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SUPPORTING OPTIMAL INFANT, YOUNG CHILD AND MATERNAL NUTRITION AND HEALTH IN JORDAN

**FY2021 3rd Quarter Report
April 1st – June 30th, 2021**

**Leader with Associate Cooperative Agreement No. AID-OAA-LA-10-0006
Under
Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Nutrition,
Tufts University,
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Background

The Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Nutrition (N-IL) seeks to generate evidence on program impacts and to build research capacity to support optimal health and nutritional status of pregnant and lactating women (PLW) and children in Jordan. This is achieved through the implementation of a rigorous research agenda, which includes assessing the impact of USAID Jordan's Community Health and Nutrition (CHN) Activity, building individual and institutional capacity to conduct and interpret research, and supporting Jordanian researchers working on answering critical questions within the realm of maternal and infant young child nutrition.

The Nutrition Innovation Lab will generate evidence firstly through analysis of existing data sets, such as the Demographic Health Surveys (DHS), to ascertain complementary feeding practices in infants and young children; secondly through a rigorously planned and implemented evaluation of USAID Jordan's CHN activity. The latter evaluation will focus on impact, process and performance, cost effectiveness, and sustainability of CHN to provide evidence to support current and future policy and programming. The CHN activity aims to improve maternal, infant, and young child nutrition (MIYCN) and post-partum family planning (PPFP) behaviors through a combination of mass media, community and facility-based interventions, and policy advocacy actions to improve nutritional status and health of PLW and children under two in Jordan. The evaluation of CHN will involve a quantitative impact evaluation (IE), a qualitative and quantitative process and performance evaluation, and an analysis of program sustainability, all focused on three governorates of Jordan: Amman, Karak, and Zarqa. Additionally, the project will aim to build individual and institutional research capacity in the realm of MIYCN by offering a competitive small grants fellowship, policy seminars, webinars, and scientific symposia to bring together key stakeholders from academia, line ministries, UN agencies, local and international non-governmental organizations, and other critical in-country partners. Another critical objective of these activities is to increase awareness and policy engagement through the expansion of MIYCN research and programming within Jordan.

Summary of Activities Accomplished During Quarter 3 of FY2021

A summary of activities undertaken during the reporting period are as follows:

1. Partnerships, Engagement, and Collaboration

1.1. Engagement with USAID/Jordan

- During the reporting period, N-IL engaged with USAID/Jordan through bi-monthly virtual meetings, and monthly tripartite interactions with USAID/Jordan, CHN and N-IL. A total of three meetings were held between April-June. These meetings have been very effective in updating USAID/Jordan and CHN on the progress made by N-IL on its research and capacity building activities.
- Key outcomes from these meetings include:
 - Administrative and project setup progress updates such as the selection of Mindset, a Jordan-based research firm, as the core partner. A panel of experts selected Mindset based on competitive review of the EOI, virtual informational interviews, and the RFA review.

- N-IL shared updates with USAID/Jordan on the status of the Research Collaboration Agreement between N-IL and CHN. The MoU will specify roles and responsibilities, as well as joint decisions regarding the CHN program design and N-IL's evaluation design, implementation of data collection, analysis, and dissemination. N-IL and CHN discussed extensively on the roles and responsibilities guide that will be incorporated in the agreement. Further discussion and finalization of the agreement is expected to take place when the Tufts team is in-country in Jordan in late August.
- On the technical end, N-IL provided regular updates on the secondary data analysis conducted by N-IL using the Jordan DHS and Household Income Expenditure Survey (HIES) datasets. In mid-July, N-IL shared a first set of infographics with the USAID/Jordan for review and feedback. The full draft is expected to be finalized by the end of September 2021 (close of FY21 Quarter 4).
- Updates on the development of the electronic COVID-19 survey and review progress by the Tufts University Institutional Review Board (IRB) and Jordan Ministry of Health (MOH) IRB was shared with USAID/Jordan and CHN on a regular basis. On June 20, 2021, the survey was published in various social media platforms of Jordan, with support from USAID/Jordan, CHN and its partners, Ministry of Health in Jordan, academic and research institutions, as well as other development organizations. The survey aims to understand the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on demand, access, preparedness, and delivery of healthcare services related to maternal and child health and nutrition in Jordan. *(Note: Updates on the status of the survey is provided in the later section of this report.)*
- Updates on the development of the evaluation protocol and study tools were regularly shared by N-IL, including discussions on the feasibility of implementing a cost-effectiveness module. In addition, regular progress and status updates on the submissions and review at Tufts and Ministry of Health Ethics Committee were shared by N-IL during these meetings.
- In addition to the administrative and technical discussions, N-IL also were prepared and presented as a tentative travel plan for Tufts/N-IL team to Jordan in late August to oversee training, meet collaborators, perspective stakeholders, and support data collection processes.

