

The Importance of MMCA Skills for WASH and Agriculture Technical Staff

Research and implementation efforts within the broader WASH and agriculture sectors have identified several key factors that support successful programming and the sustainability of improved practices and behaviors. These include using participatory approaches, providing adequate technical support and training, applying behavior change science and techniques, ensuring regular and frequent contact with extension agents or trained hygiene promoters/community mobilisers, and accompanying hardware interventions with information on how to use and maintain the hardware and to motivate this use. The 2018 FANTA report⁵ further emphasized that field staff benefit from capacity building support in adult education, facilitation skills, and SBC techniques to facilitate change in project communities.

The MMCA training includes lessons on effective communication, facilitation, negotiation, SBC, action planning, quality improvement and verification checklists, giving and receiving feedback, among others. The modular format of the training package allows each training session to be adapted to meet the needs of the program. The training can be delivered in various ways: multiple lessons can be delivered at once during a four to five day training, or lessons can be delivered individually over a period of time, such as one lesson at each quarterly meeting. This flexibility allows projects to customize the training to meet their needs. The training is highly participatory, and allows time for participants to practice the skills, co-facilitate a component of a lesson, and develop action plans on how they will use and/or train others on these skills.

Data collection before and after MMCA Trainings

Given the investment in time and resources that in-person trainings require from training participants, their organizations, and the organizers, SCALE and PRO-WASH routinely collect data before, during, and after trainings to ensure our efforts meet the needs of program participants. This includes: 1) collaborating with partners prior to the training to properly identify learning needs, 2) the use of pre- and post-tests during the training to measure comprehension of key themes and, 3) follow-up post-training with surveys and interviews. This follow-up is critical when assessing if and how training participants are applying skills learned from MMCA, for identifying the barriers and enablers to using these skills, and for documenting the adoption of MMCA lessons in programs.

SCALE and PRO-WASH's approach to adaptive management and learning include:

- **At the training:** Daily facilitator debriefings, participant pre- and post-tests, and end-of-training participant evaluations.
- **After the training:** Participant surveys at three months post-training. Interviews with program management at six months post-training (conducted to-date in the DRC, Uganda, and Bangladesh).

While piloting the adapted MMCA manual, SCALE and PRO-WASH used this information to revise and improve the training manual and to ultimately refine the capacity strengthening approaches.

The following key results are from eight training sessions with 211 participants, six post-training follow-up surveys with 83 respondents, and key informant interviews with management from six programs. These results are MMCA-specific, but many of the lessons learned are broadly applicable to capacity-strengthening efforts and will improve SCALE and PRO-WASH's activities moving forward.

Key Results

This section details findings from the final evaluations completed at the end of each training section, as well as from the follow-up surveys completed 3 months post-training:

⁵ Packard, M. (2018). Report on a Review of Social and Behavior Change Methods and Approaches within Food for Peace Development Food Security Activities. Washington, D.C. Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance III Project (FANTA)/ FHI 360

