



FOOD AID QUALITY REVIEW

CONCEPT NOTE

REFINE Research Uptake Strategy

INTRODUCTION

Research Engagement on Food Interventions for Nutritional Effectiveness (REFINE) is a knowledge-sharing mechanism that aims to improve the effectiveness of food-supported interventions. It was established in 2012 as an outcome of the Food Aid Quality Review, a multi-phase project funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Office of Food for Peace (FFP) and the World Food Programme. The goal of REFINE is to facilitate accessibility to, and exchange of, operational and policy-relevant research on nutritionally enhanced food-supported interventions that improve nutrition by:

1. aggregating high-quality, relevant ongoing research and existing literature to fill the gaps in the evidence base (“collection”);
2. synthesizing and analyzing both research results and protocols (“synthesis”);
3. disseminating and communicating this information through avenues accessible to both technical and nontechnical audiences, and facilitating its uptake, exchange, and application by key stakeholders (“the push”); and
4. conducting monitoring and evaluation activities to incorporate feedback and maximize effectiveness (“M&E”).

REFINE collects information about stakeholders, research, and research gaps on food aid products, programs, and processes. This includes studies that are formally registered in international electronic databases as “ongoing” or active; studies that have been completed but have not yet resulted in a formal report; and studies published in academic journals or as grey literature.

The existence, findings, and methodologies of these studies are synthesized into monthly resource updates, annual landscape reviews, and periodic research gap analyses. These outputs highlight both the work that has been done and the work that could be done in the future.

The purpose of the present research uptake strategy (RUS) is to realize the final two goals: the push of information to stakeholders, and M&E of how that information is used by stakeholders. The overarching aims of such a strategy are to:

- Promote the use of research findings to inform wider conversations and decisions concerning international nutrition assistance.
- Engage a range of stakeholders in knowledge exchange.
- Inform and engage with those stakeholders formulating policies, practices, and their implementation.

STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

A Research Uptake Strategy requires input and feedback from the end users of the research to maximize effectiveness. The audience for REFINE consists of stakeholders and decision makers in four areas: research; policy making; programming; and product development. An annex to this document in the form of a stakeholder analysis provides an analysis of each group, including objectives and interests of the groups as well as key members for potential targeting.

“THE PUSH”: DISSEMINATION AND COMMUNICATION

Once information has been collected and/or synthesized, REFINE will distribute this information to the stakeholders mentioned above in two ways: dissemination, which offers information to a wide audience without targeting; and communication, which tailors messages to specific audiences.

REFINE uses several distribution mechanisms. This section outlines strategies to engage stakeholders with each mechanism.

WEBSITE

REFINE owns and manages the website www.REFINEnutrition.org. The site is publically accessible, and serves primarily as an information repository. REFINE updates the site monthly based on communications with study researchers and updates to the databases in which studies are housed.

In conjunction with publicity for the FAQR website launch, REFINE will publicize its website to food aid policymakers and practitioners. REFINE will work with a member of the Tufts University public relations team to write an article or press release to alert the Tufts community, alumni, and a wider audience to the existence of the website.

The REFINE research assistant will also reach out to select stakeholders from each group in the Stakeholder Analysis, identified with the assistance of the FAQR team, to tell them about the website, and solicit feedback as to useful changes and updates. This activity will take place in February and March 2017.

REFINE RESOURCE REVIEW

In regular intervals, REFINE will prepare a report called the “REFINE Resource Review” consisting of 1) recently published relevant literature and 2) new additions to the REFINE database of ongoing studies. This is disseminated through an email listserv and social media and is available on the REFINE website.

Visitors to the website will be encouraged to subscribe to the REFINE Resource Review; increasing traffic to the website could also increase subscription to the Resource Review. The REFINE RA will contact other organizations disseminating newsletters and request that a notification be included in their newsletters, potentially for a reciprocal mention in the Resource Review. This activity will take place in February and March 2017.

REFINE can also engage with stakeholders in a more targeted manner by distributing quarterly Resource Reviews tailored to each group. The content of these tailored Resource Reviews will be based on feedback from the contacts identified in the stakeholder analysis.

TWITTER

REFINE owns and manages the Twitter handle @REFINEnutrition. Using this platform, REFINE will share salient outcomes of new ongoing studies or recent publications included in the REFINE Resource Review. REFINE tweets will include the source reference and refer to Twitter accounts associated with the publication or study being referenced, as available.

