# Sequencing, Layering, and Integration

Lessons from Madagascar RFSAs FIOVANA and Maharo | 2023–2024

## Overview & Objectives of the Learning Event

In 2023, USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) Mission in Madagascar, the BHA Applied Learning Team (ALT), and leadership from the FIOVANA and Maharo resilience food security activities (RFSAs), with support from the BHA-funded Program Cycle Support (PCS) Associate Award, began organizing a multi-phase end of activity learning event. The focus of the event was to jointly discuss challenges and lessons learned related to sequencing, layering, and integration (SLI), and to examine how these experiences can be shared and utilized to improve ongoing and future food security activities in Madagascar and beyond.

**Phase I** of the Madagascar End of Activity Learning Event took place virtually from November 28 through 30, 2023. This event was limited in size to focus on facilitating open dialogue and elevating the voices of local staff. It ultimately brought together over 60 staff from USAID Madagascar Country Office, the FIOVANA and Maharo RFSAs, and PCS for internal knowledge sharing around key themes for SLI (see agenda in Annex 1). The event opened with a brief overview of the two RFSAs and a presentation of the activities' definition of and approach to SLI. BHA and RFSA participants shared their experiences with SLI and exchanged successes and challenges in implementation. In groups, participants then discussed i) the process for determining packages of services, ii) operating context, iii) outcomes of sequencing and layering, iv) collaboration with stakeholders, and v) the role of sequencing and layering for sustainability. Following the three-day event, key lessons learned were collated into common themes to inform the design of Phase II.

**Phase II** of the Madagascar End of Activity Learning Event took place virtually on April 23 and 24, 2024. The objective of Phase II was to share the key lessons learned that surfaced in the RFSA discussions with the larger resilience food security community of practice and discuss application in Madagascar and globally (see agenda in Annex 2). The invitation for Phase II was shared widely with USAID, the Madagascar RFSAs, national and international NGOs, government officials, and the private sector. In total, over 145 participants joined the two-day event to learn from the experiences of the Madagascar RFSAs and discuss their own experiences with SLI in other contexts.

Day 1 consisted of a panel discussion on SLI with representatives from FIOVANA, Maharo, and the USAID BHA Mission in Madagascar. Day 2 consisted of informal breakout room discussions with the Madagascar RFSAs on four key themes identified and prioritized from Phase I:

- Experiences using a community-based approach for determining appropriate sequencing and layering, ensuring motivation, and sustaining results,
- Challenges and good practices for sequencing and layering in a context of shocks,
- Coordinating sequencing and layering with different actors in shared geographic zones, and
- Helpful tools for determining appropriate sequencing and layering of interventions.

This brief provides a summary of the key lessons shared, challenges, and considerations for moving forward with effective SLI for resilience food security activities.

# Understanding Sequencing, Layering, and Integration

While there are numerous understandings of SLI, this event drew primarily from broad definitions shared by USAID[1]. The 2020 request for applications for the Madagascar RFSAs underscored the importance of SLI and how the term is being used in this context.

**Sequencing** is "the intentional organization and phasing of interventions and the way they are delivered, to coordinate the order in which activities are implemented and actors are engaged to maximize outcomes and sustainability." Sequencing interventions helps ensure services are provided at the most appropriate time for the participant. It is promoted to ensure appropriate targeting and response to identified needs, thereby enabling incremental change.

**Layering** is "the strategic coordination of geographically overlapping interventions across the different sectors and stakeholders that complement each other to achieve resilience objectives." Interventions can be designed to layer over and build on both recently completed interventions and ongoing interventions. These interventions may be internal to an activity or those implemented by other organizations in shared geographic zones to reinforce a holistic response to interrelated barriers. Layering of interventions should be considered both within and across sectors, stakeholders, and pillars of assistance.

