List of Private Voluntary Organization (PVO) Questions

The information below serves as notes from the Fiscal Year (FY) 2015 USAID's Office of Food for Peace (FFP) Washington, D.C. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Information Sharing Meeting (co-facilitated by the Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance III Project [FANTA] and Technical and Operational Performance Support [TOPS] Program). The notes are organized by topic area, capturing questions posed by PVOs and responses/feedback from FFP and/or FANTA staff. Note that the information below pertains to FY2015 FFP development awards. For guidance on other FFP programs, please consult your FFP Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR) or *USAID's Office of Food for Peace Policy and Guidance for Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting for Development Food Assistance Projects*.

M&E Workshops

1. **How many M&E workshops should awardees expect in a country?**

   Only one M&E workshop per award (may be joint or organizational level workshop).

2. **How will the current security situation in Mali and Bangladesh affect M&E work (including M&E workshops)?**

   In Mali, FFP is waiting for word from the Mission. In Bangladesh, there is no effect on the work. The M&E Workshops will move forward as planned.

Theory of Change

3. **What is the difference between assumptions in the LogFrame and assumptions in the Theory of Change (ToC)?**

   Assumption – beyond the project scope. For example, WASH may be outside the project scope. The rationale would be that you are assuming that the service will continue while your project is in play. In the LogFrame, you may not be able to include all the ToC assumptions, but just key ones. FFP will later provide an example of an assumption that might not be in the LogFrame.

4. **What happens if key ToC assumptions get violated and are likely to undermine the program ToC (e.g., in the case of Burundi)?**

   FFP is flexible. The PVO should start discussions with the respective AOR as soon as they find out that critical assumptions are threatened or violated.

When should one update the ToC?

PVO can decide what timing is best. As long as the PVO sees indications of the need to revise their ToC, they should consult with their AOR and FFP M&E personnel.

5. **Concerning the annual ToC review, people wanted to know when would be the best time for the review: before the Pipeline and Resource Estimate Proposal (PREP) or Annual Results Report (ARR)?**

   It is difficult to put an exact timeline on it, but preferably before PREP submission, so that it can be submitted with the PREP. If not, with the ARR. However, you can also submit whenever there is an "event" that merits changing the ToC. You can revise the PREP after the new ToC is approved.

   The PREP can always be revised and may require full PREP review or just a minor modification. PREP is a workplan, but also a commodity planner. PVOs should be mindful of anything that may require changes in metric tonnage or lead time.

6. **How are the changes to the ToC submitted, emailed, or uploaded?**

   First share the changes with the AOR for approval before uploading them into the FFP Management Information System (FFPMIS). Submit the changes with PREP, and if not possible, then do so with the ARR.

7. **ToC diagram seems too crowded in one page. Words in boxes are too small to read, why not allow for the details to go into the narrative?**

   FFP encourages the PVO to use multiple pages.

Baseline Data and Study

8. **Do awardees have a say in the sampling structure for the baseline?**

   These are the types of discussions that will be held at the (ICF) baseline survey workshop. The strategy can be reviewed then.

   PVO: Different data collectors will be needed in Chittagong because of the language issue.

   FFP: These are the types of issues that are asked in the pre-M&E workshop baseline planning questionnaire that FANTA will send out, and can also be discussed in more detail at the baseline planning workshop if needed.

9. **How should baseline data be collected in 30 days (PVOs mention having to provide baseline data values in indicator performance tracking table [IPTT] 30 days after the M&E workshops)?**

   PVOs should:
   - *Leave those cells blank in the IPTT, until the data is available.*
   - *Put in targets when the information can be provided (i.e., 3–6 months).*

For the last three years, projects have revised IPTTs but did not notify the AOR to revise the targets in FFPMIS. Because the targets are locked in the FFPMIS, PVOs cannot revise those targets when submitting a final report. PVOs should return to the AOR sooner so that the standardized annual performance questionnaire (SAPQ) can be revised. AOR should also then prompt changes in the SAPQ.

10. **Ramadan is likely to impact the timing of this year's baseline (Mali/Bangladesh).**

    Need to move fast to be able to collect data before June. PVOs will need to provide a list of communities so that ICF compiles list of households.

11. **Is there a contingency plan for data collection if the field is unsafe?**

    If the external contractor cannot collect data before Ramadan, the contingency plan is to collect data after Ramadan. FFP will discuss the situation with partners.