1.2. Engagement with CHN Implementers

- During the reporting period, N-IL continued to engage with the CHN/FHI 360 team through bi-weekly meetings to facilitate the program and evaluation design of CHN. As the two parties continued to make progress with the design and planning of the activities, these regular interactions have facilitated timely sharing of updates and progress from the respective parties.
- Key highlights/achievements of this quarter include:
 - The IE roles and responsibilities guide that was previously finalized was specific to N-IL's baseline IE. The roles and responsibilities guide were updated to capture the overall roles of CHN and N-IL in successfully implementing the IE and the process and performance evaluation. A draft was shared with CHN for their review in early June. The original template had a date timeline which kept shifting due to changes in the COVID 19 pandemic guidance. Given this it was agreed amongst the Mission, CHN and NIL that a document which reflects actions at a higher level and that does not

have dates associated with them would be a better approach. At the time this report was being prepared, the N-IL and CHN team received a template from the USAID/Jordan which helped. By early August, N-IL will adapt its update to this guide and share it with CHN for their inputs and feedback. The guide will then be shared with the USAID/Jordan for their feedback by August 10.

- Discussion and feedback on the draft evaluation protocol and study questionnaires took place during the reporting period. Similarly, feedback from CHN on the COVID-19 survey were received and incorporated into the final questionnaire.

1.3. Engagement with Mindset

- N-IL successfully completed the sub-recipient solicitation to support its research and capacity building activities in Jordan. Mindset, a Jordan-based research firm, will collaborate with N-IL to develop and implement a comprehensive evaluation of CHN. An orientation meeting was held on May 6th, and a formal signing of the subrecipient agreement completed on May 26, 2021.
- Since then, N-IL had regular interactions on a weekly basis (one meeting per week on research and technical matters and one meeting per week on operational, financial, and budget related matters) with the research and operations team at Mindset to fulfill post-award requirements (organizational structure, workplan, office set-up, Grants Manual, hiring country staff positions). N-IL also received the organization structure and workplan from Mindset in early June which the team incorporated to the overall FY21 implementation plan. The updated FY21 implementation plan was shared with USAID/Jordan for review on July 6, 2021.
- Mindset coordinated with N-IL to finalize the job descriptions for the two country staff positions: the country coordinator and a post-doc. This recruitment process is expected to be completed by the third week of August.
- Mindset actively collaborated with N-IL throughout the reporting period to develop the evaluation protocol and the study questionnaires.
- With Mindset's help, N-IL has also started the development of the fellowship's application and indicative research topics. The template for the fellowship application will be finalized by the end of August and call for applications will be released in early September.

2. Activities related to Research and Evaluation Agenda for CHN Activity

2.1. Analysis of Existing Data and Literature Review

- The analysis of multi-year Jordan Demographic Health Survey (DHS) and Household Income Expenditure Surveys (HIES) datasets from 1990 to 2018 assesses trends/patterns and changes (if any) in complementary feeding practices and food choices (e.g., ultra-processed foods and sugar-sweetened beverages), and will help determine the critical factors that facilitate or impede the recommended practices for infants and young children under 24 months of age in Jordan.
- In addition to the DHS datasets, the team has successfully completed descriptive analysis of key consumption indicators from Jordan's HIES. The descriptive analysis seeks to understand household expenditure of key breast milk substitutes (milk, infant formula), sugar sweetened beverages, savory and sweets using 4 rounds of data from 2002 to 2013. Over the four rounds, the share of households reporting milk purchases (81% in

2002 to 60% in 2013) and baby foods (59% in 2002 to 51% in 2013) decreased, while the share which purchased infant formula (8% in 2013 to 13% in 2013) increased. The percentage of households who reported to have purchased sugar sweetened beverage and sweets remained high (above 90%) and uniform over the years.