REFINE will grow its social media presence by following donors, partners, and other stakeholders (see Stakeholder Analysis) in February 2017. It will continue to share Twitter updates twice or thrice weekly, with one or two weekly engagements with other Twitter users, including retweets and engagement with hashtags from events, webinars, or conferences.

PERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS

When REFINE identifies an ongoing study that fits the REFINE criteria but is not yet being tracked, REFINE will contact either the principal investigator or another lead researcher through the REFINE email address (REFINEnutrition@gmail.com). This contact will be referred to the REFINE website and Twitter, informed of similar ongoing research and published studies, and offered inclusion in the REFINE Resource Review listserv. A draft email template for these engagements will be completed by February 2017.

PRESENTATIONS

REFINE will present updates on its activity in webinars, conferences, and meetings. The presenters will reference and invite engagement with the website, Resource Review, and Twitter account, and will solicit feedback from the audience on how to improve information-sharing through these channels. Most notably, REFINE will present at the 2018 International Congress on Nutrition, and will design and execute an Evidence Summit at the conclusion of FAQR Phase III. REFINE will also encourage its research stakeholders to present their findings at relevant conferences as well. Appropriate avenues for both types of presentations will be identified via consultation with FAQR team members and members of the Interagency Harmonization Working Group. This activity will take place in February and March 2017.

PUBLICATIONS

REFINE aims to regularly produce grey or published literature on current knowledge gaps in the field. This includes an upcoming “landscape scan” of the current ongoing studies in food aid and nutrition programming which will elucidate research gaps, as well as a research protocol document for USAID partners and researchers.

The REFINE RA will engage with researchers, policymakers, and programmers in the development of the landscape scan. Policymakers will provide feedback as to what evidence and information is currently needed to persuade reticent decision makers. Also, it is especially important to engage with local and regional programmers to find out if there is any specific information from the implementation level that is lacking in the literature.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

REFINE’s ultimate goal is to facilitate research uptake. A stakeholder will be considered a participant in research uptake after they have adapted policies or activities as a result of engaging with REFINE. Because Uptake is considered a participatory process in which stakeholders give feedback on the kind of information they need from a project, REFINE must monitor 1) the effects of REFINE’s dissemination and communication activities, and 2) stakeholder participation. REFINE’s progress in facilitating research uptake will be monitored using a Stakeholder Tracking Tool, quantitative web-based metrics, and information gathered at meetings and events. A complete M&E plan can be found in Appendix B.

STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATIONS LOG

REFINE will use a Stakeholder Communications Log to track engagement with stakeholders and their expressions of their interest in the REFINE project. Appendix C depicts an example of what the Stakeholder Communications Log will look like, and the kind of information that will be inputted for a detailed view of engagement with specific organizations.

METRICS

REFINE will use Excel Dashboard, Google analytics, and Twitter analytics to monitor the traffic to and usage of REFINE communication sources: REFINEnutrition.org and @REFINEnutrition. These metrics are further delineated in the M&E plan.

MEETINGS & EVENTS

REFINE will gather feedback on REFINE at meetings. The feedback gathered on these occasions, paired with comments gathered from stakeholder engagement generally, will inform further research uptake strategies and stakeholder analyses. Information that will be captured includes: total number of REFINE presentations, attendance at REFINE presentations, discussion of REFINE at other meetings, and anecdotal/qualitative feedback.

CONTACT

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Appendix A: SUMMARY OF STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

	Goals	Interest	Why	Influence	What to share	Mode
Research	To publish high-quality, methodologically sound research that provides evidence for improving both policy and practice; to learn new ways of conducting research	High	Can use ongoing and published studies to inform their own research questions and design; can use REFINE to enhance research uptake.	Medium	Information on ongoing studies and recent publications; similar work done by others; research protocol guidance document; annual landscape scan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • REFINE website • Resource Review • Twitter • Email • Conferences • Webinars • Interagency meetings
Policy Making	To influence international development and humanitarian goals and policies.	Medium	Uses evidence to inform policy but must incorporate other factors into decision making.	High	Information on ongoing studies and recent publications; policy briefs on relevant findings; annual landscape scan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • REFINE website • Resource Review • Twitter • Email • Conferences • Webinars • Interagency meetings
Programming	To implement effective and cost-effective programs to address malnutrition; to conduct high-quality M&E and research.	Medium	Implementation strategies may be impacted by research; must incorporate other factors into decision making;	Medium – high	Information on ongoing studies and recent publications; policy briefs on relevant findings; annual landscape scan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • REFINE website • Resource Review • Twitter • Email • Conferences • Webinars • Interagency meetings

