



Stakeholder Consultation For USAID Office of Food for Peace – Pipeline Resource Estimate Proposal



September 2016

Stakeholder Consultation
for
USAID's Office of Food for
Peace
Pipeline Resource Estimate
Proposal

The Technical and Operational Performance Support (TOPS) Program is the USAID/Food for Peace-funded learning mechanism that generates, captures, disseminates, and applies the highest quality information, knowledge, and promising practices in development food assistance programming, to ensure that more communities and households benefit from the U.S. Government's investment in fighting global hunger. Through technical capacity building, a small grants program to fund research, documentation and innovation, and an in-person and online community of practice (the Food Security and Nutrition [FSN] Network), The TOPS Program empowers food security implementers and the donor community to make lasting impact for millions of the world's most vulnerable people.

Led by Save the Children, The TOPS Program draws on the expertise of its consortium partners: CORE Group (knowledge management), Food for the Hungry (social and behavioral change), Mercy Corps (agriculture and natural resource management), and TANGO International (monitoring and evaluation). Save the Children brings its experience and expertise in commodity management, gender, and nutrition and food technology, as well as the management of this 7-year (2010–2017) US\$30 million award.

Disclaimer:

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Contact:

The TOPS Program
c/o Save the Children
2000 L Street, NW, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20036
info@thetopsprogram.org
www.thetopsprogram.org

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AOR	Agreement Officer's Representative
CBO	Country Backstop Officer
CDF	Community Development Funds
FACG	Food Aid Consultation Group
FFP	USAID Office of Food for Peace
FSN Network	The Food Security and Nutrition Network
OAA	Office of Acquisition and Assistance
PREP	Pipeline Resource Estimate Proposal
PVO	private voluntary organization
The TOPS Program	The Technical and Operational Performance Support Program
U.S.	United States

1. Introduction

As a part of USAID’s Office of Food for Peace (FFP) commitment to consult with the private voluntary organization (PVO) community to improve FFP processes, FFP asked The Technical and Operational Performance Support (TOPS) program to facilitate a consultation with PVOs to improve the guidance document for the Pipeline Resource Estimate Proposal (PREP)¹ as well as processes related to submitting and gaining approval for the PREP.

Between May and July 2016 TOPS solicited feedback from FFP-implementing partners of all current Development Food Assistance Programs. Fifteen staff members from eight organizations² responded to the request for an interview. After gathering concerns and recommendations from colleagues in their organizations, they provided input to TOPS via Skype and telephone conversations, face-to-face interviews, and written comments. TOPS consolidated the feedback and organized it into eight topical areas. The synthesis of pre-consultation interviews (Annex 1) provided a basis for the in-person stakeholder consultation between the PVO community and FFP, held July 27, 2016, at Save the Children offices, Washington, DC.

This report begins with an overview of the Stakeholder Consultation. Section 3 consolidates the main concerns identified by the PVO community in both the pre-consultation interviews and the in-person consultation, lists recommendations from the PVO community to FFP, and provides responses to each recommendation from FFP. Three appendices offer all documentation from the consultation workshop. Annexes 1 and 2 contain stand-alone notes for the pre-consultation interviews (Annex 1) and the in-person consultation (Annex 2).

2. Consultation overview

TOPS sent out an invitation to attend the July 27, 2016, stakeholder consultation via the Food Security and Nutrition (FSN) Network. Thirty-five people participated—28 in person and seven remotely. Approximately three-fifths of participants (63 percent) were from PVO community and represented 15 countries with a Development Food Assistance Program. Almost one quarter (23 percent) were FFP staff, and 14 percent were TOPS staff. Appendix 1 provides a list of participants. Appendix 2 shares the consultation agenda.

FFP Introduction

Bridget Ralyea, from USAID’s Office of Food for Peace Central and Southern Africa Team, started off the session. Key points from her opening follow.

- FFP has been working on revising the PREP guidance for a long time and wants to hear from partner organizations.

¹ PREP is the compendium of documents that describes an awardee’s food assistance resource needs and activities for a food assistance project over the course of the upcoming year.

² CARE, CNFA, CRS, Food for the Hungry, Mercy Corps, PCI, Save the Children, World Vision.

- The goal is for FFP to have a draft version of the new PREP guidance within the next two months for release by the Food Aid Consultation Group (FACG). There will then be a 45-day comment period.
- Now is the time to think about how to improve the guidance. FFP will try to make the guidance and processes clearer.
- FFP is aware that currently, within FFP, there are different ways that PREPs are reviewed, and FFP is hopeful that the revised guidance can get everyone on the same page.

Appreciation

Before devoting the remainder of the consultation to a discussion about challenges and recommendations, participants were asked to share a round of appreciation for aspects of the PREP process that are most-valued by the PVO community, and qualities in PREP submissions that are most-valued by FFP.

PVO Community: What aspects of the PREP process are most valued? Most efficient? Generally, what is working?

The points below do not represent a consensus among participants, but rather individual experiences.

- In-person meetings between FFP and partners. For example, the Chief of Party of a project was in DC and had an in-person meeting with the Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR) to talk over issues from the issues letter. This was much more helpful than having many rounds of questions.
- FFP's receptivity to discuss issues and their emphasis on including sustainability and exit plans in PREPs each year makes PVOs think through the issues.
- The PREP allows projects to change their plan depending on what is happening on the ground. It puts everyone (PVOs and funders) on the same page regarding next year's plans
 - *FFP comment: FFP is willing to consider changes to the plan at any point during the implementation of the project.*

Bridget Ralyea: Preferred qualities of PREP submissions.

- Major changes to the project should not be introduced for the first time in the PREP. These changes can be formally approved in the PREP, but major changes need to be discussed prior to the PREP submission with both the AOR and the Mission/Regional Food for Peace Officer.
- Please do not go into detail about what happened last year or in prior years – as those are covered in quarterly reports and ARR's. The point of the PREP is to know what's coming in the next year and demonstrate your project is on track.
 - Awardees are expected to highlight things that may prevent them from meeting targets especially if that may be an ongoing issue this coming year.
 - If awardees are ahead of the implementation plan – for example something will happen in Year 3 instead of Year 4 – that should be documented in the PREP.
- If awardees get recommendations from FFP monitoring visits, FFP would like to know how awardees have addressed these recommendations.

- If there are recommendations that awardees do not agree with, ideally these should be resolved before the PREP is submitted.
- FFP intends to address the issue of awardees receiving conflicting recommendations from USAID by offering PREP training for all AORs.
- Awardees must round requests for commodities so that they are in increments of 10 metric tons
 - In the new PREP guidance, there will be a table with instructions (for commodities, request for funding, etc.)
- Awardees should cross check numbers so that it is clear how much you are asking for, how much pipeline you have, and what additional resources you need.
- It is important for awardees to discuss how, in the coming year; they will start transitioning ownership of the project and activities to the communities and local government authorities.
- Although FFP does not require that the narrative components of the PREP be written by a native English speaker, it is expected that the document will be reviewed/edited by a native English speaker prior to submission.
- Have a four corners call between the FFP mission, FFP HQ (AOR), awardee field office and awardee HQ office. In this call, talk about challenges and ways forward. Four corners calls are particularly helpful to discuss issues that USAID identified in their review of the PREP.
 - Ideally, this call should happen once a quarter, but this may depend on what the awardee agrees with the AOR.
 - Four corners calls are an excellent mechanism for ensuring that all the essential parties to the monitoring and management of the project have a common understanding of the project's challenges, successes, outstanding action items, overall status, etc.

Discussion Process

Topics that surfaced in the pre-consultation interviews (Annex 1) were reviewed point by point in plenary. This was a deviation from the original agenda, which intended for small groups to break out and discuss one or two specific points. The decision to discuss all items in plenary, rather than in small groups, was determined by group vote, and was the preference of the vast majority of attendees.

A recording of the consultation is available at:

<https://coregroup.adobeconnect.com/p98jqcuaz4g/?launcher=false&fcsContent=true&pbMode=normal>

3. PVO recommendations for FFP and FFP responses and comments

This section provides a synthesis of key challenges that surfaced during the in-person consultation session (Annex 2) and the pre-consultation interviews (Annex 1), recommendations proposed by the PVO community to address each challenge, and FFP response to the recommendations offered at the Stakeholder Consultation. Commentary by both FFP and the PVO community is organized by topic, rather than the chronological order of discussion at the consultation session. FFP was given the opportunity to clarify comments shared in the consultation prior to finalizing this document.

The turnaround timeline for the PREP review process		
PVO Challenge	Recommendations	FFP response to recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PVOs know when the PREP is due but do not know what the review process is and how long FFP intends to take for the review. There are many concerns that projects are missing deadlines for timely implementation, especially related to agricultural seasons. The number of submissions it takes to get a PREP approved is viewed as excessive. Two rounds of review is the minimum number anyone interviewed experienced, but the majority report it takes 5-8 rounds to finalize the document. PVOs are frustrated by what they describe as inequity in the turnaround time—they 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a clear and consistent timeline for the review process. Limit reviews to 1-2 rounds. FFP comments on the PREP should be received by the awardee within 30 calendar days of submission, prompting resubmission within 15 days. Upon resubmission, if there are additional issues, USAID should notify applicants within one week, and applicants should revise the PREP within one more additional week. Consider allowing applicants to revise the PREP within 15 calendar days or 2 weeks instead of 1 week. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FFP will commit to improving this issue. FFP agrees that it is unfair for awardees to have to wait so long to receive feedback. That being said, deadlines for the submission of PREPs are sometimes agreed to, and the awardee(s) request an extension of the deadline. Both USAID and the implementing partners need to respect established deadlines. There should be a cut off for FFP information requests based on submission date of the PREP. It is not fair for FFP to say, a month has elapsed, therefore, update everything. The delays in approval will be helped by having additional staff in FFP and additional training for staff. Right now, country