- During the reporting period, Tufts/N-IL drafted two infographics using the multi-year DHS data. The first shows trends of exclusive breastfeeding, complementary feeding practices, and modern contraceptive use in Jordan. A copy of the infographic was shared with USAID/Jordan in the second week of July for their review and feedback. The second infographic focuses on dietary trends of children under the age of two. A final draft of the infographic will be shared for USAID/Jordan's review by the second week of August.
- The findings from the DHS and HIES data will be compiled in a report to the USAID/Jordan to be submitted in September 2021 (Q4). A draft outline of the report was drafted during Q3, and the team has started compiling the literature and analytical findings to the report. In tandem, N-IL also worked on an outline of the manuscript on comprehensive understanding of the trends in breastfeeding practices, complementary feeding practices, and consumption of breast milk substitutes (including formula and other non-human milk) in Jordan. This manuscript aims to explore the socio-demographic (education, income, location, etc.) factors that influence the consumption by infants (0 – 23 months) as they grow. The manuscript will be submitted to the *Journal of Nutrition* by Q4 FY21.

2.2. COVID-19 electronic survey

- The protocol and questionnaires for the electronic COVID-19 online survey was finalized and ethical approval from Tufts University and Jordan Ministry of Health Ethics Committee was received in May 2021.
- The survey will use a repeated cross-sectional design to collect data from 638 pregnant and lactating women between the age of 18-49 years and 500 healthcare providers working in health facilities across Jordan. Three rounds of semi-annual surveys will be conducted between 2021-2022 to understand the effect of COVID-19 pandemic on demand, access, health facility preparedness, and delivery of healthcare services related to pregnancy and maternal and child health, nutrition, and wellbeing in Jordan.
- The survey was successfully rolled out on June 20, 2021, with the help of the Ministry of Health, USAID/Jordan, CHN implementers (FHI360, Healthcare Accreditation Council, HCAC, Institute of Family Health, IFH, Breastfeeding group) and other social media platforms on Facebook and WhatsApp. In addition, N-IL interacted with Center for Strategic Studies (CSS), specifically Dr. Walid Khatib to disseminate the survey throughout CSS networks as well as University of Jordan (UofJ). Additionally, Dr. Reema Tayeem and Dr. Raaeda Al-Qutob supported the dissemination of the COVID-19 survey through nutritional WhatsApp groups at the UofJ and additional personal networks. Furthermore, Nour Litum from Breastfeeding in Jordan, shared the survey on their social media page. This was supported by efforts from the following networks: RHAS, HFAD, HCAD, Mummy Zone, out and about with Eman, KIDSNABI, JOHUD, MINDSET, MoH, UofJ, and additional networks.
- By the end of July, a total of 165 (out of 638 sent out) PLW surveys and 165 (out of 500) HCP surveys were completed. As a result of the Eid break during the third week of July, the team received few responses (~60 surveys between July 18-July 26). To promote

participation, N-IL plans to re-share the survey link on all the social media platforms active in Jordan on a regular interval until it meets the anticipated number of completed surveys.

- While the survey was successfully rolled out with support from the local stakeholders, collaborators and partners, a low survey response rate has been a major problem for the electronic surveys. Between June 20-July 30th, about 26% PLW and 33% HCP surveys have been completed. While literature suggest poor response rates to be an issue for electronic survey, to overcome this challenge, N-IL has been constantly following up with partners, stakeholders, and collaborators, to repost the survey links to the Jordanian social media platforms. In addition, N-IL has also been interacting with IPSOS, a specialist in global market research to increase more contacts with potential participants to take the survey. The N-IL is hopeful that, in tandem with the regular, repeated posting of the survey links in the social media platforms, engaging IPSOS will help create a positive change to the response rates and fulfill the anticipated sample size by the end of August.