12. **If PVOs start implementation before the baseline, how will FFP account for that?**

    Baseline indicators are high-level indicators. Additionally, it takes a long time for projects to start implementation in earnest. They have to conduct beneficiary registration, carry out several assessments, etc., which will all take time. The baseline indicators do not shift very quickly. FANTA did an analysis, where they showed only one of the baseline indicators (household hunger score) can change somewhat at the start of projects, due to food distribution activities. Everything else takes more time to change. FFP feels that starting activities before the baseline will not limit the ability to demonstrate changes at the end of the project.

13. **Since implementation starts before the baseline study, how do we adjust after the results are released?**

    Baseline indicators are very high level, and not sensitive enough to be affected by implementation. While this is not a perfect situation, in earlier days where implementation would only happen after the baseline data collection, the reports would become available in six months or more. It may be useful to conduct internal studies and rely on those until the baseline results become available.

14. **On the articulation of evaluation plan, would you advise PVOs to skip the need for this during the years when FFP takes lead on baselines and end lines?**

    No, PVOs still need to describe what their role will be – simpler when managed by FFP. Fuller articulation is needed if the PVO will be managing the baseline or end line.

15. **Custom indicators need to be submitted now (before the baseline workshop); what happens when others arise during the M&E start-up workshop? When are custom indicators and performance indicator reference sheet (PIRS) for the baseline due to FFP?**

    The deadline is December 18th and will allow for the iterative process that should be completed by the time of the M&E workshop. USAID/FFP *has reached out to World Vision, CARE, and HKI to advise them on using two lenses: the indicators must be high level* *(outcome/impact) and should come from the ToC. There is no fixed number but ICF can only accommodate so many in the baseline.*

FFP promises to provide support during the development of the PIRS for these custom indicators. There is currently no deadline for PIRS, however, the urgency is definite. Following the M&E workshop, PVOs should draft the PIRS for custom indicators and share them with FFP a week before the workshop.

If there is a gap in indicators, PVOs can provide additional indicators during the baseline or the M&E workshops. They can discuss on a case by case basis.

16. Since HKI is piloting a new approach, are they required to use counterfactual approach to evaluation?

No, they will still use the simple pre/post-test design.

Annual Data Collection

17. Can an external annual survey be done on a rolling basis with monthly data collection?
Depends on the type of information that is collected. For example, it may be tricky to collect data on inputs at different times of the year (i.e., it may result in non-comparable data). FANTA's guide on beneficiary surveys will address this question too. PVOs should not confuse routine project monitoring with annual beneficiary surveys. Additional points to emphasize (from FFP):

- *Project implementation can begin before baseline data collection*
- *Inform staff that the final evaluation will be population based*
- *FFP can get involved in mid-term evaluation implementation*
- *Scopes of work (SOW)/reports for project studies, etc. – the process is potentially lengthy and there can be lots of back and forth.*

18. What is the guidance on custom annual monitoring indicators?

The FFP M&E guidance and this workshop are about what FFP needs. PVOs need much more than what FFP needs to understand the performance of their programs. As such they are advised to develop comprehensive M&E plans including as many custom annual monitoring indicators as they feel necessary. FFP cannot control the number of these but can provide professional opinion if needed.

19. What are FFP's expectations regarding custom annual monitoring indicators? How many should awardees select? How should they select them? How should they set targets?

Targets should be seen to contribute to the higher-level indicators; the more ambitious the better. PVOs should not worry too much about not meeting targets. If the project is within 15–20%, that would not necessarily raise eyebrows.

20. Annual survey – external or internal?

Either is fine but PVOs should check with FFP on the design of the survey. It is advisable to contract out but not a must. Guidance is available for sampling for beneficiary-based *annual surveys. The document will be published/released by the end of December 2015 and a webinar will be held around February–March 2016. TOPS may organize training around this guidance later on.*

Quarterly Reports

21. Is FFP planning to develop a quarterly reporting form?

A team has been working on it. USAID/FFP will reach out to them to see when their draft will be finalized.

IPTT, Indicators, and PREP

22. Why did FFP remove IPTTs from proposals? People wanted to know the rationale behind the timing of preparation of the IPTT (i.e., moving it from the design stage to after the award; the move presents challenges because of the limited time awardees have to prepare it in order to submit with the first ARR, and they no longer have access to the large team available at the design stage).

In part, because a Results Framework was required in the past, which did not require indicators. Now, FFP requires LogFrames, which requires indicators, so they wanted to reduce the burden for partners at the design stage. However, FFP is willing to discuss this choice with PVOs and can include it again if need be. PVOs should keep in mind that for those who do not win the award, submitting an IPTT as part of the proposal is not a good use of time.