Product Development	To offer high-quality, cost-effective, safe, and effective products while maximizing profits.	Medium	Uses evidence to inform product specifications but must incorporate other factors into decision making.	Medium	Information on ongoing studies and recent publications; annual landscape scan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • REFINE website • Resource Review • Twitter • Email
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Appendix B: MONITORING AND EVALUATION PLAN

W e b s i t e	Target Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researchers • Policy Makers • Programmers • Product Developers 		
	Indicator Concept		Indicator	Collection Frequency
	Outputs	The REFINE website is publicized to relevant audiences.	# of press releases # of mentions in other newsletters	Quarterly
		Ongoing studies (and the details of these studies) are compiled and added to the website	Total # of studies being tracked	Monthly
		Published studies (and the details of these studies) are compiled and added to the website	Total # of studies added to the website	Monthly
Outcomes	The REFINE website serves as a resource for stakeholders to find and use information.	# of website hits # of links clicked; redirects # of document downloads	Quarterly	
R E F I N E R e s o u r c e R e v i e w	Target groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researchers • Policy Makers • Programmers 		
	Indicator Concept		Indicator	Collection Frequency
	Outputs	REFINE compiles and shares the Resource Update with stakeholders	# of Resource Updates disseminated # of stakeholders subscribed to the Resource Update	Quarterly
Outcomes	Stakeholders use Resource Update to learn about new studies and inform research.	Qualitative feedback from stakeholders	Quarterly	
T w i t t	Target Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researchers • Policy Makers • Programmers 		

	Indicator Concept	Indicator	Collection Frequency
	Outputs	REFINE disseminates published and ongoing studies via Twitter	# of Tweets Quarterly
	Outcomes	Stakeholders engage in conversations about relevant studies on social media	Total # of re-tweets and conversations with stakeholders and @REFINEnutrition Quarterly
		Stakeholders use @REFINEnutrition to inform themselves and each other about ongoing and published research	# of Retweets, Likes, Mentions # of clicks on Tweeted links # of followers Quarterly
P e r s o n a l C o m m u n i c a t i o n s	Target Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researchers • Policy Makers • Programmers • Product Developers 	
	Indicator Concept	Indicator	Collection Frequency
	Outputs	REFINE engages with stakeholders via email	Numerator: # of stakeholders sent an introductory email from REFINE Denominator: # of possible stakeholders to communicate with
	Outcomes	Communications are maintained with researchers	Numerator: # of stakeholders who have engaged in 2-way communication Denominator: # of possible stakeholders to be in contact with Annually
P r e s e n t a t i o n s	Target Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researchers • Policy Makers • Programmers 	
	Indicator Concept	Indicator	Collection Frequency
	Outputs	Information about REFINE is delivered to stakeholders at events, conferences, and meetings	Total # of meetings, events, and conferences at which REFINE provided information # of policy-makers attending REFINE presentations

		Updates on REFINE are given at policy-related meetings	Numerator: # meetings where a REFINE update was given Denominator: Total # of meetings attended	Annually
	Outcomes	Stakeholders are informed about REFINE and its ongoing activities.	# of stakeholders attending REFINE presentations # of different stakeholder organizations in the audience of REFINE presentations Qualitative feedback from attendees	Annually
		Stakeholders are informed of research gaps in the literature		
		Stakeholders are aware of the landscape of ongoing studies and how these studies fit into the identified research gaps		
P u b l i c a t i o n s	Target Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researchers • Policy Makers • Programmers • Product Developers 		
	Indicator Concept		Indicator	Collection Frequency
	Outputs	REFINE produces and distributes regularly updated landscape scans of the field of ongoing studies	Total # landscape scans produced and distributed in past year	Annually
	Outcomes	Stakeholders use REFINE publications to inform policies, programs, and processes.	# of publication downloads # of publication citations	Annually

Organiza tion	Contact Name and Position	Contact Information (phone, email)	Date of Cont act	Reason for Contact	Contact Outcome