2.3. Impact Evaluation (IE) and Service Provider Evaluation (SPE)

- By early May of Q3 FY21, N-IL successfully developed a first draft of the comprehensive evaluation protocol. The comprehensive evaluation includes three evaluation components: 1) quantitative impact evaluation (IE), 2) a quantitative and qualitative process and performance evaluation, and 3) assessment of sustainability. Simultaneously, N-IL continued to develop the study questionnaire and other study documents (informed consent forms, international research checklist, etc.).
- A key component of the evaluation questionnaire for the IE and process and performance evaluation is on the exposure of participants to CHN's program messaging, for which N-IL coordinated closely with CHN by sharing the study questionnaires for review and extracting questions relevant to the CHN program impact pathway. However, a delay in the rollout of the CHN's formative research focused on identifying social movement components and practices meant N-IL could only create a module on exposure to CHN program with generic questions on program messaging, with an idea that further modifications and amendments to the IE and process and performance evaluation questions will be made once CHN is able to provide more specific details on the program messaging from their formative research.
- Therefore, to minimize any delays to the implementation of the baseline IE survey, N-IL made the decision in late May to develop two separate protocols. The first protocol will focus specifically on the IE (including the baseline survey) and the quantitative service provider evaluation (SPE) component of the process and performance evaluation. The second protocol will focus on the qualitative process and performance as well as the sustainability assessment component of the evaluation. Using this approach, N-IL and Mindset translated the protocol and study questionnaire for submission to the Jordan MOH IRB.
- By mid-July, N-IL successfully submitted the IE protocol to the Tufts Institutional Review Board (IRB) and Jordan Ministry of Health Ethics Committee. At the time when this report was being prepared, the protocol and the study tools were being reviewed by the two IRBs.

- N-IL will finalize the second protocol (process and performance evaluation) once it has received more information on the social and behavior component from CHN in August.
- In late June, N-IL received a list of the 21 health facilities from CHN as their targeted facilities for the social franchise model. Based on the information provided by CHN, N-IL and Mindset have started drafting the implementation plan for the baseline survey, that is expected to complete by the final week of August.
- The implementation plan will highlight a detailed timeline and activities for the baseline survey which includes receipt of IRB approvals from Tufts and MOH, programming of the questionnaire, development of training manuals, hiring, and training of the data collectors and district orientation that will begin in late August and is expected to be completed by mid- September 2021.
- To facilitate the baseline survey activities (training of the study data collectors, pretesting of the questionnaire, engagement with CHN and key stakeholders), the PI and the Tufts team plan on traveling to Amman, Jordan during the final week of August 2021. The team is in the process of finalizing travel plans that will be shared with the USAID/Jordan AOR for approval.
- Mindset will begin data collection for the baseline IE survey in all 22 districts in mid-September (Q4). Data collection is expected to complete in all program districts by October 2021.
- A key step for CHN after the baseline data collection is random assignment of sites/communities/health facilities to rollout program activities. N-IL will facilitate the randomization of the program facilities to cohort I and II with the help of a statistician at Tufts University. This process is already underway. The statistician will communicate with the CHN team directly to ensure that no N-IL research team members directly related to the baseline data collection are aware of the cohort I and II groups assignment until the baseline data collection has been completed. This process is expected to be completed by August 2021.
- During the reporting period, USAID/Jordan, CHN and N-IL had extensive discussions on incorporating a cost-effectiveness module to the IE. N-IL, with consultation from expert faculty at the Tufts University Friedman School created a first draft of the cost-effectiveness assessment that would have been incorporated to the comprehensive protocol. However, in April, the USAID/Jordan confirmed the exclusion of the cost-effectiveness module from the evaluation activities. As per USAID/Jordan's suggestion, N-IL omitted the cost-effectiveness module from the IE protocol.
- During the reporting period, N-IL made two oral (virtual) presentations. The first was held on May 6 to Mindset during the project orientation and the second was held on July 7th to USAID/Jordan.