<p>are asked to adhere to strict deadlines, and respond to comments within a very short window, but there is no agreed upon or consistent timeline for FFP's review process.</p>		<p>backstop officers (CBO) are covering many projects, but FFP is in the process of hiring and staffing up--this is a priority. FFP will also be doing more targeted and extensive training of CBOs and AORs once FFP has new staff in place to assist with training – this is underway now.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It would be helpful if the PREP process included other USAID agencies, e.g., Bureau of Food Security (BFS) or Office of Acquisition and Assistance (OAA) for projects with community development funds (CDF). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is an ongoing discussion within FFP and with other bureaus. FFP hopes to streamline the use of CDF.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can implementers enter in all of the restricted goods known over the 5 years during the first year PREP in order to have advance approval? E.g., if implementers want 100 kg per year of restricted goods, ask for 600 kg in Year 1 PREP to cover 5 years and extra. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FFP is trying to look at flexible solutions when there are restricted goods that are CDF funded and will be re-negotiating the memorandum of understanding with OAA in the fall. • FFP will try to work on this with OAA – if you have CDF funding it goes into a procurement planning process with OAA and any changes mid-year have to be renegotiated with OAA. • USAID's Automated Directives System (ADS) provides guidance on getting restricted goods approved. There are different processes for agricultural commodities, vehicles, etc. To the extent possible all restricted goods should be included in the initial application so that they can be approved upfront when the award is approved. If the need to procure additional

		restricted goods becomes necessary after the award has been put in place, then the appropriate approval/waiver will have to be processed separately in accordance with the ADS.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Currently PREP approval is pass/ fail. However, there are time sensitive issues in the PREP which can impact a project (e.g., purchasing seeds during a lean season). Delays in obligations results in a very risky situation. Sometimes projects are spending money against the PREP which they don't yet have for up to 7 months. This puts the NGO at an audit risk when they are spending money that has not been approved. If PVOs do the PREP, do the work plan, and don't have the money to carry out the work plan they are in a very bad situation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider the option of a conditional or partial approval (beyond just the call forward), and incremental funding, so work plans can be implemented on schedule. If USAID is not able to approve a PREP within 2 months of submission, the applicant should receive a written notice that states the reasons why it is not possible to approve the PREP and the likely approval date. At that time, FFP should provide approval for expenditure of a portion of the budgeted funds that will be devoted to necessary direct transfers to beneficiaries - such as food vouchers, inputs to farmers during the planting season, cash transfers during the hunger season, and calls forward so that there will not be food pipeline breaks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FFP knows this is a serious problem that needs to be addressed. If awardees are running out of money or need a call forward, FFP needs to elevate this issue. FFP will have internal discussions about how to release partial funds for a PREP that does not yet have full budget approval. Enhanced communication between awardees and AORs will be critical if FFP restructures the review process to offer partial funding.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The guidance states the PREP is due in August or September, but projects are asked to submit in May or June. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adhere to submission date stated in PREP guidance document. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The August to November dates were always "guidelines." The submission deadline is negotiated among/between the awardee,

		<p>FFP, and the Mission/Regional Office FFPO based upon when the awardee requires additional commodity and/or cash resources. The reason for requesting PREP submissions in May or June is that per FFP policy, calls forward for development projects are not generally processed in the first quarter of a fiscal year. So, if commodities are needed early in the new calendar year, they will have to be called forward in August (because FFP does not process calls forward at all in September (except if commodities will be provided from prepositioned stocks.) The reason why FFP generally does not process calls forward in the first quarter of a new fiscal year is discussed in the next bullet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under a continuing resolution OMB releases a portion of Title II funds to FFP based on the amount of time of continuing resolution. For example, if a three-month continuing resolution is put in place by Congress, then OMB gives FFP 90 days of Title II funding contingent on the agreement that FFP will not release funds for development programs, except after consultation with and explicit approval by OMB. This is to ensure that FFP has resources on hand to respond to emergencies. • When absolutely necessary, FFP has gone through a consultation process with OMB and provided limited funds for development projects, but FFP has very little latitude on
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		this issue. Projects should be managed in such a way that resources are not required in the first quarter of a fiscal year.
Coordination of PREP review process within FFP		
PVO Challenge	Recommendations	FFP response to recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frustration with the review process links to the dissatisfaction with multiple rounds of issues letters. PVOs feel that feedback is inconsistent and seems to come from different positions. There is a concern that many of the issues in the letters are coming from people who are unfamiliar with the proposal or the program. • Later reviewers appear to add comments during subsequent rounds that conflict with earlier reviewers' comments. Distinct differences between the FFP Mission's view and D.C. Headquarters view is a concern. The common perception is that FFP could do a better job at consolidating comments and ensuring that questions in issues letters are appropriate and not contradictory. • All PVOs report that they receive requests in issues letters for justification that has already been provided in earlier documents or in some cases about things that are not relevant to the country 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop internal guidance, such as a checklist, for those who review PREPS. • Require every reviewer to read the proposal narrative and study the DIP before commenting on the PREP. • Have a consistent FFP review team that participates from start to finish on PREP reviews. • In addition to training for AORs, there should also be more training for the Mission. And training that includes AOR, Mission, and PVO staff so everyone is on the same page. • PVOS understand that at times technical reviews are necessary and will benefit the program, but they must be built into a consistent timeline, and the technical input should be consistent. • Determine the conditions when/if an M&E review is necessary on PREPS. If necessary coordinate that review so 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FFP is committed to improving the PREP review process. • FFP will have further internal discussions about under what conditions reviewers should request additional technical input (including M&E) on PREPS.

<p>context. PVOs assert that they spend a lot of time justifying things that they've already justified in previous documents.</p>	<p>that the project receives consolidated feedback that is consistent across review teams.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are challenges for the PREP and the ARR specifically related to M&E approval for the M&E plan. If the M&E plan is not approved, PVOs don't know what we are supposed to be reporting against in the ARR. M&E field requirements are growing exponentially. They require a lot more effort for PVO and FFP alike. The sooner a PVO can get the M&E plan approved, the sooner we can move ahead and do better reporting. It is a real challenge. Appreciate the suggestions to enhance communication, but for this issue, a 4-corners meeting is not going to get us as far as we need to go. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Request for separate stakeholder consultation for M&E as it relates to the PREP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FFP acknowledges the challenges with the M&E review and approval process and is committed to improving the process.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referencing FFP point: <i>"Sometimes essential reviewers (e.g., people from the mission) are in the field and unable to participate in the PREP review, so the AOR has to determine whether to involve that person involved in the PREP review."</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider having the AOR ensure that the scheduled date for the PREP submission coordinates with critical reviewers' availability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is a 4-corners topic. All four parties should agree on the submission date. If a project needs a call forward before the end of current year, everything needs to be approved before the call forward date in August. Start there and work backward to determine PREP submission date.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AORs and FFP mission officers are viewed as the most competent candidates for consolidating comments because of their familiarity with projects. PVOs trust they 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask AOR or FFP Mission Officer to consolidate and organize comments before sending issues letter. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All comments that come in should be vetted by the AOR. This will be part of FFP internal training and guidance for new CBOs joining FFP. • More dialogue between the AOR, the

<p>will be able to identify and remove contextually inappropriate or irrelevant comments and substantially streamline the process.</p>		<p>Mission/Regional Office, and the awardee may decrease the number of questions and concerns that are being raised in issues letters.</p>
Communication before and during the PREP process		
PVO Challenge	Recommendations	FFP response to recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussions with AORs do not always happen in a timely manner. A number of partners state they do not receive a decision or even notification that comments are forthcoming from the AOR. • In addition to more timely responses to requested changes, partners would like increased communication with the AOR leading up to the PREP. If there is a clear understanding of what’s going into next year’s PREP via more routine communication, it will minimize comments, and streamline the review. • PVOs feel a great need for better communication with the AOR about the budget and an enhanced understanding among AORs about budgetary upper limits versus annual limits, resource levels, and allowable flexibility. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase communication between AORs and projects. Keep partners up to date. • Design a clear process for PVO communication with the AOR prior to submitting the PREP. • Develop some type of complaint / help desk mechanism for issues with FFP processes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FFP will have an internal discussion. For example, perhaps FFP can include work objectives for AORs that specify routine, regular, deliberate communication with awardees is expected. • FFP requests that awardee field staff make the effort to have routine and deliberate conversations with FFP field staff, and that awardee HQ staff make an effort to have regular conversations with the AOR. • If awardees do not want to talk to FFP directly, one option is to talk to TOPS (e.g., Mark Fritzler) who will then pass on the concerns.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Because PREPs are a part of a project's strategic planning process, several PVOs request that FFP be present during this process or at the very least attend an in-person or remote briefing session. This would offer an opportunity for PVOs and FFP to carry out a general review of the DIP, look at calendars, explain changes, and allow FFP to clarify any remaining questions so that projects will know how to move forward and FFP will know what they are getting. PREPS could then be approved in one or two rounds rather than piecemeal approvals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include FFP in project strategic planning process. There should be a deliberate consultative conversation at field and HQ level to go through project plans in detail. Allow partners to make a presentation to FFP prior to submitting the PREP. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase FFP communication between AORs, Mission, and HQ. Make sure AORs are aware of HQ expectations. Need to institutionalize a quarterly, 4-corners call. As a result of the calls there should be a TO-DO list. For each of the 4 corners, there should be action items, a proposed date of completion, and acknowledgment of completion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreed. This is best practice. Having the conversation, recording action items, following up to make sure action items have been addressed.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could the agreement to institutionalize the 4 corners approach go into the PREP guidance document? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreement to institutionalize the 4 corners approach; perhaps to be considered as a CBO work objective.

