**Notes from TOPS M&E Task Force Meeting**

**March 8th, 2017**

**Participants**

* Godfrey Senkaba, World Vision
* Marta Perez, World Vision
* Kristi Pearson, World Vision
* Jennifer Simpson, PCI
* Takawra Kapinkinja, CRS
* Hap Carr, CRS
* Imee Cambronero, Save the Children
* Meghan Bolden, Save the Children
* Katherine Arnold, Save the Children
* Eyerusalem Tessema, Save the Children
* Joel Mercado, Food for the Hungry
* Subodh Kumar, Food for the Hungry
* Diana Stukel, FANTA/ FHI 360
* Sujata Bose, FANTA/ FHI 360
* Claire Boswell, Food for the Hungry/ TOPS
* Edith Mutalya, TANGO/TOPS
* Karyn Fox, TANGO/TOPS
* Laurie Starr, TANGO/TOPS

**AGENDA**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 10:00 | Welcome & introductions |
| 10:10 | TOPS M&E Updates |
| 10:20 | Task Force Input on Technical Briefs |
| 10:50 | Task Force Input on Stakeholder consultation |
| 11:20 | Additional topics of TF interest |
| 11:30 | Close |

**NOTES**

Notes are not verbatim.

Recording here:

**Introductions**

New member to TOPS M&E team, Karyn Fox. Strong background in resilience; will primarily support TOPS and other resilience efforts, but devoting partial time to TOPS ME team to develop a series of M&E technical briefs. Karyn has worked off and on at TANGO in various capacities since 2001. One hat was evaluation director for a series of WFP evaluations.

**TOPS M&E Updates**

**- Ethiopia M&E support for DFAPs**

Edith just returned from FFP/FANTA workshop with Ethiopia DFAP staff. Participated in workshop to gain direct input from new awardees about where they felt their teams needed additional technical assistance. This info helps TOPS determine how to structure our follow-up workshop. TOPS received two requests for support from REST and Food for the Hungry. We are in the process of working out the details of subsequent technical assistance. 3 days per organization.

**- Potential for DRC / Liberia short term technical assistance (STTA)**

A similar opportunity is available for partners who have DRC and Liberia awards. TOPS will not determine what STTA to offer until we speak with the awardees. Unlike the FFP/FANTA workshop, the TOPS workshop is completely optional. TA usually provided by TANGO staff.

**- Francophone Qualitative Sampling and Analysis Workshop**

April 24-28 in Niamey, Niger. Friday is a half-day. The decision to host this particular workshop was determined by survey that went out in September where we asked you to prioritize areas for M&E capacity strengthening by geographic region. Francophone Africa was due for a TOPS M&E workshop. Sabrina Aguiari will lead these workshops. She is a fabulous qualitative researcher and very strong in gender analysis.

All the FFP awardees in the region plan to send participants: 3 in Niger, 2 in Burkina Faso, and 1 in Mali. Likely to have 3 participants from each program.

Contact edith@tangointernational.com for more information about participant sign up. Registration site will be set up by Friday, March 10th, 2017.

**- Two new Theory of Change workshops**

* “Testing and Modifying a TOC” and “Embracing Failure as a Learning Mechanism”. Both are free events and are not mandatory.
* Single day events and individualized to organizations, rolled out in April and May, perhaps a few in June. Will not bring all organizations in one room, but will work with each separately, which allows for confidential information to be shared.
* Five FFP awardees signed up so far for seven individual workshop days.
* “Testing and Modifying a TOC” workshop designed to help PVOs with the annual review process on existing TOCs, a FFP requirement that to date has no published guidance on how to do it.
* Laurie meeting with FFP regularly to ensure guidance offered is aligned to FFP expectations. FFP is in process of refining their thinking on what a TOC review looks like and how to encourage partners to use the TOC as a living document.
* “Embracing Failure as a Learning Mechanism”. Idea came from participant in one of the last 5-day TOC workshop. This workshop is designed for recent applicants to FFP who did not receive funding for a recent DFAP proposal that included a TOC.  The objective is to review one or more TOCs that accompanied rejected proposals to a) learn how to create stronger models and b) ensure the TOC is accurately articulated in a proposal. Caveat: while the TOC is a critical element of project design, it is only one of many reasons that a proposal may have been rejected by FFP.
* Interested organizations should contact [laurie@tangointernational.com](mailto:laurie@tangointernational.com)