**Integration** of interventions is "the intentional layering and sequencing of multisectoral interventions and the coordination of actors to address needs and prevent or reduce the drivers and effects of shocks and stresses that undermine long-term well-being." Activities should be integrated at both the household and community levels with the goal of creating increased synergy.

The importance of developing a tailored package of interventions through strategic SLI was highlighted for the Madagascar RFSAs as it is considered essential to overcome the multiple and interrelated barriers faced by vulnerable populations to create transformational and sustainable change.

> *"To transform the livelihoods of an individual, household, or community one must substantially increase income, improve nutritional knowledge and behaviors, effectively manage risks, and strengthen the systems that ensure household members' equitable access to income and knowledge regardless of age, sex, caste, or ethnicity. Creating transformational and sustainable change requires overcoming multiple interrelated barriers through a package of interventions tailored to their needs."*
>
> – Madagascar RFSA 2020 RFA

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[1] https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2022-12/Resilience-Policy-Revision-Jan-2023.pdf

# Key Lessons from FIOVANA and Maharo RFSAs

During both phases of the learning event, FIOVANA and Maharo staff had the opportunity to spotlight key learnings related to SLI across a variety of thematic areas. Highlights include the following:

## Topic 1: Experiences using a community-based approach for determining appropriate sequencing, layering, and integration

- **Community consultations and visioning were key** to identify and validate community needs and objectives, associated services, and potential service providers and influencers, as well as to ensure accountability and build buy-in. They were the primary drivers to determine appropriate SLI for village development plans.
- **Let the community lead:** Enabling communities to determine their own priorities encourages ownership and sustainability and leads to effective SLI.
- It was critical to **coordinate not only directly with communities, but also with local structures** (community development committees, the village development committee community action planning process, local/traditional leaders) for effective community engagement.
- **Integration**: Working through existing community groups led to stronger organization and results.
- **Sequencing**: Beginning with simple activities helped create social cohesion and led to increased motivation within groups.
- **Layering**: Effective layering of interventions can be challenging when there are differing capacities and skills within communities; joint planning with the commune-level government actors helped ensure proper sequencing and layering.
- **Example - Sanitation**: For an effective approach, FIOVANA sequenced and layered interventions related to water infrastructure, hygiene promotion, and sanitation promotion and integrated community, traditional and local authorities, community groups, government, and others into water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) activities.

## Topic 2: Challenges and good practices for sequencing & layering in a context of shocks

### Challenges

- **COVID-19** led to delays and affected ideal sequencing, limited mobility/contact with communities, disrupted supply chain, and led to increased out-migration.
- **Climate change and natural disasters** (cyclones, drought, flooding) created urgent humanitarian need, affected infrastructure and community access, destroyed harvests, and distorted food prices in the marketplace.

### SLI Adaptations

- Increase **integration with local partners/committees and emergency programs** to meet needs and involve them in all sequencing decisions.
- **Integrate and layer additional interventions** to respond to shocks (e.g., rapid response systems, village savings and loan associations for resilience, distribution of food and WASH kits, infrastructure activities) and prioritize overlapping interventions.
- **Reconsider sequencing** to respond to new urgent needs and adjust to conduct activities in parallel when possible.
- **Leverage the DRMC** to coordinate shock response and **train households** on shock-preparedness measures.
- **Example - Nutrition:** As a result of adapting SLI approaches to respond to drought, Maharo was able to improve nutrition among children, food consumption of households, and nutritional status during the lean season.

## Topic 3: Coordinating sequencing and layering with different actors within geographic zones

- The **benefits** of coordination with other actors include harmonization of interventions, approaches, and messaging, increased complementarity, and maximized efficiency and impact. Coordinating with other actors builds sustainability through developing linkages and close coordination with the community, strengthening trust and increasing community ownership.
- It is important to **involve actors at different levels,** including local government and development committees, local leaders, regional and national government actors, private sector, and other actors in the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.
- There are challenges when partners have different approaches and offerings (e.g., different per diems). It is important to **harmonize and establish clear agreements.**
- **Coordination is important at all stages** (community consultations, mapping, identification of needs, implementation of interventions, etc.).
- Operating within a **cluster system** and having **multisectoral committees** at the commune-level was key to successful coordination. Other effective methods included joint field missions and formal and informal meetings.
- **Example - Gender-based violence (GBV)**: FIOVANA coordinated with the Ministry of Population to strengthen their GBV efforts. By training GYSD volunteers, FIOVANA was able to contribute to increased access to the government's GBV reporting tool and improve accountability of response, ultimately reducing the number of GBV cases.