Templates and Uploading Processes		
PVO Challenge	Recommendations	FFP response to recommendations
<p>There is unanimous agreement that PREP templates are challenging.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Templates do not match FFPMIS. • When the FFPMIS rounds up to 10, the AER does not match—PVOs are criticized for discrepancies. • The PREP guidance tells PVOs what they need to submit, but provides no format. This must be confusing for FFP too, with 20 appendices and everyone sending them in a different format. • Most forms have not been updated since 2012. There is not a 2016 version of the Annual Estimate of Requirements (AER) template available---what should PVOs use? PVOs have received AER templates with old data in them. • In some cases, projects that used the forms available when the PREP was due, were later asked to re-do all entries in templates that were updated after submission. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide downloadable versions of all components required in the PREP. Make budget and M&E templates look exactly like FFPMIS entry. • Make sure all forms are up to date and send out updated forms for each current year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It would be difficult for FFP to create official templates because FFP would have to get Paperwork Reduction Act approval, a complicated government process. FFP tries to stay away from developing required official forms because of the many layers of agreement and approval required to approve templates.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make templates that match the FFPMIS system, which are solely a resource for NGOs to use, but are not a FFP requirement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some PVOs have developed their own templates that are sent to the field. PVOs may wish to share them or post them through TOPS.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask TOPS to work with PVOs to review and revise forms on an annual basis with the goal of developing forms that mirror FFPMIS. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree. Given the awardees are the ones who use the templates, and knowing that FFP has challenges in developing templates as indicated above, it would behoove the awardees to work with TOPS or amongst themselves in a working group to come up with templates that mirror elements in FFPMIS.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review each template to see if it can be streamlined. Avoid duplication across documents. Specifically review whether all beneficiary information is necessary in the various tables. • Provide one repository where partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please provide more detailed input to FFP on where there are redundancies and repetition. Please raise questions about specific parts of the templates. PVOs could do this through a working group.

	can access all templates. If TOPS creates the templates, perhaps the FSN can be the repository.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication on whether to upload documents to FFPMIS is inconsistent. “At times, FFP does not want PREP documents uploaded, but rather wants everything by email.” Other partners report they must send documents by email and also upload to FFPMIS. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide clear step-by-step guidance on uploading documents to FFPMIS. Develop TOPS webinars and update video clip posted on the TOPS website to match updated FFPMIS. Require partners to only upload documents to FFPMIS once they are approved and finalized. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Please let the FFPMIS helpdesk know if there are discrepancies between guidance matching the FFPMIS uploading process. Entering PREPs into FFPMIS is the standardized method for submitting PREPs. A best practice, when documents are revised during the review, is to delete the prior version and upload the revised version into FFPMIS. Ultimately, the final approved version of all documents must be entered/uploaded into FFPMIS and all older version must be deleted. Sometimes CBOs request that documents be emailed to them. CBOs cannot require the awardees to comply, and awardees can decline when asked to provide documents via email. Things that are direct entry must go into FFPMIS when the PREP is submitted (commodity pipeline/ration calculator).
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could all PREP updates be done at the same time during a certain time of year, rather than rolling out various FFPMIS updates, so that partners know when PREP is regularly updated? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FFPMIS is not always available when it is needed. "It is a painful process. Sheets are not unlocked and pages are not yet set up. A country can be early or on time...but FFPMIS is not ready." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide more clarity on the date that FFPMIS will be opened. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FFP hears PVO concerns and is actively working on this. FFP is currently considering modifying the system so that PVOs will be able to open a PREP, but cannot delete items. In the meantime, contact the AOR and ask them to please open the PREP. Any FFP staff can open the PREP in FFPMIS (AOR, institutional support contractor, and all FFP staff).
Sequence of due dates for PREP and ARR		
PVO Challenge	Recommendations	FFP response to recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The sequencing of required DFAP documents could be improved. Although submitting the PREP by June or July offers FFP plenty of time to review, it results in projects having less information to base decisions on. "...if the ARR is not yet complete, we make projections in PREP based on what we <i>think</i> we will find out in the annual report." While logically it makes more sense to submit the way forward (PREP) after looking at what has been achieved (the ARR), PVOs acknowledge that re-sequencing could present a financial conundrum. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revisit the sequencing of PREP relative to the ARR. Consider a systemized strategy review ahead of the PREP, then the ARR, then the PREP. Consider having the ARR due before the end of the fiscal year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This has to be an internal FFP discussion – as it is linked to the continuing resolution, how FFP is trying to forward fund PVOs, and other issues. FFP does not have to receive the ARR to make all funding decisions. Quarterly report information helps justify funding. There are other ways to inform program implementation decisions besides the ARR: monitoring trips, activity managers' trips, etc.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When grants are awarded in September, partners must submit the ARR on the 1st Monday of November, but the PREP is due 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PREPs should be submitted before September 30th, except for a new award, in which case, PREPs should be 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2013 guidance does state that PVO should have a discussion with the AOR under these circumstances to determine if PREP is

<p>before the ARR. “This throws us off. There is not enough time to prepare the PREP, and not enough information to feed into it.”</p>	<p>submitted within the first 90 days of the award. Awardees should be notified of the submission date at least 30 calendar days in advance of submission.</p>	<p>necessary. Acknowledgement that guidance may not be written as clearly as it could be. FFP will re-write this to make it clearer that PVOs always have flexibility if you discuss it with your AOR. Our goal is to streamline.</p>
<p>Clarity in FFP expectations</p>		
<p>PVO Challenge</p>	<p>Recommendations</p>	<p>FFP response to recommendations</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partners believe that the level of detail requested in the PREP is erratic across projects. Many assert that requests for detail are not in line with published PREP guidance. Some FFP reviewers have asked partners to restate the whole program, to re-explain activities, to redefine indicators, and to share much more detail than PREP guidance suggests is required. In general, with so many additional requests, it is not easy for partners to tell what is actually required and what might be an extra ask. Partners who do not have decades of experience working on FFP development projects must rely heavily on the FFP guidance documents. When notes are compared to other FFP-partners who have substantial history with FFP, they find that those with long-term experience do things much differently than what is stated in the guidance because of their institutional 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide clarity in the PREP guidance on various FFP expectations: level of detail needed in narrative and budget; which components of the PREP do and do not require approval; naming conventions, how to refer to which fiscal year the PREP applies to, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revised guidance will help provide more clarity. More training for CBOs and improved communication will improve consistency in CBO requests for detail. 4 corners calls will also help with this challenge. However, consider whether PVOS really want every single detail spelled out. If every detail is down in writing, you will have to follow it. This will limit some options for being flexible and creative if FFP is very directive. There will be differences in the way CBOs manage their projects, irrespective of how much training they receive. When an awardee is concerned about the CBO’s “asks,” the awardee has the right to (and should) request that the CBO’s team leader be brought into the discussion.

<p>knowledge of what is acceptable. This is confusing for new partners who are trying to follow guidance to the letter, or manage situations where limited guidance exists.</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partners would specifically like more clarity on what is required for the detailed budget that is submitted for PREP, for both current year and future years. Guidance from AORs has been inconsistent. • Some projects have been told to enter actual expenses, others have not. Some projects are not asked to provide much detail at all on budget; others must provide details on any variation + or – 10% for every single line item. PVOs want to provide FFP with the information it needs, but also want to make sure what is asked for is reasonable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide more standardization of what level of detail in the budget is expected. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training of CBOs will help mitigate the variability in the budget-related requests. FFP would like more PVO input on this issue. We are interested in what the PVOs consider to be reasonable.

Disaggregation of program elements		
PVO Challenge	Recommendations	FFP response to recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The requirement to disaggregate the budget and expenditures by all program elements makes budget preparation complex, confusing, and tedious. Some partners assert that when the budget is dissected into so many parts it becomes useless information. PVOS wonder about the value this requirement brings to FFP compared to the workload for the PVO. The cost associated with breaking out in this way is significant. PVOs want more money going to implementation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require less disaggregation by program elements. Develop a smaller working group to work on this issue. The cost of general items could be pro-rated based on direct costs of each program element. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This request is difficult. The requirement comes from the State Department. FFP has to report data on distinct program elements to a variety of contributing stakeholders and break out how each stakeholder's dollars are spent in reports. If PVOs do not provide disaggregated data FFP cannot report the way we are required to. There can be a conversation to think about how to streamline this. Perhaps there can be a 'general' category – e.g., in budgeting, to include the salary of a general person (e.g., cooks, drivers, cleaners) so that PVOs do not have to divide these salaries by program elements.
Monetization proceeds and program income		
PVO Challenge	Recommendations	FFP response to recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PREP guidance pre-dates community development funds (CDF) and should be updated to speak differently to awards that have no monetization. There is little guidance on CDF funding, which is the main source for most projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide more guidance on CDF funding. Change guidance to request that all documentation for monetization is included as a supplementary annex. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is clear and will be addressed. The guidance will be revised. In the draft PREP guidance on monetization has been moved to the annex.

Appendix I: Participants (Consultation workshop and pre-consultation interviews)

Name	Organization
Mazen Fawzy	ACDI/ VOCA
Mustafa Aslamy	Action Against Hunger
Emanuel da Costa	ADRA International
Yasmin Perez	ADRA International
Kumkum Kahsiparekh	CARE
Mara Russell	CARE
Mohammad	CARE
David Brigham	CNFA
Katie Murray	CNFA
Lizzie Jones	CNFA
Dane Fredenburg	CRS
Erin Fleming	CRS
Hans Fly	CRS
Marcus Cleveland	CRS
Beth Ceryak	FFP/USAID
Bridget Ralyea	FFP/USAID
Graceanna Enzinger	FFP/USAID
Juli Majernik	FFP/USAID
Katie McKenna	FFP/USAID
Lara Evans	FFP/USAID
Tammy Boger	FFP/USAID
Mike Heller	FFP/USAID
Mara Mordini	FFP/USAID
Melissa Joy	FFP/USAID
Getahun Shibishi	Food for the Hungry
Marea Pappas	Food for the Hungry
Tracey Goebel	Food for the Hungry
Lindy Fenlason	Independent Consultant
Catherine McMahan	Mercy Corps
Nathan Oetting	Mercy Corps
Maggie-Jane Lucas	Mercy Corps
Bianca Morales	PCI
Tom Spangler	PCI
Binta Cisse	Save the Children
Matthew Smith	Save the Children
Suzanne Berkey	Save the Children
Yohannes Gebrewold	Save the Children
Imee Cambroner	Save the Children

Name	Organization
Meghan Bolden	Save the Children
Adam Keehn	The TOPS Program
Adrenne Todela	The TOPS Program
Lauren Jessup	The TOPS Program
Laurie Starr	The TOPS Program
Julia Crowley	The TOPS Program

Appendix 2: PREP Stakeholder Consultation Agenda

Stakeholder Consultation:

USAID/FFP Pipeline & Resource Estimate Proposal (PREP) Guidance

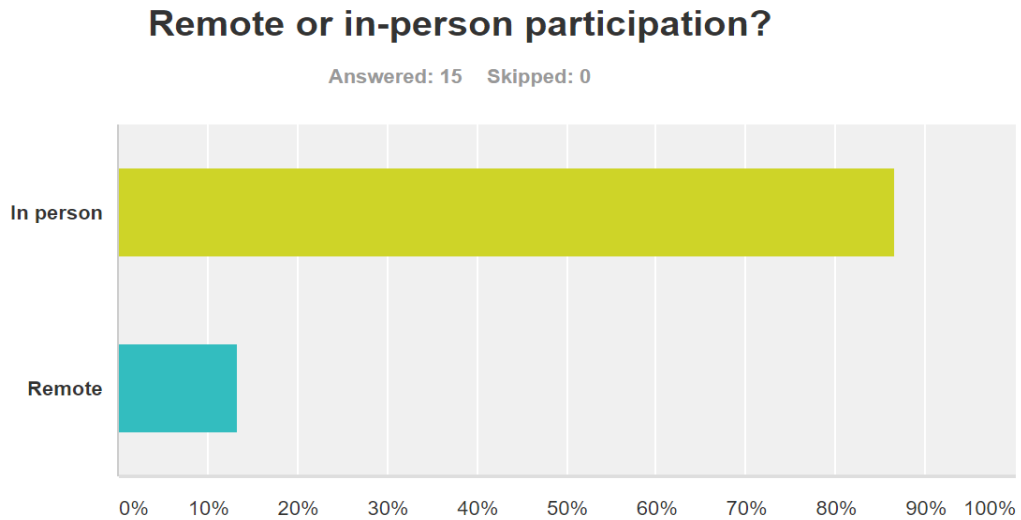
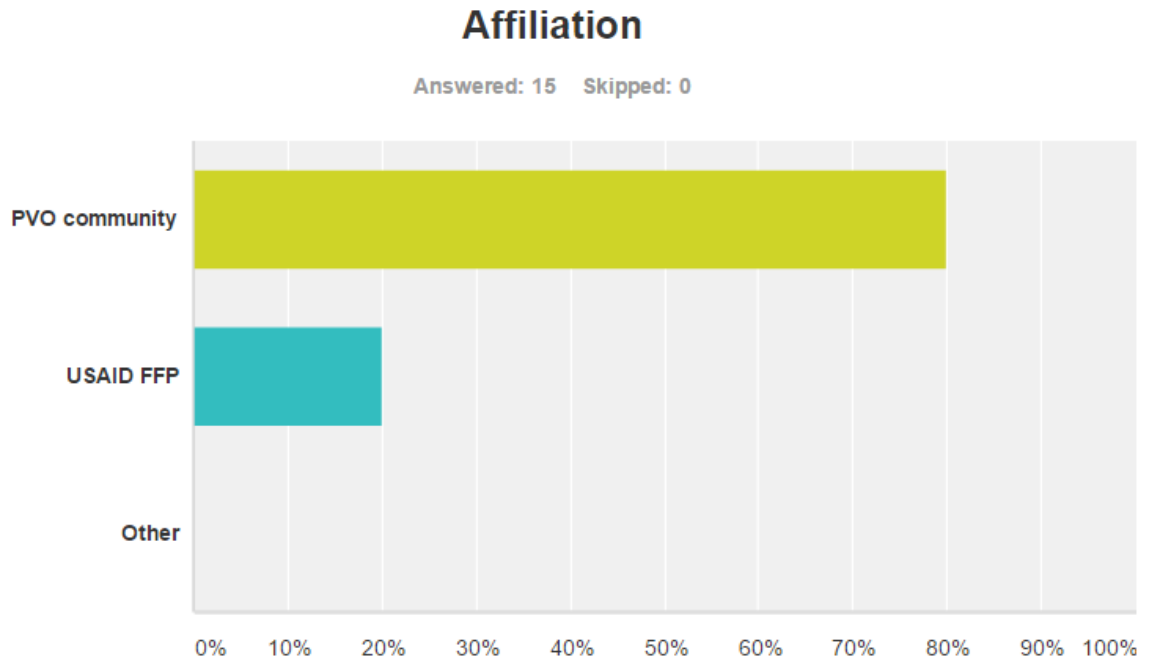
Wednesday, July 27, 2016, 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Save the Children 899 N. Capitol NE – 9th Floor

Start Time	Subject
9:00-9:20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TOPS Welcome FFP Introduction
9:20- 9:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plenary brainstorm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What aspects of the current PREP process are most valued? Most efficient? Why?
9:30-9:40	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FFP appreciation to PVOs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examples from PREP submissions that demonstrate high standards
9:40-10:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plenary discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is most challenging about the PREP guidance & process? Most unclear? Pre-consultation interview findings will serve as a foundation for the discussion.
BREAK (10 min) Coffee and light snacks	
10:10 -11:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Breakout session: specific topical areas. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each group focuses on resolutions within topical areas. Note-taker from FFP at each table. We will need 2-3 bullets on each area.
11:00 -11:35	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share unique highlights in plenary.
11:35 -11:55	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Way forward <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commentary by FFP / Q&As
11:55-12:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wrap up – TOPS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thanks everyone for your interest and help!

Appendix 3: Workshop Evaluation Summary

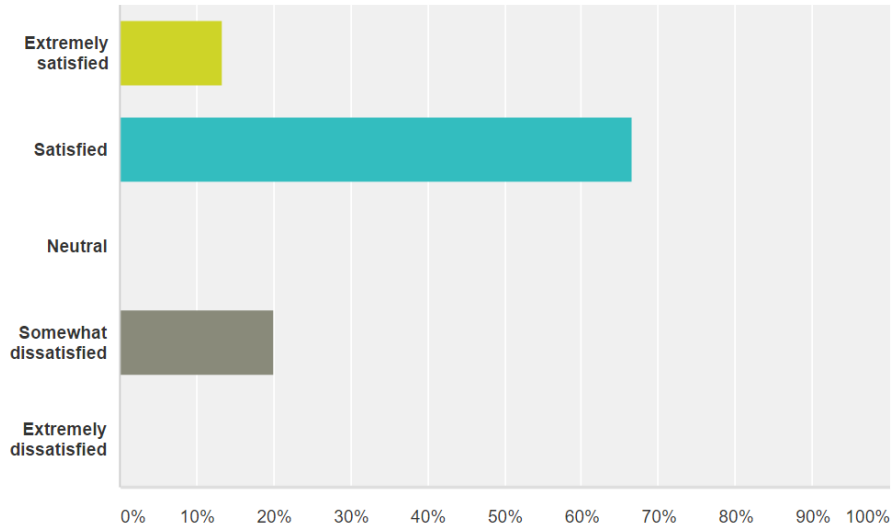
Results only represent the 15 of 30 people who responded to the after consultation satisfaction survey.



Results only represent the 15 of 30 participants who responded to the after consultation satisfaction survey.

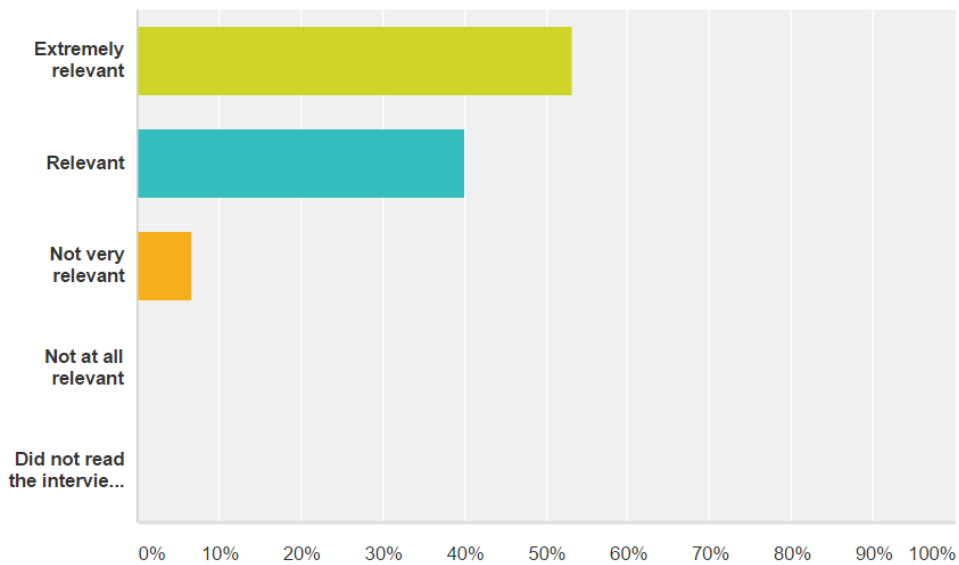
Please rank your overall level of satisfaction with the consultation session.

Answered: 15 Skipped: 0



How relevant to your concerns are the issues raised in the pre-consultation interview notes?

Answered: 15 Skipped: 0



Optional: Please briefly explain what was satisfying or dissatisfying.

1	Open discussion was good. It was maybe inevitable that although the session was designed to focus on the written guidance, the conversation expanded to process issues. But then frustrating that the conversation at times seemed to focus on individual AORs justifying/explaining individual issues, rather than seeking to understand the concerns being raised.
2	Very open and constructive dialogue. Practical and useful.
3	Despite being a consultation, many of the recommendations or requests made by the PVOs seemed to be outright dismissed by USAID.
4	Need more time. Was a bit clear FFP hadn't read some of the initial feedback & recommendations from the PVOs on the PREP, which slowed down some of the discussion.
5	Too much FFP back and forth, needed better facilitation.
6	It seemed less of a partner consultation than FFP providing specific guidance. There was not enough time for partners to speak and contribute. There could have been better facilitation in terms of reigning in side points and repetitive discussions. It was not clear whether the partners and FFP shared the same goals/desired outcomes of the workshop. It may have needed to be longer than it was. Also, FFP kept referencing a revised draft. If that could have been reviewed/referenced, everyone could have been on the same page.
7	Appreciated starting with some positives and the flexibility to stay in plenary. Frustrating that the USAID rep. seemed to answer each PVO comment with a response on how she did it and then have the AORs get into a discussion on one point as to how each did it (we already recognize there is inconsistency). I also did not feel it was clear what next steps were.
8	It seems as though there is internal issues with FFP that need to be discussed/determined (minimum standards set, required 4 corner calls, etc.), which will help the PVO community.
9	I liked the sense that my concerns were listened to. I hope that actions will be taken to address these concerns. I hope that the PREP guidance when released will reflect the actions needed to address the concerns raised by participants.
10	Thought the discussion was very relevant to the current topics
11	Dissatisfying: The last minute change of methodology and the short time to discuss this critical topic. Satisfying: FFP participation and commitment to hear the community.
12	It was well organized and materials were shared in advance.

Optional: Please offer suggestions on how to make consultations between the PVO community and FFP even more satisfying and productive for all involved.