*Question: Any more plans for the 5-day TOC design workshops?*

*TOPS response: Not at this time. Primary focus is on the individual TA sessions. If demand is high enough, we can discuss scheduling one. If there is interest, convey it to TOPS. We try to set up all workshops based on demand, rather than creating a workshop and hoping someone will come. Both new workshops are entirely based on demand, so that is why we have placed priority in these areas.*

**Task Force Input on Technical briefs**

In lieu of finishing the long-standing M&E guidance document that has been on hold for several years, we’ve decided to launch a series of short technical briefs, that come out once per month. Karyn Fox, is leading this effort.

Objectives of briefs.

* Clear "how-to" documents, primarily focused on how to effectively execute FFP M&E requirements versus conceptual musings or findings from recent studies.
* Fill gaps in existing FFP M&E guidance and will provide links to other existing more-detailed resources and tools that explain "how-to" execute a particular aspect of M&E.
* Friendly "field-outreach" tone vs. an academic tone.
* Eventually compiled into a compendium of TOPS "how-to" M&E guidance.

Subject matter will be determined by users, including input from field-based and DC Task Force members and other relevant M&E staff of FFP DFAPs. We have some input already. One possibility is to put submitted ideas forth in a survey to prioritize. TOPS welcomes input on how topics should be selected.

Earlier input from field task force members:

* Setting up routine monitoring system
* Web-based data collection
* Logframe based on ToC
* Provide practical and successful examples of different programs per topic: indicators, data quality and data quality assessments, qualitative tools and analysis, statistical concepts, etc.
* PIRS for new FFP indicators (e.g. institutional strengthening, transformative capacity index )
* Monitoring cash programs

Today’s input from task force members:

* TIPS sheets from USAID provide a good model.
* Target setting
  + Contact Barbara Reed. Great materials from RKSM in Uganda
* Data quality (5 elements of data quality; how DQA can be formal or informal)
  + USAID already has a document. Draw from it or
* Setting base values for annual monitoring indicators, writing PIRS for custom indicators, and target setting are always hot issues mentioned in FFP/FANTA ME workshops.
* PIRS for new FFP indicators
* Beneficiary Based Sample Survey Methodology
* Development of SOW
* How to set Baseline values for annual monitoring indicators- big issue
* Assumptions: general assumptions about a project; assumptions between causal linkages; assumptions around other actors. Clarifying what we consider to be assumptions and what kind of evidence we will use to test the various assumptions. How to monitor the extent to which our assumptions are holding or not holding.

Karyn will take this input and compile it with input from other TF meetings and interviews, and will send it out to TF to get feedback. We hope you will send out to your colleagues to get internal feedback as well. Will use this feedback to set priorities for what comes first.

**Considerations/ trade offs**

* Need to be mindful of what can be covered in a 3-5 page brief.
* Need to consider what TOPS can write about in the next 4 months (before the program concludes this summer).
  + Topics such as monitoring cash programs may be difficult to write a brief on, when FFP is still working diligently to clarify how this takes place themselves.
  + PIRS for new FFP indicators- FFP still needs to finalize the indicators. And FFP will be writing the PIRS.
* A number of topics mentioned already have published guidance. To what extent do we duplicate? Present in a new format? Make topics more accessible via a “field tone”? Sometimes there is value in re-publishing existing guidance and sometimes there is not.

**Task Force input on stakeholder consultation**

As many know, TOPS has been hosting stakeholder consultations. Term is used broadly and means different things.

* **Donor requested – e.g., APS / PREP / Strategic results framework indicators.** 
  + gain PVO input on a specific document/ or process
  + seek solutions to areas where PVOs have significant challenges
* **PVO requested** 
  + To seek solutions to areas where PVOs have significant challenges.
  + To have an in-depth Q&A about confusing aspects of FFP requirements.
* As TOPS wraps up we want to place most of our focus on the sessions driven by PVO needs and requests.