## Topic 4: Most helpful tools for determining appropriate sequencing and layering of packages of interventions

- **Score cards and community dashboards** can be leveraged for comprehensive and participatory planning, messaging, and monitoring. They can facilitate activity layering, work well for multi-sectoral projects, can be easily contextualized, and promote community ownership/mutual commitment of stakeholders.
- **Poverty wealth ranking exercises** are helpful to inform where interventions should take place.
- **Annual surveys and external data sources** enable implementers to adapt strategy based on data and can be triangulated with information from the community score card or other community-based tools. Good practice includes sharing data in a timely manner and integrating it with the project's monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning system.
- **The theory of change** can be used to identify an integration strategy by carrying out a holistic review.
- **Pilots and refinement period studies** can generate lessons learned that are critical to inform SLI approaches.
- **Example - Food Security Monitoring System:** Maharo's strong monitoring system, leveraging Mira and other data sources, allowed the RFSA to anticipate actions to adjust their SLI approach in the zone to respond to the true needs of the target population.
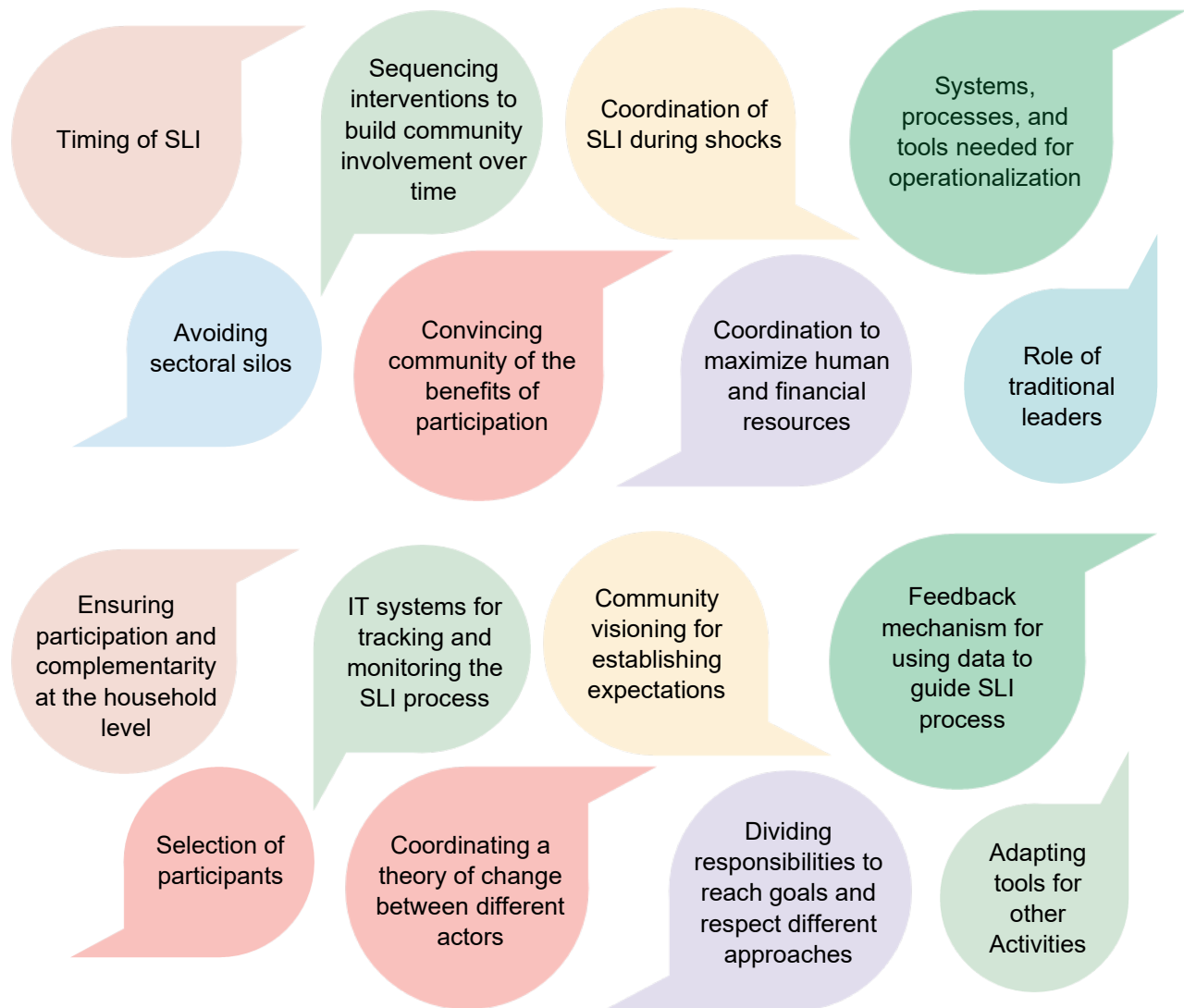
! *To learn more about the key lessons from FIOVANA and Maharo RFSAs on each of these topics, view their presentations from the event here.*