Presenter	Event	Location	Topic	Date	Audience
Oral presentations					

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shibani Ghosh • Elizabeth Marino-Costello • Devyn Andrews • Robin Shrestha 	Jordan N-IL Project Orientation: Mindset	Virtual	Introduction to the Nutrition Innovation Lab in Jordan	May 6, 2021	15
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shibani Ghosh • Elizabeth Marino-Costello 	USAID/Jordan Monthly Meeting	Virtual	Progress Updates on Jordan N-IL activities	July 7, 2021	7

3. Supporting Jordan’s IYCF research agenda and building Jordan’s related human and institutional capacity

- During the reporting period, N-IL in collaboration with Mindset, created a Call for Applications for the N-IL fellowships for emerging Jordanian graduate students (MS and PhD), and junior faculty in maternal, infant, and young child nutrition (MIYCN).
- With the help of two research assistants, a comprehensive review of literature was carried out in June to develop key topic areas relevant to Jordanian context for the research fellowships. This process is expected to be completed by the end of August.
- Applications will be reviewed by a committee consisting of faculty from Jordanian academic institutions and Tufts. N-IL is in the process of compiling a list of potential committee members that includes academics and research experts from Jordan, Tufts, Mindset and CHN. N-IL anticipates awarding two to four small grants per year.

4. Report on MEL Performance Indicators

Summary:

- N-IL has been progressing well to meet its Intermediate Results I target this fiscal year. N-IL has so far made good progress in developing infographics and manuscripts for peer-reviewed publications utilizing findings from the secondary data analysis. In addition, as part of the Intermediate results II, N-IL has been working to successfully develop the Fellowships application. Call for Applications will start by end of August.
- A detailed update on the indicators in Intermediate Results I and II are provided below:

No	Indicator	FY2021 targets	Quarter 3 updates	Target Achieved
<u>Intermediate Results 1: Rigorous Research Agenda (Evaluation of CHN utilizing qualitative and quantitative approaches)</u>				
Indicator STIR 12	Number of peer-reviewed scientific	4	N-IL is working on a manuscript and two infographics using secondary data	ongoing

	publications results from USG support to JN-IL research		from multi-year DHS surveys. Similarly, N-IL is working on a secondary analysis report expected to complete by Q4 FY21. N-IL will also start working on a methodology paper in Q4 FY21.	
Indicator 1.1	Number of presentations on IYCF complementary feeding practices in Jordan	5	Due to the ongoing COVID-pandemic, N-IL aimed to conduct four webinars in this fiscal year. N-IL closely worked with USAID/Jordan and CHN to organize the first two webinars in February and April. However, the surge in the COVID-19 pandemic and the turnover at MOH IRB has delayed the organization of the first two webinars. Nonetheless, N-IL has been coordinating with its AOR in Jordan to plan for the introductory meeting with MOH IRB, upon which timeline for first two webinars will be planned.	ongoing
Indicator 1.2	Total number of enumerators, supervisors and data collectors that received training and support in study protocol and data collection by JN-IL.	30 (10 male, 20 females)	Indicators are related to the implementation of the baseline IE survey and will be updated in Quarter 4 with actual numbers of trained enumerators and supervisors.	ongoing
<u>Intermediate Results 2: Jordan's MIYCN research agenda and capacity building</u>				
Indicator 2.1	Numbers of small grants fellowships awarded to Jordanian academics and students Fiscal year target	3 (2 female, 1 male)	N-IL, through its core partner, Mindset, plans to award the small grants fellowships in Q4 of this fiscal year. N-IL anticipates achieving the targets by quarter 4 of this year.	ongoing
Indicator 2.2	Numbers of academics and students that attended seminars, lectures and workshops, webinars	200	N-IL will at least plan one webinar in Q4. This indicator will be updated in Q4 (in the annual report) after successful completion of the planned webinar.	ongoing

	conducted at improving linkages between policymakers, academics, and students on MIYCN and NCDs			
Indicator 2.3:	Numbers of attendees that participated the annual symposia conducted to promote adoption of evidence on MIYCN, PFP and NCDs	300	Due to ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, organizing an in-person event may not be possible. Nonetheless, N-IL will coordinate with Mindset to plan for a virtual webinar/event. N-IL anticipates sharing an update on this indicator in Q4/annual report.	Not achieved