#	Responses
1	The approach that evolved was very productive, the right people from FFP were present and the same from the PVO community.
2	Clear guidance, rather than the opinion or experience of the presenter would be useful. It seems the PVO community reviewed the documentation in advance but that perhaps FFP did not or at a minimum, did not review and develop a collective, unified response to the issues raised.
3	Make them routine - quarterly; to ensure mgmt. issues are being addressed and PVOs and FFP can have a forum to be addressing issues in real time.
4	Have TOPS facilitate so that it can balance FFP and partner participation. The advance consultations and notes were great, and I think the original plan of having them be discussed in small groups would have been better. On the PVO side, it would help not to have the managers/directors, but the people who actually do the writing, data entry, etc. There were some, but it did not seem to be true for all. It depends on the type of consultation, of course, but for something very specific and operational like this, it would have been useful.
5	- Prior to consultation, identify issues for which PVOs/USAID are in agreement, action plan and next steps. Don't spend time reviewing what may already be in agreement. - More discussion with plan of action oriented. - Limited responses by FFP to each comment and make it more of a group dialogue.
6	I think that this consultation was more contentious than the EFSP one. Also, there was a smaller number of participants because fewer PVOs manage DFAPs. I think that in such cases, more time and sensitivity is needed for each of the topic areas (see below).
7	Next time it would be better to book the whole day. In the morning the groups can discuss separately. And the afternoon will be plenary. In this case the plenary was managed by 3 to 4 people so it didn't add much to the document.

Optional: please offer suggestions for how TOPS can improve facilitation of consultation sessions.

1	N/A
2	The group should have broken out into smaller group discussions. There was richness to the discussions that may have been lost. However, the disagreement between AORs was palpable and extremely revealing. It highlighted that there is no consistency across the office. the PVO community and FFP would clearly benefit from a working group around reporting and operationalization of new rules/regs/dynamics with OAA.
3	Great job! Just more time and stick to proposed breakout groups - may have yielded more concrete solutions.
4	Tops should lead the session, and any FFP or partner staff speaking in specific sessions should just be speakers for those sessions, with TOPs guiding the day overall.
5	This consultation was a long time in coming and there are numerous areas to address to improve the ability of the PVOs to both understand USAID needs and find more effective ways of implementing programs. We need a continuous dialogue rather than a consultation every few months. A liaison between the PVO community and FFP that can represent the each to the other (without being program specific which would be the responsibility of the ind. org). Also, action plans or more deadline oriented changes would be helpful where possible.
6	I know that the idea of small groups was rejected, but that was because everyone wanted to talk about everything. In such cases, the groups should not be topic based, but should just break people down to small groups to talk about all topic areas and all recommendations should be considered.

Annex 1: Pre-Consultation Interview Notes

As a part of USAID's Office of Food for Peace (FFP) commitment to consult with the private voluntary organization (PVO) community to improve FFP processes, FFP asked The Technical and Operational Performance Support (TOPS) program to facilitate a consultation with PVOs to improve the PREP guidance document and processes related to submitting and gaining approval for the PREP.³

Since May 2016, TOPS has been soliciting feedback from FFP-implementing partners through Skype and face-to-face interviews. A few partners elected to supply written feedback on Survey Monkey. Fifteen staff members from eight organizations⁴ contributed to the recommendations presented in this draft; most of them gathered suggestions from colleagues prior to the interview. TOPS consolidated the feedback and organized it into eight topical areas. The intent of the resulting draft recommendations is to provide the foundation for the July 27, 2016, Stakeholder Consultation. The views and recommendations expressed are those of the PVO community and do not necessarily reflect the views of TOPS.

1. Draft recommendations based on key challenges

The eight organizations interviewed unanimously highlight the following areas where they would like to see improvements in the PREP guidance document and the PREP process.

- **The timeline for the PREP review process**
- **Coordination of PREP review process within FFP**
- **Communication before and during the PREP process**
- **Templates and protocol for uploading documents to FPMIS**

A majority of organizations interviewed define four additional areas where they would like to see improvements. They are:

- **Sequencing of due dates for PREP and ARR**
- **Clarity in FFP expectations**
- **Disaggregation of program elements**
- **Monetization proceeds and program income**

Finally, several topics were mentioned by one or two people. While there is not consensus among those interviewed that these represent critical areas for improvement, we include them in this summary because they may resonate with others who were not interviewed. These topics are outlined in the final section: **Other recommendations**.

³ PREP is the compendium of documents that describe an awardee's food aid resource needs and activities for a food aid program over the course of the upcoming implementation year.

⁴ CARE, CRS, Food for the Hungry, Mercy Corps, Save the Children, CNFA, PCI, World Vision.

1.1. Timeline for PREP review process

Recommendations:

- **Develop a clear and consistent timeline for the review process. Limit reviews to 1-2 rounds.**
- **FFP comments on the PREP should be received by the awardee within 30 calendar days of submission, prompting resubmission within 15 days. Upon resubmission, if there are additional issues, USAID should notify applicants within one week, and applicants should revise the PREP within one more additional week.**

Basis for recommendations: PVOs know when the PREP is due but do not know what the review process is and how long FFP intends to take for the review. Several projects reported uploading documents to FFPMIS that were not reviewed for three months. There are many concerns that projects are missing deadlines for timely implementation, especially related to agricultural seasons. A number of people interviewed are frustrated by what they describe as inequity in the turnaround time—they are asked to adhere to strict deadlines, and respond to comments within a very short window, but there is no agreed upon or consistent timeline for FFP’s review process.

The number of submissions it takes to get a PREP approved is viewed as excessive. Two rounds of review is the minimum number anyone interviewed experienced, but the majority report it takes 5-8 rounds to finalize the document. PVOs acknowledge that some portions of the PREP are approved before other components of the document—commodities are often the first to be approved—but assert that the piecemeal approach to approval is problematic for budgeting.

Recommendation: If USAID is not able to approve a PREP within 2 months of submission, the applicant should receive a written notice that states the reasons why it is not possible to approve the PREP and the likely approval date. At that time, FFP should provide approval for expenditure of a portion of the budgeted funds that will be devoted to necessary direct transfers to beneficiaries - such as food vouchers, inputs to farmers during the planting season, cash transfers during the hunger season, and calls forward so that there will not be food pipeline breaks.

Basis for recommendation: Sometimes projects are spending money against the PREP (which they don’t have yet) for up to 7 months. This puts the NGO at an audit risk when they are spending money that has not been approved. If there is a delay in the provision of funding, perhaps a low-cost extension or mechanisms similar to PAL is in order. One PVO expressed frustration that AORs criticize a project for not spending down, but the project feels it is restricted financially because the PREP is not yet approved.

Recommendation: Adhere to submission date stated in PREP guidance document.

Basis for recommendation: The guidance states the PREP is due in August or September, but projects are asked to submit in May or June.

1.2. Coordination of PREP review process within FFP

Recommendations:

- **Develop internal guidance, such as a checklist, for those who review PREPS.**
- **Require every reviewer to read the proposal narrative and study the DIP before commenting on the PREP.**
- **Have a consistent FFP review team that participates from start to finish on PREP reviews.**

Basis for recommendation: All PVOs interviewed report frustration with the review process, particularly when later reviewers appear to add comments during subsequent rounds that conflict with earlier reviewers' comments. PVOs feel that feedback is inconsistent and seems to come from different positions. Distinct differences between the Mission's view and FFP D.C. view is a concern. The common perception is that FFP could do a better job at consolidating comments and ensuring that questions in issues letters are appropriate and not contradictory.

Frustration with the review process links to the dissatisfaction with multiple rounds of issues letters mentioned earlier. PVOs feel that a majority of the issues in the letters are coming from people who are unfamiliar with the proposal or the program. All PVOs report that they receive requests in issues letters for justification that has already been provided in earlier documents or in some cases about things that are not relevant to the country context. PVOs assert that they spend a lot of time justifying things that they've already justified in previous documents. "It feels as if reviewers are looking at the PREP as a stand-alone document, which it is not." "After the issues letter it is impossible to hold to the 15 page limit, because we are essentially restating the entire proposal all over again."

Recommendation: Ask AOR or FFP Mission Officer to consolidate and organize comments before sending issues letter.

AORs and FFP mission officers are viewed as the most competent candidates for consolidating comments because of their familiarity with projects. PVOs trust they will be able to identify and remove contextually inappropriate or irrelevant comments and substantially streamline the process.

1.3. Communication before and during the PREP process

Recommendations:

- **Increase communication between AORs and projects. Keep partners up to date.**
- **Design a clear process for PVO communication with the AOR prior to submitting the PREP.**

Basis for recommendation: "Although the purpose of the PREP seems clear to FFP (i.e., it is not the place to make changes), this assumes projects are having ongoing discussions with AORs." PVOs relate that discussions with AORs do not always happen in a timely manner. Some PVOs state they make requests for project changes, and ask to receive official comments from FFP on these changes within two months of submitting the PREP. Most interviewed partners state they do not receive a decision or even notification that comments are forthcoming from the AOR. Sometimes there is no communication for up to 12 months. It is difficult to accurately fill out the PREP without this information. PVOs perceive that it is often strategic issues and changes that hold up PREP approval.

If PREP is not the place to make changes, **“when and how should we have discussions about changes to programs to make the timeline work?”**

In addition to more timely responses to requested changes, partners would like increased communication leading up to the PREP. “Maybe the AOR could send a clear instruction email to jump start the PREP process. It could include more instruction on deadlines, the most recent PREP guidance that is available, and any specific interventions FFP wants to hear about.”

PVOs feel a great need for better communication with the AOR about the budget and an enhanced understanding among AORs about budgetary upper limits versus annual limits, resource levels, and allowable flexibility.

One interviewed partner appreciates having a certain level of informality in communications, but requests that communications maintain a higher degree of professional respect for one another.

Recommendation: Include FFP in project strategic planning process. Allow partners to make a presentation to FFP prior to submitting the PREP.

Basis for recommendation: Because PREPs are a part of a project’s strategic planning process, several PVOs request that FFP be present during this process or at the very least attend an in-person or remote briefing session. This would offer an opportunity for PVOs and FFP to carry out a general review of the DIP, look at calendars, explain changes, and allow FFP to clarify any remaining questions so that projects will know how to move forward and FFP will know what they are getting. PREPS could be then approved in one or two rounds rather than piecemeal approvals.

Recommendation: Increase FFP communication between AORs, Mission, and HQ. Make sure AORs are aware of HQ expectations.

Basis for recommendation: A few partners experience confusion when seeking guidance from AORs. They believe that AORs are not able to answer all questions, and are not adequately reaching out to HQ to get a definitive answer. “If you ask if something is required, the AOR will say yes, even if it is not required.” In several cases, partners state that AOR guidance has directed them to present all project changes in the PREP. They are surprised to now hear that the PREP is not the place to make changes.