# Way Forward: Areas of Interest and Key Take-Aways

## Areas of Interest

During the learning event, participants had the opportunity to hear from, ask questions, and share experiences with the Maharo and FIOVANA RFSA staff and USAID/BHA. Key areas of interest that arose over the two days are included below.

- Timing of SLI
- Sequencing interventions to build community involvement over time
- Coordination of SLI during shocks
- Systems, processes, and tools needed for operationalization
- Avoiding sectoral silos
- Convincing community of the benefits of participation
- Coordination to maximize human and financial resources
- Role of traditional leaders
- Ensuring participation and complementarity at the household level
- IT systems for tracking and monitoring the SLI process
- Community visioning for establishing expectations
- Feedback mechanism for using data to guide SLI process
- Selection of participants
- Coordinating a theory of change between different actors
- Dividing responsibilities to reach goals and respect different approaches
- Adapting tools for other Activities

## Key Take-Aways

Throughout the two-day event, participants shared several takeaways for effective SLI. A summary of these learnings is included here. Please see Annex 3 for additional participant reflections.

> **"Deep understanding of sociocultural context and community engagement is key to start SLI"**

Close collaboration with the community was highlighted as an essential factor for ensuring project sustainability. Participants noted that it is important to understand community needs and concerns and to encourage the community to envision its future. Early community engagement is critical for co-creating the activity. As one participant shared, "strategies have to be locally adapted and success measured based on the context."

> **"Be intentional, remove silos, think collaboratively beyond sector/organization to combine efforts to achieve collective outcomes"**

Working in partnership with other actors was another key take-away for successful SLI. At the beginning of the project, actor mapping can help to identify who, and what resources, are present. Participants highlighted the importance of working intentionally and finding common ground with partners so that "everyone has ownership and buy-in to the process."

> **"Start SLI from the very beginning of a project, including all actors, not just those internal to the project"**

Another key takeaway was the importance of timing for effective SLI. Participants commented on the need to think through and include SLI at the very beginning of a project and ensure local leaders and actors are involved from the outset. Throughout the project, implementers should continuously be looking for ways to adapt, improve, and identify new ways to include SLI approaches in their activities.