Recent survey was very useful. Many responses. Thank you. Top priority is Monitoring and Evaluation Indicators 52% of respondents. Per PVO input, the preference is to host a separate stakeholder consultation on indicators versus general M&E issues, such as the timeliness of the M&E Plan approval, etc. PVOs want to discuss broad questions about process NOT *TECHNICAL questions about specific calculations for indicators.* For example.

* + more clarity on specifically how FFP is using the data generated from existing indicators
  + the timeline for reporting indicators
  + Agreement on integrating new required indicators into existing programs.
  + Some older programs used the 2013 FFP PIRS, but the guidance that came out for this year’s ARR made it seem like all programs use the new PIR definitions for FFP indicators.
  + Examples of the extent to which implementers are adapting or further fleshing out the FFP PIRS for their awards, for instance, “this will be counted when our Empowered Women financial savings groups have made the first disbursement of the VSLA”.
  + Can we get baseline values for some annual monitoring indicators from the project baseline, specifically outcome monitoring indicators for beneficiaries? (Using targeting criteria to identify potential beneficiaries in the population, and then disaggregate the data for base values)
  + Complexity of FFP indicators to measure (annual).
  + What to do with indicators that already show achievement at baseline, with little room for improvement (e.g. 97%). Do projects need to collect the data to inform these indicators?

Today’s input from task force members:

* + Need to better understand the new SRF resilience indices for absorptive, adaptive, and transformative capacity. They are complicated—how are field staff expected to collect data?
  + Indicators expected to be finalized in late April or May.
  + Information from recent attendees at Ethiopia FFP ME workshop: Resilience indices are required indicators. Indicators that contribute to the Transformative index will be collected by a third-party firm at BL/EL; indicators that contribute to Adaptive and Absorptive indices will be collected annually.
  + Even if indicators are only required to be collected at BL/EL, partners need to know how they are progressing. Getting key tools to help them monitor these indicators will be useful.

TOPS: We know that FFP wants to host a session where the new Strategic Framework Indicators are unveiled, and expect that this includes an opportunity for partners to ask questions about the tabulation and data collection required for these indicators. This type of event will happen with or without TOPS. Need to focus on what should be discussed at a stakeholder consultation that we host. The broader issues surrounding indicators. What is challenging? What would you like to see remedied?

Today’s input from task force members:

* Multiple levels of disaggregation increases burden exponentially. Need good output monitoring system and an MIS system to relieve that burden from your data analyst. What do we need to do to staff this properly to be able to give FFP the results they need?
* Excessive # of indicators. Not just a burden on staff, but burden on beneficiaries as well. Fatigue on both parts. Fatigue affects quality.
* Burden related to budget. More disaggregation= sample size increases drastically. …drives up the cost…..difficulty collecting the data and accountability. Need more training.
* What matters most- we want to prioritize focus on key areas to move the needle, but we have to report on all of these indicators and it is hard to take a step back.
* SC: Facing struggle to layer all processes - reviewing TOC, updating targets, trying to ensure data quality, and meet all reporting requirements. What do we need? Capacity building, more published guidance via field manuals?
* Refine and Implement programs – surge support needs to happen in the beginning. How do we try to get ahead of the curve, so if there is no movement on the indicators we can still meet reporting requirements?
* How to set base values for annual monitoring indicators? big challenge
* Reporting on indicators cumulative vs. non-cumulative is confusing.
* FANTA: As background, from FFP's perspective, they feel that there are about 10 indicators per sector that awardees must collect (about 30 annual monitoring indicators). I am just providing this as background in case you want to discuss the large number of indicators (note that the baseline indicators are not collected by awardees).

FFP mentioned to me that there will be a push on data use (internally) soon at FFP. Hopefully, more will be forthcoming on that shortly.