1.4. Templates and Uploading Processes

Recommendations:

- **Provide downloadable versions of all components required in the PREP. Make budget and M&E templates look exactly like FFPMIS entry.**
- **Make sure all templates are up to date and be sure to send out updated templates for each current year.**
- **Provide one repository where partners can access all templates.**
- **Review each template to see if it can be streamlined. Avoid duplication across documents. Specifically review whether all beneficiary information is necessary in the various tables.**

Basis for recommendation: There is unanimous agreement that PREP templates are challenging. A non-exhaustive list of examples follows.

- “Most forms have not been updated since 2012” “There is not a 2016 version of the AER template available---what should we use?”
- PVOs have received Annual Estimate of Requirements (AER) templates with old data in them.
- Projects that used the templates available when the PREP was due, were later asked to re-do all entries in templates that were updated after submission.
- Templates do not match FFPMIS.
- “When the FFPMIS rounds up to 10, the AER does not match—we get criticized for discrepancies.”
- “CSR4s were lovely. Now it is confusing.”
- “When you read the PREP guidance, you would think that there are forms with it. PREP tells us what we need to submit, but provides no format. This must be confusing for FFP too, with 20 appendices and everyone sending them in a different format.”

Recommendations:

- **Provide clear step-by-step guidance on uploading documents to FFPMIS. Develop TOPS webinars on PREP guidance. Update video clip posted on the TOPS website to match updated FFPMIS.**
- **Require partners to only upload documents to FFPMIS once they are approved and finalized.**
- **Provide more clarity on the date that FFPMIS will be opened.**

Basis for recommendations: Most partners interviewed experience inconsistent communication on whether to upload documents to FFPMIS. “At times, FFP does not want PREP documents uploaded, but rather wants everything by email.” Others report they must send documents by email and also upload to FFPMIS.

Many partners interviewed state that FFPMIS is not always available when it is needed. “It is a painful process. Sheets are not unlocked and pages are not yet set up. A country can be early or on time...but FFPMIS is not ready.”

1.5. Sequence of due dates for PREP and ARR

Recommendation: Revisit the sequencing of PREP relative to the ARR. Consider a systemized strategy review ahead of the PREP, then the ARR, then the PREP.

Basis for recommendation: Most partners interviewed feel that the sequencing of required DFAP documents could be improved. Although starting the PREP early and submitting by June or July offers FFP plenty of time to review, it results in projects having less information to base decisions on. “We are only halfway through the year. We have much less information about what is going well and what we might want to change.” “...if the ARR is not yet complete, we are making projections in PREP based on what we *think* we will find out in the annual report.” Those interviewed recognize that while logically it makes more sense to submit the way forward (PREP) after looking at what has been achieved (the ARR), re-sequencing could present a financial conundrum. Perhaps a solution is to have the ARR due before the end of the fiscal year.

Recommendation: PREPs should be submitted before September 30th, except for a new award, in which case, PREPs should be submitted within the first 90 days of the award. Awardees should be notified of the submission date at least 30 calendar days in advance of submission.

Basis for recommendation: When grants are awarded in September, partners must submit the ARR on the 1st Monday of November, but the PREP is due before the ARR. “This throws us off. There is not enough time to prepare the PREP, and not enough information to feed into it.”

1.6. Clarity in FFP expectations

Recommendation: Provide clarity in the PREP guidance on various FFP expectations: level of detail needed in narrative and budget; which components of the PREP do and do not require approval; naming conventions, how to refer to which fiscal year the PREP applies to, etc.

Basis for recommendation: Partners interviewed believe that the level of detail requested in the PREP is erratic across projects. Many people interviewed assert that requests for detail are not in line with published PREP guidance. Similar to frustrations outlined in section 1.2, some reviewers have asked partners to restate the whole program, to re-explain activities, to redefine indicators, and to share much more detail than PREP guidance suggests is required. Some PVOs state their projects have submitted 20 page documents filled with detail, only to receive requests for more detail, while other projects submit a three page narrative that is approved. In general, with so many additional requests, it is not easy for partners to tell what is actually required and what might be an extra ask.

Partners who do not have decades of experience working on FFP development projects must rely heavily on the FFP guidance documents. When notes are compared to other FFP-partners who have substantial history with FFP, they find that those with long-term experience do things much differently than what is stated in the guidance because of their institutional knowledge of what is acceptable. This is confusing for new partners who are trying to follow guidance to the letter, or manage situations where limited guidance exists.

Partners would specifically like more clarity on what is required for the detailed budget that is submitted for PREP, for both current year and future years. Guidance from AORs has been inconsistent. Some projects have been told to enter actual expenses, others have not.

One interpretation of what the PREP should be follows: “Focus on the major outcomes to be achieved during the year, and any changes that will be needed in order to accomplish them. If research and learning are required, these items should be given prominence - especially in the first year of Refine and Implement programs. If there are no major changes in the planned program as indicated in the proposal or refined design, then approaches and activities should simply be referenced in an abbreviated DIP.”

Question: What exactly does FFP want us to write about in the narrative? “We’ve heard that SABAL was well-written, but we don’t know why. We need a 101 on [narrative] writing. Something that states, because of XYZ, this is a good example of what [FFP] wants.”

Question: What are the naming conventions?

1.7. Disaggregation of program elements

Recommendation: Require less disaggregation by program elements.

Basis for recommendation: Most interviewed partners express frustration about the requirement to disaggregate the budget and expenditures by all program elements. Disaggregation by so many elements makes budget preparation complex, confusing, and tedious. Some interviewees assert that by dissecting the budget into so many parts it becomes useless information. “We have to just estimate everything at the end of the day, because there is no way our sub-grantees can dice up things into so many categories. Is this bringing value vs. workload?” “It takes a lot of time to do the budgets and expenditures by codes. If we hire more staff for financial management, there is less money for programming.”

1.8. Monetization proceeds and program income

Recommendation: Provide more guidance on CDF funding. Change guidance to request that all documentation for monetization is included as a supplementary annex.

Basis for recommendation: Partners assert that PREP guidance pre-dates community development funds (CDF) and should be updated to speak differently to awards that have no monetization. Much of the current guidance is based on the assumption that a project is monetizing, yet this is rare for the partners interviewed. There is little guidance on CDF funding, which is the main source for most projects.

1.9. Other recommendations

Several issues were mentioned by one or two people. While these issues did not surface as common concerns across the PVO community, we include them in this summary because they may resonate with others who were not interviewed.

Recommendation: Fully integrate the theory of change (TOC) into the PREP.

Basis for recommendation: The TOC is driving projects and is being revised every year. As such, it should be at the heart of the PREP and PREP guidance. “How a project reflects on the TOC should be driving our PREP process. As we reflect annually with Refine and Implement, the TOC should be the driver. What will be changing....why it is changing? This process will help projects actually use the TOC.”

Recommendations: Provide more guidance for the environmental report that describes exactly what FFP needs to know. Review whether the environmental report needs to be a part of the PREP.

Recommendation: Review required page limit.

Basis for recommendation: After issues letters it is impossible to meet page limits and also provide all additional information.

Recommendation: Make necessary language updates.

Basis for recommendation: The guidance uses out-of-date terminology such as MYAP.

Recommendation: Provide more clarification on the various roles and responsibilities of the people/ entities reviewing Title II documentation.

Basis for recommendation: PVOs wonder who reviews the IPTT? Is it the same person who reviews the PREP? Could this be a reason the review process feels inconsistent?

Recommendation: Offer more online training on all aspects of PREP.

The stakeholder consultation will take place July 27, 2016 from 9:00 to 12:00 p.m. at the offices of Save the Children, 899 N. Capitol NE. 9th floor.

For more information contact laurie@tangointernational.com.

Annex 2: July 27 Consultation Notes

Notes: PREP Consultation [Recording available here.](#)

Laurie Starr, TOPS: Overall agenda

- FFP will share some ideas about what we may expect in the next PREP guidance and give an introduction for what catalyzed this event.
- Start with a round of appreciation:
 - NGOs please share what is already working well within the PREP process. What shouldn't be changed?
 - FFP please share what PVOs have been doing well on PREP submissions.
- Challenges:
 - The challenges from the pre-consultation interviews will be the basis for discussion but we will look at all of the topical areas mentioned
 - We would like this session to be solution oriented

Bridget Ralyea, FFP: Introduction.

- FFP has been working on revising the PREP guidance for a long time and wants to hear from partner organizations.
- The goal is for FFP to have a draft version of the new PREP guidance within the next 2 months for release for FACC. There will then be a 45-day comment period.
- Now is the time to think about things to improve with regards to the guidance. FFP will try to make the guidance and processes clearer. FFP is aware that currently, within FFP, there are different ways that PREPs are revised and FFP is hopeful that the guidance can get everyone on the same page.

PVO Community: What is working well?

- In-person meetings between FFP and partners. For example, the Chief of Party of a project was in DC and had an in-person meeting with the AOR to talk over issues from the issues letter. This was much more helpful than having many rounds of questions.
- FFP's receptivity to discuss issues and their emphasis on including sustainability and exit plans in PREPs each year makes PVOs think through the issues.
 - FFP: There will have to be some separate PREP guidance for Refine and Implement projects.
- The PREP allows projects to change their plan depending on what is happening on the ground. It puts everyone (PVOs and funders) on the same page regarding next year's plans

FFP: Some preferred qualities of PREPs

- Major changes to the project should not be introduced in the PREP. These changes can be formally approved in the PREP but major changes need to be discussed prior to the PREP with both the Agreement Officer and AOR.