> **"Data driven CLA is a good starting point"**

Lastly, multiple participants highlighted the importance of using data and different tools, specifically adapted to their local context and approaches. Tools, such as the household score card, can be used to adapt objectives based on community needs. Participants also emphasized that tools that enable close monitoring of SLI are critical since "learning and monitoring are crucial for layering."

# Annex 1: Phase I Agenda

November 28-30, 2023
6:30 am - 9:00 am ET / 2:30 pm - 5:00 pm EAT

| ET | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **28** | **29** | **30** |
| 6:30 | | Opening | Opening |
| | **Workshop Opening** | | |
| 7:00 | | **Breakout #2: Effects of Operating Context on Sequencing & Layering** | **Breakout #4: Collaboration with Stakeholders for Sequencing & Layering** |
| | **RFSA Overviews** | | |
| 7:30 | | **Plenary Debrief** | **Plenary Debrief** |
| | Break (10 min) | Break (10 min) | Break (10 min) |
| 8:00 | | | |
| | **Breakout #1: Process for Determining Packages of Services** | **Breakout #3: Outcomes - Results of Sequencing & Layering** | **Breakout #5: The Role of Sequencing & Layering for Sustainability** |
| 8:30 | | | |
| | **Plenary Debrief & Closing** | **Plenary Debrief & Closing** | **Plenary Debrief & Closing** |
| 9:00 | | | |

# Annex 2: Phase II Agenda

April 23 and 24, 2024
8:00 am - 10:00 am ET / 3:00 pm - 5:00 pm EAT

## April Day 1 (2 hours)

| Time | Session |
|---|---|
| **10 min** | **Opening**<br><br>• Welcome, agenda overview<br>• Opening remarks |
| **30 min** | **Brief Overview Presentations**<br><br>• Overview presentation by each RFSA (15 min each) |
| **60 min** | **Panel Discussion with Q&A: Experiences with SLI in Madagascar**<br><br>• Panel discussion including two representatives from each RFSA and one from BHA Mission |

| Time | Session |
|---|---|
| | • Introductory prompting question for each panelist followed by open Q&A with participants |
| 15 min | **Plenary Reflection**<br><br>• What did you hear that is similar to your experiences and approaches? What is different?<br>• What resonates the most for your current or future programming? What are you eager to learn more about or apply? |
| 5 min | **Closing** |

## April 24 - Day 2 (2 hours)

| Time | Session |
|---|---|
| 10 min | **Opening**<br><br>• Welcome, agenda overview<br>• *Participants join first breakout discussion* |
| 45 min | **Interactive Breakout Discussions 1**<br><br>**Topics:**<br><br>1. Experiences using a community-based approach for determining sequencing and layering, ensuring motivation/buy-in & achieving/sustaining results<br>2. Challenges and good practices for sequencing & layering in a context of shocks (e.g., natural disasters, COVID)<br>3. Coordinating sequencing and layering with different actors (including government) within geographic zones<br>4. Most helpful tools for determining appropriate sequencing and layering of packages of interventions |
| 15 min | **BREAK**<br>*Participants join second breakout discussion* |
| 50 min | **Interactive Breakout Discussions 2**<br><br>• As above (participants rotate to a different group; topics remain the same)<br><br>**Closing**<br><br>• Mission/BHA Washington closing remarks |

# Annex 3: Participant Reflections in Ahaslides

## What did you learn that is different or new compared to your experiences and approaches with SLI?

I was reminded of the importance of TIMING and how this affects sequencing

Engagement communautaire est important,

Impliquer d'autres acteurs.

Deep understanding of sociocultural context and community engagement is key to start SLI

SSI est un processus très dynamique et complexe. Cependant, il est très important pour la durabilité.

L'importance de l'engagement communautaire. J'aimerai qu'on en parle plus.