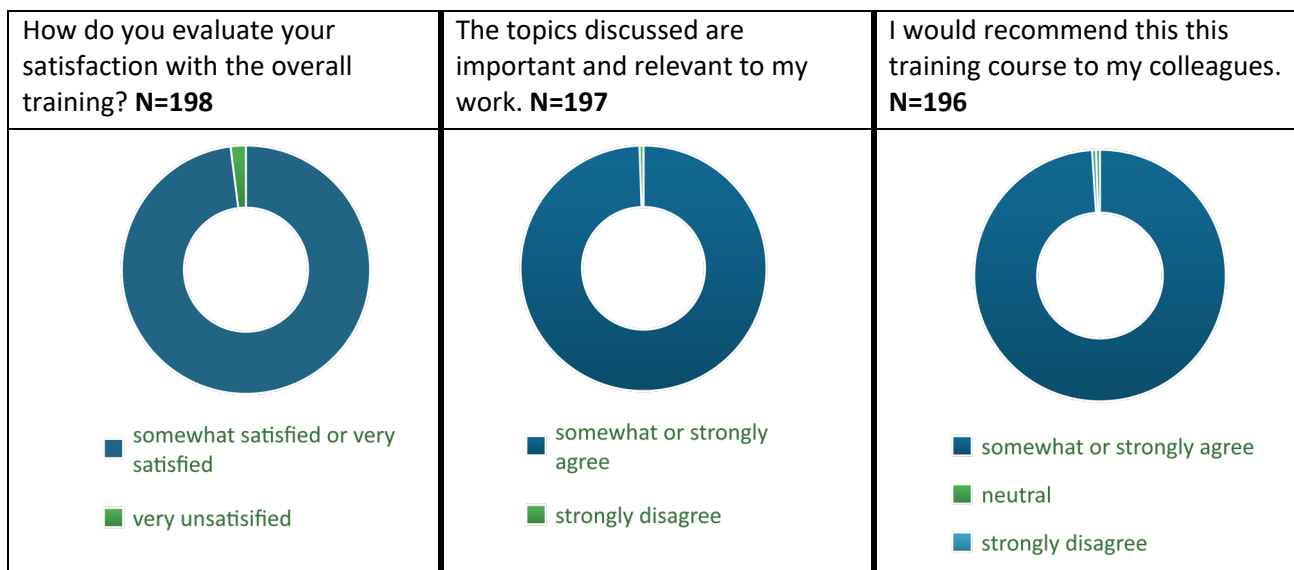
Final Evaluations

At the end of each training session, participants completed an anonymous evaluation form. On average, across all eight sessions, over 98% of the training participants reported that they were “somewhat or very satisfied with the overall content of the training”, “somewhat or strongly agreed that the topics discussed were important and relevant to their work”, and “would recommend this training to others” (Figure 1).

“The training will help me both as a supervisor to improve my support to the team and to support the community structures we work with to improve their capacity in facilitating sessions during the roll out of modules.”

- Uganda MMCA Workshop participant

Figure 1: Key results from training evaluations



Post-training Surveys

Across the six training sessions for which we have post-training data (data from Ethiopia is forthcoming), 52% (n=83) of participants completed the three-month post-training surveys. On average, 94% of survey respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement “as a result of this workshop, the quality of my work in the last 3 months improved.” 98% strongly agreed or agreed with the statement “as a result of this workshop, I am confident in my ability to train others on the concepts covered in the MMCA.”

Depending on the training cohort, 25% to 100% of participants reported having trained others on MMCA lesson(s) in the last three months. Although SCALE and PRO-WASH included in the training Terms of Reference that data be shared and conducted a session in the training on how to use the monitoring forms, the reported numbers of people trained varied widely between participants and programs, and it has been difficult for SCALE and PRO-WASH to validate these numbers.⁶ Participants are voluntarily reporting these numbers and many MMCA cascaded trainings are informal and with low literacy populations, thus there is no documentation such as a pre/post-test to triangulate figures. However, follow-up interviews with DFSA management provided additional clarity on how each program has used these skills as part of their programmatic activities and, in some cases, what they have learned from cascading the training to others.

Related to continued learning on MMCA skills, all but one survey respondent expressed interest in an in-person or online MMCA refresher or advanced skills training, indicating that participants feel the training is relevant

⁶ SCALE provided programs with a post-training monitoring form to capture data on cascaded trainings. The data from those forms and what was reported in the surveys was oftentimes contradictory. For example, in the DRC participants reported training 260 people on the monitoring forms and 2472 in the post-training surveys. We have continued adapting our approach to working with DFSAs to collect this information (e.g. through online and offline form options and connecting with M&E staff) and are committed to trying to collect information on cascaded trainings to contribute to our monitoring and adaptive management approach.

to their work. One remote refresher has been conducted to-date for one DRC DFSA, and SCALE and PRO-WASH are exploring remote learning options to provide former training participants opportunities to continue to strengthen their MMCA skills.