- Please do not go into detail about what happened last year or in prior years – as those are covered in ARRs. The point of the PREP is to know what’s coming in the next year and demonstrate your project is on track.
 - Awardees may want to highlight things that may prevent them from meeting targets especially if that may be an ongoing issue this coming year.
 - If awardees are ahead of the plan – for example something will happen in Year 3 instead of Year 4 – that should be documented in the PREP.
- If awardees get recommendations from FFP monitoring visits, FFP would like to know how awardees have addressed these recommendations.
 - If there are recommendations that awardees don’t agree with, ideally these should be addressed at the time of giving the recommendation and resolved before the PREP
 - If awardees feel that the USAID recommendations are not grounded, please let USAID know and dispute any
 - If awardees have had conflicting recommendations from USAID, ideally this should be improved in the future by PREP training for AORs.
- Awardees should round requests for commodities so that they are in increments of 10 metric tons
 - In the new PREP guidance, there will be a table with instructions (for commodities, request for funding, etc.)
- Awardees should cross check numbers so that it is clear how much you are asking for, how much pipeline you have, how much additional resources you need.
- It would be great if PVOs mention how in the coming year they will start transitioning ownership of the project and activities to the community.
- Also, be sure to have someone whose first language is English review your PREP documentation
- Have a call – called a four corners call – between the FFP mission, FFP HQ (AOR), implementer field office and implementer HQ office particularly if an in-person meeting can’t happen.
 - In this call, talk about challenges and ways forward
 - Ideally, this call should happen once a quarter, but this may depend on what the implementer agrees with the AOR
 - The four corners call could include action items and include completion date [of the item], completed by whom so that there is a sense everyone is working together

Grievances / key challenges from awardees regarding PREP process

- On the synthesis of PREP interviews document, the four challenges that implementers would like to see addressed by FFP were unanimous across all of the PVOs. These challenges are:
 - 1) The timeline for the PREP review process;
 - 2) the coordination of the PREP review process within FFP;
 - 3) the communication before and during the PREP process
 - 4) Templates and protocol for uploading documents to FPMIS
- FFP: The concern about timeline of approval is a very fair issue that you are raising. The delay in approval will be helped by having additional staff in FFP and additional training for staff. Right now, CBOs are covering too many projects, but FFP are in the process of hiring and staffing up is a priority. FFP will also be doing more targeted and extensive training of CBOs and AORs.

- Also implementers want some type of complaint / help desk mechanism about FFP
 - FFP: If awardees don't want to talk to FFP directly, one option is to talk to TOPS (e.g. Mark Fritzler) who will then pass on the concerns
- The more consistency in timeliness and submission from FFP, the better for implementers
 - FFP will commit to improving this issue
- **Coordination to prep review process within FFP:**
 - FFP: At times, the need for technical reviews can delay the overall review process.
 - PVOs understand that there are times when technical review is necessary. It benefits the programs to have technical input. How do we time that, and how do we ensure the input is consistent?
 - PVO: Need clarity on who is actually reviewing it
 - FFP will have further discussions internally about reviewers particularly about when and what technical review is needed.
 - Recommendation of implementers: have a 2-month timeline for FFP review, then communicating and addressing concerns with implementers
 - If there are technical problems or questions with the feedback implementers are given, please alert FFP
 - PVO: There is also concern about timeliness with regards to M&E review- also need consolidated feedback. M&E should fall under the same category as a technical review. Is it always needed on a PREP? Programs are getting direct feedback from different individual review teams rather than consolidated feedback.
 - FFP: When you need to change indicators, confer with AOR. FFP should not find out for the first time in the PREP that a project is changing indicators.
 - PVO: Need to institutionalize quarterly, 4-corners call. Would be a good time to discuss all these issues that FFP does not want to show up in the PREP for the first time. Recommend that as a result of the calls there is a TO-DO list. For each of the 4 corners, there would be action items, a proposed date of completion, and acknowledgment of completion. If something doesn't happen, we all know why.
 - FFP: Best practice. Having the conversation, recording action items, following up to make sure action items have been addressed.
- Page 4, recommendation. AOR or Mission officer should consolidate comments before sending issues letter. If we know there are any issues, could have a quick meeting with the AOR to resolve before it gets put into the issues letter.
 - FFP: Will be part of internal training we do and guidance we provide, because we have so many new AORs and CBOs joining FFP.
- PVO: Possible recommendation: Currently PREP approval is pass/ fail. However, there are highly time sensitive issues in the PREP which can impact a project (e.g., purchasing seeds during a lean season). Decide whether PREP is a conditional or partial approval so things can move forward.
 - FFP: Call forward can be approved outside the context of the PREP approval. In terms of activities, if they were approved earlier, you don't need approval to move forward.
- PVO: This presupposes that partners have enough money to implement activities. Need to have a further discussion about how PREP ties in with funding cycle. Delays in obligations results in a risky situation in which PVOs are being put to provide funds. PVOs do the PREP, do the work plan, and if we don't have the money we are in a very bad situation.

- FFP: We hear you. We know this is a problem and we do need to address this. If implementers are running out of money or need a call forward, FFP needs to elevate this issue.

Group discussion of pre-consultation recommendations

1.1. Timeline for PREP review process

- Recommendation from pre-consultation interviews: 1) Develop a clear and consistent timeline for the review process.
- Comments on previous recommendation in small group:
 - FFP: Would be helpful if this includes other agencies (BFS), OAA for projects with CDF funding.
 - This probably is not possible in short-term because FFP does not yet have clear standards and templates about how projects are reviewed at OAA.
 - PVO: Can implementers enter in all of the restricted goods known over the 5 years during the first year PREP so they would have advance approval? For example, if implementers want 100 kg per year of restricted goods, ask for 600 kg in Year 1 PREP that would cover for 5 years + some extra
 - FFP is trying to look at flexible solutions when there are restricted goods that are CDF funded. FFP will try to work on this with OAA – if you have CDF funding it has to go in your procurement process with OAA and any changes mid-year have to be renegotiated with OAA
- Recommendations from PVO pre-consultation interviews:
 - **2) Limit reviews to 1-2 rounds.**
 - **3) FFP comments on the PREP should be received by the awardee within 30 calendar days of submission, prompting resubmission within 15 days. Upon resubmission, if there are additional issues, USAID should notify applicants within one week, and applicants should revise the PREP within one more additional week.**
- Comments:
 - PVO: Consider allowing applicants to revise the PREP within 15 calendar days or 2 weeks instead of 1 week.
 - PVO: How do we incorporate new information that comes in after the submission of the PREP? This sometimes forces us to have even two complete PREP processes.
 - FFP: There is a cut off of information requests based on submission date of the PREP. It is not fair to say, a month has elapsed, therefore, update everything.
 - However, if there are programmatic changes after submission of the PREP (e.g. anytime you see a better way forward) please let FFP know. FFP can do a modification any time of the year. We are open to changes and want projects to be as successful as possible.
- Recommendations from pre-consultation interviews: ***If USAID is not able to approve a PREP within 2 months of submission, the applicant should receive a written notice that states the reasons why it is not possible to approve the PREP and the likely approval date. At that time, FFP should provide approval for expenditure of a portion of the budgeted funds that will be devoted to necessary direct transfers to beneficiaries - such as food vouchers, inputs to farmers during the***

planting season, cash transfers during the hunger season, and calls forward so that there will not be food pipeline breaks.

- FFP: Yes, partial approval is appropriate – should never miss a planting season. FFP will have internal discussions about how to release partial funds for a PREP that does not yet have full budget approval.
 - Enhanced communication between awardee and AORs will be very critical if the FFP restructures the review process to offer partial funding.

Recommendation: Adhere to submission date stated in PREP guidance document.

- FFP: Current guidelines are 2013, and were drafted in 2012. The August to November date has never been adhered to. The due date is not just because FFP believes awardees will be late. It is tied to continuing resolution. FFP needs to avoid the continuing resolution issue to make sure awardees have adequate pipeline. The goal of the timing of when a PREP is due, even though there were recommendations to have the PREP due after the ARR, everyone knows that if you are under continuing resolution, you won't get any resources for your development program, or you'll get intermittent resources and those will have to be prioritized.
- 1:25 FFP: Congress, under continuing resolution, OMB releases a portion of Title II funds to FFP based on the amount of time of continuing resolution. For 3 months they give us 90 days of Title II funding and make the release of any funds contingent on the agreement that we will not release funds for development programs, except without explicit approval and consultation of OMB. This is to ensure that FFP has resources on hand to respond to emergencies. FFP has gone through consultation process with OMB and provided limited funds to development projects if it is absolutely necessary, but FFP has very little latitude on this issue. If your project is on continuing resolution for most of the years if, when planning, you could avoid requests for 1st quarter call forwards and funds, it makes FFP lives much easier.
- 1:27 FFP recognizes that it's problematic, because you cannot do a call forward in August. Under continuing resolution you can't do a call forward October – December. If you're not careful, this potentially results in pipeline breaks, or too many commodities coming at once and warehouse issues. Generally FFP does not provide Title II funds in the first quarter of the Fiscal year. Something to keep in mind if you're doing commodity pipeline planning and cash-pipeline planning, etc.

1.2 Coordination of PREP review process within FFP

Recording 1:28

Recommendations from pre-consultation interviews:

Develop internal guidance, such as a checklist, for those who review PREPS.

Require every reviewer to read the proposal narrative and study the DIP before commenting on the PREP.

Have a consistent FFP review team that participates from start to finish on PREP reviews.

- FFP comment: Need for an Internal FFP discussion. There are different ways that AORs disseminate PREPs for review. Some always run the PREP by all technical leads and M&E, other do not. Sometimes essential reviewers (e.g., people from the mission) are in the field and unable to participate in the PREP review, so the AOR has to determine whether to involve that person involved in the PREP review. Some AORs do not allow a person who was unavailable during the initial review to step in at the end, others do.
- PVO: Is it possible for the AOR to ensure that the scheduled date for the PREP submission coordinates with critical reviewers' availability?
 - FFP: This is a 4-corners topic. All four members agree on submission date. If you need a call forward before the end of current year, everything needs to be approved before the call forward date in August. Start there and work backward to determine PREP submission date.

- What's another way we can make sure that reviewers who are not familiar with program can become familiar with the project other than reading the 50-page proposal narrative?
 - If there is a new person at FFP who will be covering a project, PVOs can give a short face-to-face summary of project prior to PREP.
 - FFP: CBOs who are new to a project should read all the documents up to the current date. It is the obligation of reviewers new to the project to become familiar with the project. If comments are submitted that are not relevant, it is the responsibility of the AOR to remove those comments.
 - FFP: In some cases AORs do the vetting, in other cases they may not feel empowered to strike questions. FFP will try to remedy this with the planned training.

- PVO: In addition to training for AORs, there should also be more training for the Mission. Also there should be training that includes AOR, Mission, and PVO staff so we can get everyone on the same page.
 - FFP: Good training is essential at all levels – (field staff, PVOs, AORs). High degree of turnover and lots of new staff with very different skill sets. Right now FFP has limited training resources, but we know FFP needs to emphasize training for all.
 - FFP will be developing internal guidance for AORs that will also be shared with mission and partners and hold trainings in the relatively near future (1-3 quarter of FY 17).
- PVO: Currently partners send field staff to the FFP Baseline training and FFP M&E training in the 1st year, we have management visits and backstopping visits on an annual basis and quite often they revolve around the PREP or ARR. This could be the start of the 4-corners approach to get everyone on the same page about the strategic issues. Purposeful pre-planning for the PREP.