23. Give an example of both high and lower-level outcome indicators.

High-level indicators have something to do with change of behavior while lower-level indicators are around acquiring knowledge.

24. What is the difference between output base values and outcome baseline values?

For output base values, PVOs should not leave them blank (mainly 0 in most cases).

For outcome baseline values, PVOs may leave them blank until the study results are out. PVOs may conduct beneficiary-based studies (depending on whether PVOs will have identified those already). Whenever PVOs revise targets, they need to go back to the AOR to obtain approval to revise those within the FFPMIS.

25. On number of groups receiving FFP assistance, do we lump them together or scatter them across the IPTT?

PVOs should keep them separate in the LogFrame, but should combine them in the IPTT.

26. Can PVOs revise their FY16 PREPs after IPTT creation to ensure that the budget and detailed implementation plan are consistent? If so, on what timeline? Also, will PVOs be asked to revise FY16 PREPs to comply with the new PREP guidance due out in January, or can they wait until FY17 PREP submission to use the new guidance?

After the Bangladesh M&E Workshops, FFP will review the IPTTs. It may be that the IPTT can be changed before PREP finalization. For the first PREP, FFP is not asking for compliance with the new guidelines. Final PREP guidance is due out in January.

27. Will the PREP guidelines be revised, if so when?

The revision is underway but FFP will confirm when it will be released.

28. When will new PREP guidance apply?

In 2017. FFP will provide technical assistance and support with the first round of PREPs under the new guidelines.

Special Studies

29. The level of detail required in study SOWs is worrisome. Can approval time be reduced if PVOs submit a detailed SOW? Or can PVOs provide less detailed SOWs, move ahead with study preparations, and finalize the SOW prior to implementation?

Answers provided in 30-31.

30. Does FFP have templates for SOWs, and/or clarifications regarding the format and requirements for the following types of assessments:

- **Gender Analysis Assessment**
- **Formative Research/Barrier Analysis**
- **Inclusive Value Chain Assessment**
- **Any other assessments?**

There are currently no formats in place. FFP is working with FANTA to develop a SOW for Gender Analysis. The TOPS website has documents on barriers analysis and value chain.

A participant asked about the time frame for Gender Analysis: FFP is meeting with FANTA to discuss the timeframe.

31. Regarding project-specific studies and assessments: Is approval needed to conduct a census of project households in targeted communes? Is this related to beneficiary registration?

PVO: In order to register beneficiaries, we feel conducting a census would be best. Do we need approval?

FFP: It will be part of the detailed implementations plan, so no extra approval is needed from the M&E team.

PVO: Is approval needed for project-specific studies? Are SOWs needed for each one? What is the approval process? Will it take six months to approve each one?

FFP: FFP will require an SOW for each study. The timing, etc. depends on what each study is about. The process should be collaborative, not focused on approval. Currently, there is a big technical team within FFP.

PVO: Do we need approval for formal analysis? Gender analysis? Others?

FFP: Each needs to be reviewed. In terms of what needs approval, and FFP will provide answers in writing. When USAID/FFP M&E advisor reviews a SOW, he/she pays attention to the methodology, questions, and staffing. The SOWs can focus on these elements, if that helps. By contrast, the Country Backstop Officer closely reviews every element of an SOW.

PVO: On some details: the number of households in geographic areas may not have survey instruments completed by the time the SOW is prepared.

FFP: That would be a critical missing piece. The studies must be well organized.

PVO: For the SOW, the focus would be on methodology, research questions, and staffing.

FFP: An example of a challenge: a poorly written or vague SOW can lead a project to hire an external firm, and having an evaluator that does not even visit any communities.

PVO: Is there a draft SOW or template that could be shared?

FFP: No, there is not.

Mid-Term Evaluation

32. Is delivering a presentation of mid-term evaluation results in Washington, D.C. a requirement going forward? Do PVOs need to budget for it?

It is on a case by case basis. If the lead evaluators are from USA, it makes sense, otherwise skip it.

33. If mid-term evaluations come with the need to change targeting, and how would this impact the end-line evaluation?

Targeting in and of itself is not so much an issue, but it is definitely if the program expands to new communities. In the latter case, the contractor will use their discretion to decide which of these new communities to include or not.

Other Topics

34. Will McAID be required?

PVO: CARE is interested in using a cloud-based M&E system. It would be better to use a system that already exists. CARE is currently figuring out which system to use. They hope to resolve this question by the end of the M&E workshops.

FFP: This and a number of other technologies have been developed using USAID funds, all you may need is technical assistance from the developers. Whichever system is used, we encourage use of existing systems rather than every new project building their own.