Key Learnings from MMCA Field-Testing

"[The chief of the village] did not see any interest in the [Budikadidi] project. He was ready to discourage his community from following the activities presented by the Budikadidi project. Thanks to the negotiated behavior change technique, he ended up understanding the difference between a development project and an emergency project. This afternoon he finally understood the project's objective, its policy and its importance within his village. Thanks to the necessary tools made available to us [by the MMCA training]."

- Elie Kalombo, Mbuji-Mayi MMCA WhatsApp Group

Prior to the Training

- **Conducting learning needs and resources assessments (LNRA) with participants was crucial to training success.** Conducting this assessment via email several weeks ahead of the training allowed the facilitators to identify participants' expectations and experience levels, and design the training agenda accordingly. This assessment included questions on expectations, prior experience with the subject matter, role in the project and how often they use these skills in their current work.
- **Pre-training meetings with program leadership were critical to ensure that the training agenda was contextualized and that the MMCA skills were integrated into program implementation.** In-person or remote planning discussions with program management ahead of the training provided facilitators the opportunity to better understand the techniques and tools already used by the program, discuss and plan how MMCA would be integrated into the program, and work together on plans for cascading this training. These discussions also allowed facilitators to effectively guide the Action Planning sessions during the training, during which the participants planned in small groups how they would carry MMCA lessons forward—either by incorporating the skills into their work or by training others.
- **A core set of MMCA lessons is recommended for all programs, but the rest of the training agenda should be adapted to meet the needs of the program.** The MMCA training is modular and highly interactive, thus it is not possible to cover all lessons in a one-week training. A few lessons are recommended for all programs (such as communication, negotiation and facilitation) but the others should be chosen based on program priorities. In the post-training surveys, participants most commonly reported using competencies and techniques from the lessons on communication, facilitation, and negotiation. However, for the other lessons there were large variances in which competencies were applied post-training. For example, 92% of the participants in Bangladesh reported using the social and behavior change lesson versus only 11% in one DRC training. This highlights the importance of using the participant LNRA data and working with program leadership to contextualize the agenda so that lessons are relevant and immediately applicable for staff post-training.

"You want all your field staff to attend and it is very difficult to make this selection. [Our job] is really about making change in the communities and ... this is not a skill you want to give only to some staff and not to others!"

- DRC DFSA Manager, post-training interview

During the Training

- **Working closely with a locally or regionally based co-facilitator helped contextualize the MMCA content and builds regional training capacity.** At each MMCA training, we had a locally or regionally based co-facilitator, which improved participant comprehension through the facilitators' abilities to reinforce concepts in local languages. These co-facilitators are now a local/regional resource for other

partners interested in applying MMCA in their programs. For example, in Ethiopia a MMCA participant from the World Vision-led SPIR program co-facilitated the MMCA training the following week for REST in Tigray. This resulted in very positive feedback given that he was able to easily pull examples from his program and encourage cross program learning.

- **An intentional mix of participants (including from different sectors, the government, other USAID-funded programs, and the USAID Mission) offered a dynamic learning environment.** The time during the training to practice different communication, facilitation, and negotiation techniques allowed participants to discuss and learn from colleagues working in different sectors and for learning across projects where there was staff from more than one project present. Having USAID/Food for Peace Mission staff in attendance at several trainings allowed for real-time discussions on how the MMCA skills can improve program quality and, in some cases, how to respond to donor recommendations. Having government counterparts in some training allowed for fruitful discussions on implementation and sustainability. Additionally, having program management participate at critical times during the training supported staff to develop more comprehensive and realistic action plans.
- **Incorporating a field exercise into the training allowed participants the opportunity to practice and receive real-time feedback.** The earlier training sessions in the DRC, Uganda, and Bangladesh did not incorporate a field practicum, and many of those participants suggested including one in future trainings. Thus, a field exercise was piloted in Ethiopia. It allowed participants an opportunity to practice MMCA skills in a work setting and to receive immediate feedback from the facilitators and colleagues.
- **Using multiple learning modalities helps address the needs of different learners.** The MMCA training is highly interactive and was designed to be applicable in low-resource settings. However, co-facilitators and participants recommended that multimedia (such as short videos or Powerpoint presentations) be incorporated into future trainings in order to diversity the ways in which the information is presented.