Community engagement

The importance of encouraging the community to envision its future

La gestion adaptative est importante

Learning and monitoring are crucial for layering

C'est important de savoir que SLI peut s'appliquer à tous les niveaux, tant en amont qu'en aval de l'intervention, aussi bien en phase de recherche que de développement

Wholistic approach internal and external of the project (community, between sectors/purposes, projects/ partnerships)

Working more intentionally with other stakeholders in the area, including with other partners to make sure you're working complementarily.

The success that varied approaches to the same core problem/desire can have favorable outcomes. Strategies have to be locally adapted, and success measured based on context

Although not knew, I am happy to hear about recognizing how important local engagement is for SLI.

Be intentional, remove silos, think collaboratively beyond sector, organization to combine efforts to achieve collective outcomes. No longer program view but identify synergies across programs, organizations to promote sound SLI. We all want to achieve the same impact and change.

The importance of the early community engagement and co-creating the activity

le succes de l'approche varie et l'engagement des leaders communautaires

L'approche SLI est très intéressante et elle doit être pensée bien avant la mise en oeuvre de chaque projet. Elle peut être utilisée pour tout type d'activités et de projets. L'application de l'approche SLI est la clé de la réussite surtout dans les approches participatives et est essentielle pour l'engagement de la communauté et des autorités locales.

I am aware that considering and implementing each approch separately do not conduct to Achieve RFSA objective. I have learned differents aspects on how can disign and implement SLI approach effectively. It' s allow me to have a new thinking affecting my way of actionning

se focaliser les ménages cibles pour atteindre les objectifs communs entre les acteurs.

Qu'il faut constamment chercher des opportunités d'appliquer les approches SLI

Importance de l'approche SLI dans la mise en oeuvre de RFSA

Community-visioning is critical

Engagement des leaders communautaires dans tous les processus de mise en oeuvre

Income generating activities, if encouraged among participants in interventions, motivates them.

Séquençage, superposition et intégration adaptés au contexte

need to understand community needs and concerns

Coordination with others actors

Avoir des outils pour evaluer le SLI

La conviction et le leadership des membres SFF entraîne un nouveau engagement remarquable de la communauté (cas MAHARO)

It begins since the conception phase

s'integre dans la realisation des plitique publique tant local de national

Identifier les besoins importants, urgents des cibles prioritaires et en meme temps identifier les opportunités de dévelopemment (Livelihoods). Puis sequencer et superposer les interventions suivant une bonne logique et complémentarité avec les autres acteurs

## What resonates the most for your current or future programming? What are you eager to learn more about or apply?

Community & HouseHold score card

How to document and measure the success/result of using SLI

Integrating the best practices/approaches tools and processes into a graduation approach. What works best?

intégration des secteurs privés dans le processus de SLI vers le developpement

Community engagement to SLI

The community engagement in Government program in sustainable ways and measure the success of the program.

Commencer le SLI dès le début du projet avec tous les acteurs non seulement à l'interne du projet

La collaboration et l'adaptation

s'integrer dans la realisation des politiques publiques tant Nationaux que locaux pour donner la chance à tous les acteurs à pariciper inclusivement

I am curious about market-based approaches and how SLI can be used to support them and increase HH income

la synergie des acteurs et intervenants pour plus d'impact sur la realisation des droits des vulnérables

L'integration des interventions

on se focalise sur l'integration

Nous souhaitons vraiment voir l'engagement effectif de tous les acteurs, essentiellement, les leaders traditionnels, les autorités gouvernementales, les secteurs privés et surtout la communauté de se donne les mains pour progresser et avancer dans le développement.

Difference entre SLI et approche de graduation

identification des besoins prioritaires de la communaute

Operationalization et outils de gestion sir SLI

Le HDP nexus

Clearly defining the interphases between Sequencing, Layering and Integration.

Tools/system and Nexus and documentation on GA

best defining SLI during contextualisation period

L'implication des leaders locaux des le debut du projet

Data driven CLA is a good starting point

Implication ptogrammatique multidisciplinaire

SLI and Graduation approach