Food Aid Quality Review Phase II:

Using Title II Reporting Requirements to Strengthen the Evidence Base for Programming

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For correspondence, contact:
Beatrice Lorge Rogers
Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy
Tufts University
150 Harrison Avenue
Boston, MA 02111
E-mail: Beatrice.Rogers@tufts.edu

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ACRONYMS

AOR	Agreement Officer's Representative
ARR	Annual Results Report
CBO	Country backstop officer
DEC	Development Experience Clearinghouse
DIP	Detailed Implementation Plan
FAFSA	Food Aid Food Security Assessment
FAMC	Food Assistance Manager Course
FANTA	Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance
FAQR	Food Aid Quality Review
FFP	Food for Peace
FFPIB	Food for Peace Information Bulletin
FFPIS	Food For Peace Information System
FFPMIS	Food for Peace Management Information System
FFP/M/R	Office of Food for Peace/Mission and/or Regional Office
FFPO	Food for Peace Officer
FSN	Food Security Network
FY	Fiscal Year
IPTT	Indicator Performance Tracking Table
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
PREP	Pipeline Resource Estimate Proposal
PTD	Policy and Technical Division
PVO	Private Voluntary Organization
RFA	Request for Application
SAPQ	Standardized Annual Performance Questionnaire
TOPS	Technical and Operational Performance Support
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Food Aid Quality Review

The United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) Office of Food for Peace (FFP) awarded Tufts University Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy a contract to conduct the Food Aid Quality Review (FAQR) in 2009. Phase I of the FAQR examined the nutritional needs of beneficiary populations across the developing world and the nutritional quality of commodities currently available to meet those needs. Initial focus on product quality quickly expanded to include assessments of programming and processes of food aid deemed equally important to Title II effectiveness. The findings were published in *Delivering Improved Nutrition: Recommendations for Changes to U.S. Food Aid Products and Programs* (USAID, 2011 foodaidquality.org). Phase II, which began in October 2011, is focused on assisting FFP in implementing Phase I recommendations for changes in food aid products, programming and processes.

Data Use Study

One of the recommendations from the Phase I final report was to "strengthen the evidence base for innovations in programming approaches."[1] In response to this recommendation, the Tufts research team implemented the present study to review how stakeholders—awardees and FFP staff— use the data collected from reporting in the design of Title II programs. The objective of the study is to provide guidance on how to use these data optimally, not only to monitor program operations, but also to inform and improve program design. A secondary objective was to assess possibilities for streamlining data reporting requirements to make compliance easier and more useful. The input of awardee and FFP stakeholders gained from field interviews, focus groups and workshops informed recommendations to FFP on improving the use of data from Title II programs and by so doing strengthen the evidence base for programming.

Recommendations

The recommendations made in this report are intended to improve the use and usefulness of information collected as part of FFP reporting requirements. Each recommendation came either directly from stakeholders through the many meetings, focus groups and workshops, held between March 2012 and July 2013, or from the issues identified during these same consultations. Once the recommendations were synthesized, FFP staff reviewed them to ensure relevance, and subsequently updated them as of November 2013.

The following table summarizes these recommendations and ranks them according to the following criteria: (a) Cost: the level of resources required to implement them; *low:* little or no cost; *medium*: requires measurable internal staff time; *high:* requires hiring

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[1] Webb, P., B. Rogers, I. Rosenberg, N. Schlossman, C. Wanke, J. Bagriansky, K. Sadler, Q. Johnson, J. Tilahun, A. Reese Masterson, A. Narayan. 2011. Delivering Improved Nutrition: *Recommendations for Changes to U.S. Food Aid Products and Programs.* Boston, MA: Tufts University.

external staff (b) Time: the likely time horizon for achieving them; *low:* days or weeks; *medium:* months up to a year; *high:* more than a year (c) Priority: potential for contributing to improved, evidence-based program design; and (d) Feasibility: ease of implementation. Note that low priority recommendations have been eliminated from this list, since they would be unlikely to be implemented, so only high and medium priority recommendations are presented here.

Recommendations are presented in order on the left hand column, and on the right ranked high, medium and low based on each of the criteria. The summary table eliminates anything considered low priority as there is little likelihood of implementation. Additionally, each recommendation identifies who would most likely be responsible for implementing. The rightmost column indicates whether FFP has acted on the recommendation as of November 30, 2013; a dashed line indicates the recommendation has not yet been implemented; others are noted as 'in process' or 'complete' with the dates of completion. The research team consulted with representatives of FFP between November 20 – 26, 2013 to determine the current status of each recommendation.