“What really struck me was that participatory approach. Something that was totally different. When you have field staff that were not trained and field staff that were trained and you compare the way that they work, you see how they are working with local stakeholders and using participatory techniques.”

- DRC DFSA Management, post-training interview

After the Training

- **Given the flexible nature of the MMCA training guide, each program has integrated the MMCA content into their activities differently.** During follow up interviews with DFSA management, we learned that one of the Bangladesh partners has integrated priority MMCA content (such as facilitating SBC including small doable actions, behavior change through effective communication, empathy, negotiating behavior change, and listening and questioning skills) into existing training curricula rather than cascading MMCA as a standalone training. They have targeted a range of audiences with these techniques, including local agricultural service providers, water entrepreneurs, field facilitators, technical officers, skilled birth attendants, and accelerators. In Uganda, one partner taught the training to others who did not receive the training, added a few MMCA lessons such as negotiated behavior change and cross-site visits into other planned WASH trainings, and is exploring how to incorporate concepts into their WASH marketing activities. In the DRC, one partner has developed MMCA training plans for each of its activity purposes, contextualizing the content based on staff needs for each sector. SCALE and PRO-WASH have learned from this feedback to work with programs to think creatively about how the training content can be integrated into their activities.
- **Post-training support and follow-up is important for supporting participants to put MMCA skills into practice.** Across the six post-training surveys, all but one participant reported applying specific skills from at least one MMCA lesson in their work. Participants identified a number of factors that made it easier for them to apply the MMCA techniques to their work. The most consistent response was the *relevance of [MMCA] knowledge/skills to my job* (between 75-100% on average per training), whereas other responses varied widely by training (see Figure 2). Participants also identified factors that

prevented them from applying the techniques to their work, such as *difficulty adapting what I learned to my local context* (see Figure 3 for average responses across all trainings). The variance in responses across training groups reveals that post-training follow-up (done by management, SCALE and PRO-WASH, and fellow participants) is important for supporting participants to overcome challenges to applying these skills. For example, some concepts, such as guided testimonials, are difficult for participants to apply even after having theory, practice, and field sessions. These skills in particular may require on-going remote support from others experienced in MMCA.

Figure 2: What helped you apply what you learned at the training, on average across trainings? (n=6 trainings, 83 total respondents)

