students' homes.	May Tekli Kebele Saharti Samre Woreda Tigray Region
Nutritious School Meals	Despite schools maintaining their own poultry sheds, the consumption of chicken eggs was not promoted to school children.	The school feeding program introduced chicken eggs and demonstrated the importance of poultry consumption.	Debre Birhan Kebele Sekota Woreda Amhara Region
Keyhole Gardens	Residents were unaware of sustainable and cost-effective water efficient techniques to increase diet diversity.	Within two months, 31 households were trained on how to build a keyhole garden and how to feed their households using the vegetables grown from this garden.	Kino Kebele Debarq Woreda Amhara Region
Goat Milk	Residents regarded goats as a potential income source for their meat but were unaware of the nutritional value gained by feeding goat milk to young children.	Training was provided to the community by 20 pregnant and lactating women on the nutritional value of goat milk for young children.	Kino Kebele Debarq Woreda Amhara Region
Pumpkin Consumption	Residents were not consuming pumpkin because of a belief that it was a vegetable reserved for feeding their livestock.	Cooking demonstrations were organized for 50 vulnerable households and 5 days of training were carried out on its nutritional value. These trainings reached 534 pregnant and lactating women.	Kino Kebele Debarq Woreda Amhara Region
Nutrition Clubs	Primary school students were unaware of proper nutrition and its importance for their healthy growth and development.	Nutrition Clubs were established in the local schools and existing clubs were strengthened.	Berkeza Kebele Meket Woreda Amhara Region

## RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

Through the Grant Under Grant funding mechanism of USAID's flagship five-year Growth through Nutrition (GtN) program implemented by Save the Children, financial resources have been secured for the establishment of 3 additional Community Labs to improve the nutritional status of women and children, with a focus on the first 1,000 days between conception and the age of two. The Seqota Declaration Program Delivery Units (PDUs), supported by technical assistance provided by ThinkPlace through funding support from Big Win Philanthropy, have developed a Community Lab model which has encouraged community engagement and the prioritization of nutrition smart innovations. Due to these inspiring results, Save the Children/GtN has committed \$329,193 to the scale-up of the Community Labs with the objective of creating 700 model nutrition households and establishing model institutions that are aligned with the Seqota Declaration Innovation Phase Investment Plan and the broader priorities of the Government of Ethiopia.

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