

# THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

## Combining “What Works” in Adaptive Management and Human-centered Design

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### BACKGROUND

- The Amalima project builds on existing communal initiatives in order to sustainably improve household food security and nutrition by strengthening access to and availability of food, community resilience to shocks, and nutrition and health among mothers and children in Matebeleland North and South in western Zimbabwe
- Program activities are ongoing and impact is positive. For example, significant gains had been made in volume and quantity of crops sold
- However, the team wanted to check in to see if what was intended actually was happening, and what tweaks could be made to further program gains. Key questions were: To what extent were field volunteers implementing communication activities as designed, including the use of job aids? Were supervision activities adequate to ensure quality?

### GOAL

To assess program training activities to identify what was working well and areas of potential

improvement, ensuring maximum impact in the project's final years



### WHAT WE DID

- Rapid assessment via 30 in-depth interviews with field volunteers, and by direct observation of 12 group training sessions for farmers facilitated by field volunteers using Amalima materials
- Grouped similar individual statements from field volunteers and farmers and identified recurring issues to establish themes
- Organized design meetings to discuss the results and develop solutions at multiple program levels
- Combined adaptive management with human-centered design provides an opportunity to reflect on and adapt our approach to better meet field volunteer needs.

### WHAT WE LEARNED

- Information provided by field volunteers during the sessions was mostly correct, they were confident when facilitating sessions, and appreciated the communication tools, especially picture cards
- Too many sessions were one sided. Volunteers identified as technical experts, not trainers, and most were not able to facilitate participatory sessions. Some field volunteers preferred to memorize the content and not use the tools at all
- People want immediate benefits. Without knowing the benefit of activities, or when benefits would result from new practices, people did not participate or dropped out
- Monitoring and supervision were perceived to be the same thing. The purpose of supportive supervision was intended to improve quality but tools and targets did not support this intent
- Supervisors agreed that our training approach supported “teaching” and were open to trying something different

### SO, WHAT WORKS?

- A mid-project assessment identifies gaps in the original training plan and provides an opportunity to bring together staff to solve a common problem
- Combining adaptive management with human-centered design provides an opportunity to reflect on and adapt our approach to better meet field volunteers' needs
- As a result of our findings:
  - We developed a refresher module for the community volunteers to build skills in interpersonal communication and group facilitation
  - Job aids guide the field volunteer to lead a discussion, and to identify barriers and motivations to personalize problem-solving
  - Tools include picture cards to start conversations around social norms
  - The entire project was involved in improving the design of our intervention and applying behavior change strategies to agriculture

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