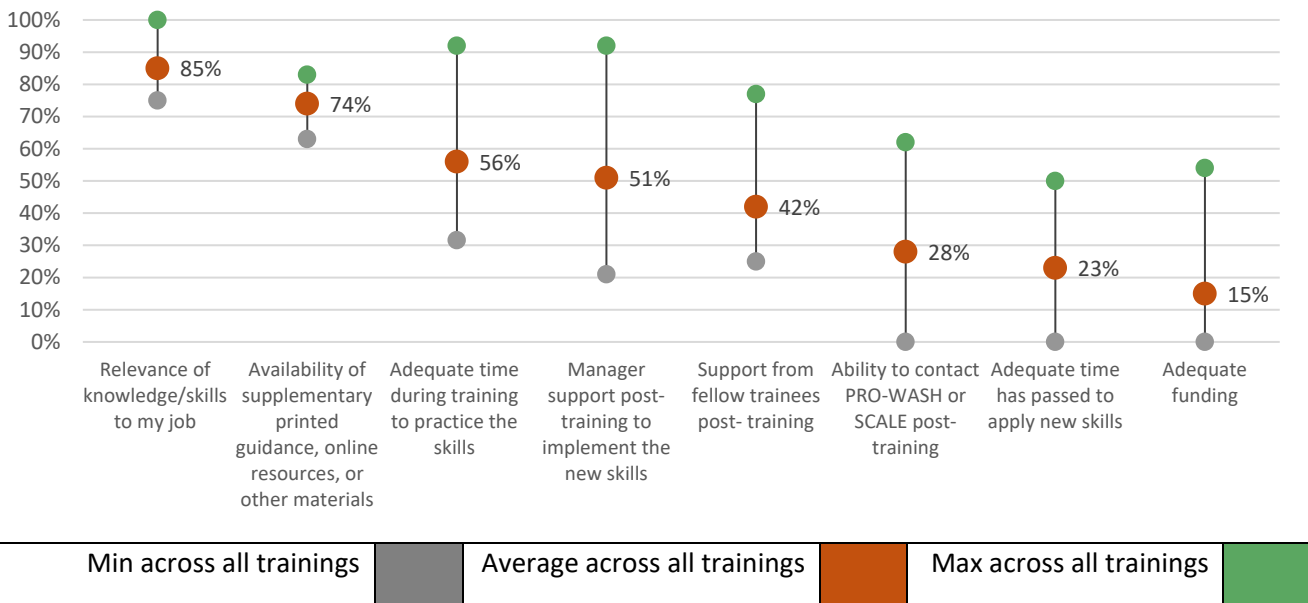
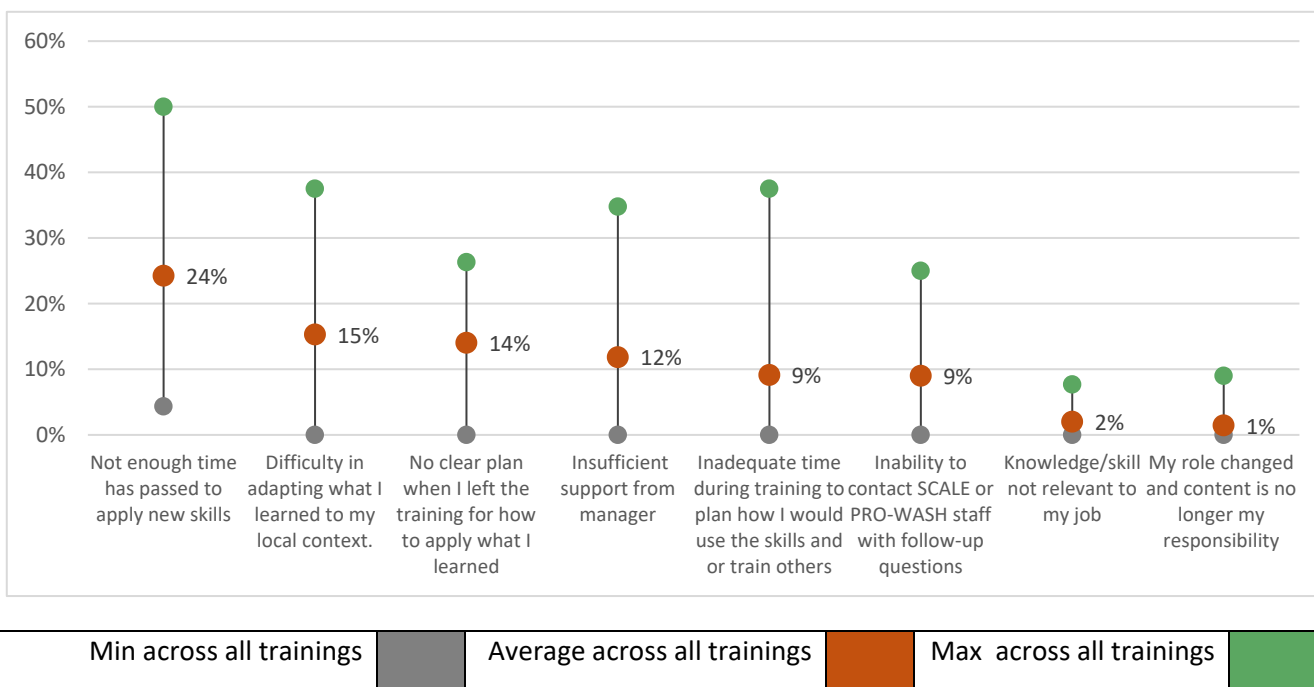