1.3. Communication before and during the PREP process

Recommendations:

- **Increase communication between AORs and projects. Keep partners up to date.**

- **Design a clear process for PVO communication with AOR prior to submitting the PREP.**
- **Include FFP in project strategic planning process. Allow partners to make a presentation to FFP prior to submitting the PREP.**
- Comments during plenary session:
 - FFP: For internal discussion. Perhaps include work objectives in AOR that specifies they must have routine, regular, deliberate communication with awardee.
 - PVO: If there is clear understanding of what's going into next year's PREP via more routine communication, it will minimize comments, and streamlines the review.
 - FFP: Request that PVOs should also be making the effort to have routine and deliberate conversations with FFP field staff. Countless times every year FFP gets big surprises in the PREP. We read for the first time, about huge changes that are taking place in a project, and those changes are described in three sentences in the PREP.
 - FFP wants project to do new and innovative things, but FFP field staff should have pre-approved everything before it appears in the PREP and DC should be aware of everything.
 - PVO: There should be a deliberate consultative conversation at field and HQ level to go through project plans in detail. Could the agreement to institutionalize the 4 corners approach could go into the PREP guidance document?
 - FFP: Needs to be something we put forward to the AOR work objective.

Recording 1:50

1.4 Templates and Uploading Processes

Recommendations from pre-consultation interviews:

- ***Provide downloadable versions of all components required in the PREP. Make budget and M&E templates look exactly like FFPMIS entry.***
- Comments during plenary session:
 - PVO: Templates should mirror FFPMIS so that PVOs can fill them out and easily enter into FFPMIS
 - FFP: Would everyone in room agree to have exact same budget template? PVOs are all very different, some of you have cost share, most do not. All of your financial systems are different.
 - PVO: Tables and pipeline, things that have to be manually entered would be very helpful. PVOs would love to share templates with field offices so they can start to fill in exactly as we must enter them.
 - FFP: Some of you have developed your own templates that you send to the field. Is it possible for you to share them so they could be disseminating all PVOs.
 - PVO: It is possible to set up Excel so that you cannot progress to the next sheet until you have filled a sheet out correctly.
 - FFP: The system [FFPMIS] was built from some of our old templates. Do we still have them?
 - PVO: The information in them is old. They need to be updated.

- FFP: It would be difficult for FFP to create a new official template because FFP would have to get it through the Paperwork Reduction Act approval, which would take substantial time and complicated government process. FFP tries to stay away from developing required official forms because of the many layers of agreement and approval required to approve something.
- PVO: Could the templates be solely a resource for NGOs to use that match to the FFPMIS system but are not a requirement to use?

Recommendation: ***Perhaps TOPS can work with the implementing community to review and revise forms on an annual basis with the goal of developing forms that mirror FFPMIS.***

- FFP: Agree. These are implementers' tools. FFP does not ever have to see them. However you want to create efficiency for yourself is fine. FFP is unlikely to do it.

Recommendations from pre-consultation interviews:

- ***Make sure all templates are up to date and send out updated templates for each current year.***
- ***Provide one repository where partners can access all templates.***

Comments:

- TOPS: If TOPS creates the templates, perhaps the FSN can be the repository.
- ***Review each template to see if it can be streamlined. Avoid duplication across documents. Specifically review whether all beneficiary information is necessary in the various tables.***
 - FFP: Please provide more detailed input on where there are redundancies and repetition. Raise questions about specific parts of the templates. This is very general. Please flesh out the specific templates and the specific redundancies.
 - FFP: Could do this through a working group.
- ***Provide clear step-by-step guidance on uploading documents to FFPMIS. Develop TOPS webinars on PREP guidance. Update video clip posted on the TOPS website to match updated FFPMIS.***
- Comments during plenary discussion:
 - FFP: FFP already has a users' guide for FFPMIS.
 - PVO: FFPMIS has changed a number of times since the PREP guidance was first released and the guidance doesn't match FFPMIS. It needs to be updated.
 - FFP: Please let helpdesk know if there are discrepancies between guidance matching the FFPMIS process.

Recommendation: ***Is there a way that all PREP updates are done all at the same time during a certain time of year, rather than rolling out various FFPMIS updates, so that partners know when it's regularly updated?***

- FFP: The PREP is not disconnected from everything else in the system. This would be a senior FFP management decision.
- ***Require partners to only upload documents to FFPMIS once they are approved and finalized.***

- FFP will consider this recommendation and see if it will fly. Various preferences among AORs. Some prefer to have documents emailed to them so they can share them with the field. But FFPMIS is the agreed upon formal system. Understand it is time-consuming to upload multiple documents. Bottom line is that the AOR must be sure to have the final version. Sometimes the final version is not uploaded into FFPMIS, and that is not ideal.
- FFP: Things that are direct entry must go into FFPMIS when PREP is submitted (commodity pipeline/ ration calculator). We can consider changes to requirements for uploaded documents (budget narratives; technical narratives, DIPS).
- FFP: We need to work this out internally and make sure whatever we agree upon is clear in the revised guidance.
- **Provide more clarity on the date that FFPMIS will open.**
 - FFP: This is a matter of ping-pong the AOR and asking them to please open the PREP. Any FFP staff can open the PREP in FFPMIS (AOR, Amex, and all FFP staff).
 - PVO: Is it possible for PVOs to open a PREP, similar to PVO being able to now open an ARR.
 - FFP: This was in original design, but the function that allowed partners to open a PREP also allowed them to delete things. Important things were deleted. FFP is currently considering modifying the system so PVOs are able to open a PREP, but cannot delete things. We hear your concerns and are actively working on this.

Recording 2:13

1.5 Sequence of due dates for PREP and ARR

Recommendations from pre-consultation interviews:

- **Revisit the sequencing of PREP relative to the ARR. Consider a systemized strategy review ahead of the PREP, then the ARR, then the PREP.**
- Comments:
 - FFP: This has to be an internal FFP discussion – as it is linked to the continuing resolution, how FFP is trying to forward fund PVOs, and other issues. Linked to continuing FAFSA2 discussion that we should see results (ARR) before we give out additional funding (PREP).
 - FFP: Quarterly report information helps justify funding. We don't have to have the ARR to make all funding decisions. There are other ways to inform program implementation decisions besides the ARR: monitoring trips, activity managers' trips, etc.
 - FFP: There is a question about whether you need to submit a FY 2017 PREP if your project is approved in August or September 2016. 2013 guidance does state that PVO should have a discussion with the AOR under these circumstances to determine if PREP is necessary. Acknowledgement that guidance may not be written as clearly as it could be. We will re-write this to make it clearer that you always have flexibility if you discuss it with your AOR. Our goal is to streamline.
 - PVO: Since we are talking about the desire to streamline we need to recognize that incremental approvals are affecting our ability to report. There are challenges for the PREP and the ARR specifically related to M&E approval for the M&E plan. If the M&E plan is not approved, we don't know what we are supposed to be reporting against in the ARR. M&E field requirements are growing exponentially. They require a lot more effort for PVO and

FFP alike. The sooner a PVO can get M&E approved, then we can move ahead and do better reporting. It is a real challenge. Appreciate suggestions to enhance communication, but for this issue, a 4-corners meeting is not going to get us as far as we need to go.

- FFP: Request PVO to call and discuss to get better clarification on issues.
- PVO: Request for separate stakeholder consultation for M&E as it relates to the PREP.
- PVO: Budget issue as a result of late approvals. PVO asked to preload FY 17 budget on 3rd attempted submission of PREP for new program into the FY 16 template. Do we expect more of this?
- FFP: Call your AOR- may not understand fundamental challenges. If it is unclear reach out to Team Leader.

1.6 Clarity in FFP expectations

Recommendation from pre-consultation interviews:

- ***Provide clarity in the PREP guidance on various FFP expectations: level of detail needed in narrative and budget; which components of the PREP do and do not require approval; naming conventions, how to refer to which fiscal year the PREP applies to, etc.***
 - PVO comments during plenary session:
 - Standards on level of detail needed should be clear – for example, it should be clear how long the DIP narrative should be.
 - How much detail does FFP need in budget and budget explanation?
 - Newer NGOs may be doing more work than necessary because we don't have institutional knowledge that older implementers have.
 - FFP: Revised guidance will help this, also more training for AORs, improved communication - 4 corners will help with this. However, really don't think PVOs want every single detail spelled out. If every detail is down in writing, you will have to follow it. You will ruin your own opportunity for being flexible and creative if we are very directive.
 - PVO: Example, one project where we are not asked to provide much detail at all on budget; another where we must provide details on any variation + or – 10% for every single line item. We want to see more standardization of what level of detail is expected. We want to provide FFP with the information it needs, but also want to make sure what is asked for is reasonable.

Recording: 2:35

1.7 Disaggregation of program elements

Recommendation from pre-consultation interviews:

- **Require less disaggregation by program elements.**

Comments during plenary session:

- PVO: This is a large topic and perhaps warrants a smaller working group. The cost associated with breaking out in this way is an issue. We want more money going to implementation.

- FFP: This request is difficult. The requirement comes from the State Dept. FFP has to report data on program elements to a variety of stakeholders, and so we have to breakout where the \$\$ is going in our reports. If you do not provide disaggregated data we cannot report the way we are required and we may lose the stakeholders who are contributing. However, there can be a further conversation to think about how to streamline this. Perhaps there can be a 'general' category – e.g., in budgeting, where you can put the salary of a general person (e.g., cooks, drivers, cleaners) so that you don't have to divide that up by program elements.
- PVO: Cost of general items could be pro-rated based on direct costs of each program element.

Recording: 2:40

1.8 Monetization proceeds and program income.

Recommendation from pre-consultation interviews:

Provide more guidance on CDF funding. Change guidance to request that all documentation for monetization is included as a supplementary annex.

Comments during plenary session:

- FFP: This is clear and will be addressed. The guidance will be revised. In the draft PREP guidance monetization has been moved to the annex.

Closing

- Bridget Ralyea: Thank you to all who participated in person and online. Especially those who met with Laurie to provide these very important comments. We take them seriously and have already started drafting revised PREP guidance and will keep the process moving forward. FFP always wants to hear from you (PVOS). I like openness and I am always ready to entertain whatever comments you have. We want the PREP guidance to be as streamlined, as useful, and as clear as it can possibly be. Stay in contact with us. Meet among yourselves to present a unified front for changes. The door is open. Email is bralyea@usaid.gov.