* Task Force agrees separate session for “how to” questions / capacity strengthening is needed outside of stakeholder consultation on broader issues.
* FANTA: Should we make a distinction between a consultation on annual monitoring indicators and one on BL/EL indicators? Issues are distinct.
* Some agreement that most concerns are around annual monitoring.
* SC: Conversation cannot exclude the BL/EL indicators. Even though partners are not responsible for collecting BL/ EL indicators, we are responsible for moving the needle on the BL indicators by the endline. This is how FFP judges the success of our programs, how they justify numbers to congress. If partners don’t have any idea of how we are doing on these indicators, whether we report them or not, a topic that needs to be discussed is “How can our teams have insight into whether those indicators are capturing the success of our programs?” How can we participate in making sure that BL /EL data are high quality
* FH: In Ethiopia, Arif mentioned that FFP prefers all annual indicators be collected via routine monitoring vs. beneficiary based samples. But there are indicators where it is not possible to collect via normal routine monitoring. Discussion was unresolved in the workshop.
* CARE: FFP doesn’t want us to do BBS, because we don’t do them well, but we still need to collect the data. Some indicators we want to collect for project purposes that are household-based and will require a beneficiary-based sample. FFP always comes back and asks us to make them part of routine monitoring, but that does not always make the most sense. What do we do?
* FANTA: Some indicators are very hard to collect via routine monitoring when you have 100,000 beneficiaries.
* SC: Not sure we want to rehash the number of indicators question. We’ve gone over that issue many times and FFP and partners see the issue differently.

TOPS: Can we identify 3-4 concerns that we would like to find solutions to in the period of a 3 hour stakeholder consultation? What are the solutions you seek?

* Prioritization of key areas of focus. Required / RiA, but usually for programs, all indicators end up being required. What matters most for our programs? Is there an opportunity for a dialogue and some negotiation on this issue.
* How can we reduce the reporting burden of layered disaggregation? How can we reduce the impact on program staff?
* Can we ask for something that we probably won’t get? E.g., What if we didn’t have to put targets for all indicators / all disaggregations? We only set targets for those we really think we can move the needle on. The others we just track for reporting purposes to USAID. It doesn’t reduce the burden of collecting the data but does alleviate the pressure on teams to move the needle on everything.
* TOPS: In past consultations, FFP has encouraged partners to bring out of the box ideas.
* Some indicators are expensive to monitor. Can these be moved to the BL/EL versus annual monitoring.
* The list of indicators and onerous data collection they require, in combination with an external firm carrying out BL/EL data collection has affected our field teams. Teams perceive that FFP wants these indicators, they feel they don’t really need to know about them, and they are not even part of the evaluation anymore. This leaves the team with the idea of M&E is a pain in the rear rather than a learning and performance management instrument.
* Other TF members agree!
* Need to explain to FFP how something like the multiple disaggregated layers of an indicator, or additional required indicators can ultimately affect project performance and impact, because of the draw on staff time and resources (via TOC, logframe, other elements) , and because there is so much there, it can be hard to even understand whether change is occurring.
* Proposed solution: Can we look at a core set - maybe see if there is room to reduce disaggregation within those core indicators - that we monitor and then we can move toward using the data we are collecting, as opposed to viewpoint that monitoring is a burden for reporting.
* Good idea. Link these types of solutions to FFP ongoing efforts to promote adaptive management.
* We want to be able to use the data and understand how FFP is using it.

**Other TF ideas**

* Topics for next TF meeting?
* Consider bringing back report outs from programs that are on the same cycle. How projects have or have not used baseline information in programming? Or how they have or have not used the project Theory of Change? How useful was the midterm? Did program design change? How did the MT evaluation process go? Tips and tricks for the next cohort?
* Moderate agreement among TF members.
* TF recommends hearing from the Haiti/ Zimbabwe cohort.

**Wrap up**

Karyn ( [kfox@tangointernational.com](mailto:kfox@tangointernational.com) ) will reach out for more input on technical briefs.

Laurie will reach out for more input on indicator stakeholder consultation.

Laurie will reach out to Haiti / Zim cohort to present at next meeting.

Next meeting Wednesday, May 10th. 10:00 -11:30.