Figure 3: What prevented you from applying what you learned in the training? (n=6 trainings, 83 total respondents)



- **Spend more time with participants and management on action planning during the training to help programs plan how they will cascade the training to others.** When asked about barriers to training others, 23-63% noted that they did *not have enough time to train others*. The next most common barrier was *insufficient time during the training to develop an action plan* (0-31%). It is important to address these challenges during future trainings by adding more time for action planning and by working with management before the training and during the action planning sessions. During post-training support, PRO-WASH and SCALE recommended that, if time is limited, programs select fewer lessons to cascade rather than trying to condense the full training package, which would risk compromising the quality of the lessons. It was also suggested that projects could use the lessons as a continuous education tool and spread the lessons out over several months.

Figure 4: What prevented you from training others on the Make Me a Change Agent Training lessons? (n=6 trainings, 83 total respondents)



Recommendations Based on Key Learnings

While COVID-19 has affected organizing in-person trainings in the short-term, the experiences gained from delivering and monitoring the MMCA trainings identified a number of important points for future remote and in-person trainings. Based on our data analysis across trainings and follow-up data collection efforts, our recommended actions for future trainings include:

- **Discuss with program management before, during, and post-training their targets and timing for cascading the MMCA training** to ensure that action plans developed during the training are feasible and have management buy-in.
- **Discuss with program management the opportunities to build in post-training MMCA technical support, mentorship, online communities of practice, or refreshers** into their work plans and indicator monitoring, so that staff have access to technical backstopping as they integrate MMCA into their programs.
- **Continue to identify and work with local or regional facilitators to strengthen the network of skilled MMCA trainers.** Locally trained facilitators can continue to support current and future USAID/FFP-funded activities and other initiatives.

- **Address limitations to the ToT approach through follow-up coaching, field-based learning, and early identification of future trainers.** Each MMCA training was delivered as a ToT, but not all participants leave the training able to train others without additional support from SBC colleagues. A few ways to improve this ToT model may include:
 - Explore the possibility of replicating the approach taken in Bangladesh, where SCALE and PRO-WASH led one training and then coached participants from that training who lead the facilitation of the two subsequent trainings.
 - Add a field practical component, for participants to receive live feedback from facilitators.
 - Help management identify participants with high potential to be MMCA trainers and encourage them to be the lead trainers for any training that is cascaded to others. This could include remote mentorship to these trainers.
- **Strategically select participants from different programs and sectors to encourage cross-program learning during the training, and consider how best to engage government and private sector partners** either through inclusion in the training or working with staff to tailor their cascade plans to different audiences. Community members, private sector, and government partners may need training on different MMCA skills; working with training participants to identify who they will train and what skills those audiences need to know, helps prioritize action plans. Ensure program management are available during action planning discussions for support and accountability.
- **Explore remote learning options to ensure that those not able to attend in-person trainings are also exposed to the training curriculum.** Since not everyone is able to attend an in-person training, having e-learning options makes the training content accessible to more program staff, government partners and others. Modules will be designed in a way that they can be used as a standalone remote training or as a prerequisite or refresher for those attending an in-person training.
- **Support participants interested in staying connected and supported post-training.** Participants in half of the trainings were interested in establishing WhatsApp groups for peer-to-peer learning and support following the training, but activity in the groups slowly tapered off over time. Other groups wanted to remain connected via email, but that modality did not gain traction. It is important to ask training groups their preferences for staying connected and interest in a local or global community of practice, and to explore how to best support peer-to-peer learning over the longer term. However, we recognize that these groups must be useful and timely and should be voluntary.

Contact

To learn more about MMCA and to inquire further about a training for your program, please contact SCALE (scale@mercycorps.org) and PRO-WASH (prowash@savechildren.org).