5. Governance of the Nutrition Innovation Lab

- During the reporting period, N-IL continued its work developing an organizational structure that is both internally and externally collaborative and efficient. Although remotely active, the Lab has made good progress in compiling a list of potential stakeholders and partners in-country and will continue the process of adding internal and external partners and stakeholders into the structure.
- The Jordan work is led by Shibani Ghosh, Associate Director of the Nutrition Innovation Lab, who serves as the Principal Investigator in collaboration with Patrick Webb as co-Principal Investigator. Both are faculty at the Friedman School and have significant experience working across different countries and cultural contexts.
- The PI and co-PI will be supported by Amman- and Boston-based teams. In Amman, the Nutrition Innovation Lab is in the process of formalizing a Jordan-based institution, Mindset, as the sub-recipient of the sub-award. Upon completion, the process to hire a Jordan Country Coordinator and a Post-Doctoral Research Fellow will follow. Both positions will be held by Jordanian nationals. In Boston, the team now includes Elizabeth Marino Costello, Robin Shrestha, Katherine Appel, Justin Hackett (RA), Kamal Kasturi (RA).
- The Jordan Country Coordinator and Post-Doctoral Research Fellow will be hired through the core partner, Mindset. The core partner institution will be part of the overall Nutrition Innovation Lab's network, and it will function as a key research and capacity building collaborator.

6. Successes and Challenges of working in the context of COVID 19

- The ongoing global pandemic has continued to impact N-IL's planning, logistic and implementation of the evaluation and capacity building activities in Jordan. The lack of in-country travel of the Tufts team has delayed the project set-up activities and identification of the core-partner and the two in-country positions. Planning and implementation of research and capacity building activities (seminars, webinars, symposia) has been delayed. Regarding the ethical approval to implement the research, due to the ongoing pandemic, the ethical review committee at Tufts now requires an additional safety review process for all international

research. The Integrative Safety Committee (ISC) was formed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic with reviewing human subjects research ramp up requests and exception requests for research-related travel. The additional review process has further prolonged the overall ethical approval process. Despite the challenges, the Nutrition Innovation Lab has so far been successful in engaging remotely with the USAID/Jordan as well as the CHN implementers (FHI 360), potential partners, experts, and stakeholders throughout the reporting period.

- Key successes for N-IL during the reporting period has been the onboarding of Mindset as the core partner to facilitate N-IL's research and capacity building activities, implementation of the COVID-19 electronic survey, finalization of the IE protocol and subsequent submission to the Tufts IRB and Jordan MOH IRB for review and approval, despite the COVID-19 challenges in the United States and Jordan.
- During the reporting period, N-IL faced some delays in finalizing the first infographic. Due to the remote working environment, regular interactions for edits and updates on the infographics became challenging with the professional graphic designer working on the infographics. However, this issue was resolved once N-IL engaged it's the Communication Specialist (Devyn Andrews) who took over the development of the infographics. Since Devyn's addition to the team, the activity has gained momentum and interactions and edits needed to format and update the infographics has been prompt and efficient. N-IL will continue to move forward with this arrangement for all future infographics it plans on developing.
- Since the start of the project, in-country travel of the Tufts team has significantly impacted project set-up and research activities. Tufts team is finally able to travel to Jordan, and we anticipate traveling to take place at the end of FY21 Quarter 4, in August. This is timely and will facilitate local engagement as well as the preparation and implementation of the baseline survey.