SUMMARY TABLE

#	Recommendation	Cost	Time	Priority	Feasibility	In Charge	Current Status
	ANNUAL REPORTS						
A1	Create a standard feedback loop for the ARR and PREP	Low	Medium	High	High	FFP/PTD	In process
A1.1	Establish a process to ensure submission of the ARR to the DEC after final approval	Low	Low	High	High	FFP/PTD	Process for submission in discussion
A1.2	Establish deadlines for issues letter, awardee response and CBO approval of the ARR	Low	Medium	High	High	FFP/PTD	----
A1.2.1	Establish timeline from ARR submission to final approval that is no more than three months	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	FFP/PTD	----
A1.3	Provide separate issues letters for the ARR and PREP	Low	Low	High	High	FFP/CBOs	----
A1.4	Establish deadlines for issues letter, awardee response and CBO approval of the PREP	Low	Medium	High	Medium	FFP/PTD	----
A1.4.1	Establish timeline from PREP submission to final approval that is no more than three months	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	FFP/PTD	----
A1.5	Ensure sufficient time for ARR approval prior to PREP submission	Low	Medium	Medium	Low	FFP/PTD	----
A1.6	Channel all ARR and PREP feedback to awardees through the CBO	Low	Low	Medium	High	FFP/PTD	----
A2	Identify the purpose and users of the ARR in a user flow chart	Low	Low	High	High	FFP/PTD	Completed Sept 2013
A2.1	Modify user flow chart for submission and approval of the ARR and incorporate into	Low	Low	High	High	FFP/PTD	----

#	Recommendation	Cost	Time	Priority	Feasibility	In Charge	Current Status
	ARR guidance						
	ANNUAL REPORTS Cont'd						
A3	Refine guidance for the ARR narrative to meet user needs	Low	Medium	High	High	FFP/Report Guidance	----
A3.1	Require explanation of any indicator targets in IPTT that vary by more than 10% in either direction	Low	Low	High	High	FFP/Report Guidance	----
A3.1.1	Include a comments column in the IPTT template to standardize the location of target variance explanations	Low	Low	High	High	FFP/Report Guidance	----
A3.2	Include explicit instructions to report on significant context changes	Low	Low	Medium	High	FFP/Report Guidance	----
A3.3	Include instructions to link previous ARRs to current narrative	Low	Low	Medium	High	FFP/Report Guidance	Complete Sept 2013
A3.4	Extend the ARR page limit from 12 to 14 pages	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	FFP/Report Guidance	----
A3.5	Include instructions to identify any formative research or field studies being conducted or completed during the past fiscal year	Low	Low	Medium	High	FFP/Report Guidance	----
A3.5.1	Include instructions to list document names for any special studies or evaluations conducted during the life of the award in the ARR narrative	Low	Low	Medium	High	FFP/Report Guidance	----
A3.5.2	Establish a process that assures submission of special studies to the DEC	Low	Low	High	High	FFP/Report Guidance	----
A3.6	Simplify the language of key questions	Low	Low	Medium	High	FFP/Report Guidance	----

Food Aid Quality Review

#	Recommendation	Cost	Time	Priority	Feasibility	In Charge	Current Status
	MONITORING & EVALUATION						
B1	Define a minimum percentage of project budget for M&E in RFA guidance and incorporate into budget approval process	Low	Low	High	High	FFP/M&E	----
B1.1	Ensure appropriate allocation of resources to M&E	Low	Low	High	High	FFP/CBOs	----
B2	Provide harmonized output level indicators for annual monitoring	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	FFP	Completed April 2013
B3	Provide standard annual monitoring tools	Medium	High	Medium	High	FFP	----
B4	Improve awardee M&E capacity with periodic TOPS workshops	Medium	Medium	Medium	High	TOPS	In Progress Nov 2013
B5	Identify evaluation criteria to ensure quality data collection for reliable analysis from outside contractors.	Medium	Medium	High	High	FFP	----
B5.1	Conduct a process evaluation of new baseline management	High	Medium	Medium	Medium	FFP/M&E	In Progress Nov 2013
B6	Design baseline and final evaluations as complementary activities and when possible contract baseline and final evaluation surveys as a single task	High	Medium	High	Medium	FFP/M&E	----
B7	Issue an updated FFPIB on M & E policies	Low	Low	Medium	High	FFP/PTD	In Progress Nov 2013
B8	Send trip reports to awardees as feedback	Low	Low	Medium	High	FFP/CBOs	----

#	Recommendation	Cost	Time	Priority	Feasibility	In Charge	Current Status
	KNOWLEDGE SHARING						
C1	Develop FFP policy for standardizing file names	Low	Medium	High	High	FFP/PTD	----
C1.1	Issue an FFPIB on the new file naming policy	Low	Low	High	High	FFP/PTD	----
C1.2	Include reminders of the file naming policy within repositories	Low	Medium	High	High	FFP	----
C2	Create a regional monthly newsletter of program highlights	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	FFP/Info Officers	----
	FFP TRAINING						
D1	Adopt a standard FFP orientation plan to be completed in one year	Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	FFP/PTD	----
D2	Designate a liaison to manage the training of new hires	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	FFP/PTD	----
D3	Ensure M&E training for FFPOs processing reports	Medium	Medium	High	High	FFP/PTD	----
D4	Supplement in-person training with online modules	Medium	High	Medium	High	FFP/PTD	----
	FFPMIS						
E1	Enter ARR IPTT as data rather than attachments	High	High	High	Medium	FFP	----
E2	Conduct FFPMIS user surveys as input into further training	Medium	Medium	Medium	High	FFP	----
E3	Provide video training for FFP staff	High	High	High	High	FFP	----
E4	Provide in-person training for FFP staff	High	Medium	Medium	High	FFP	In Progress Nov 2013
E5	Link notification system with automatic email	High	Medium	High	High	FFP	----

Based on the rankings listed above, the following recommendations are high priority and feasibility and could be implemented fairly readily with little time and at low cost:

Annual Reports

A1.1 - Require CBOs to submit the ARR to the DEC after final approval

A1.3 - Provide separate issues letters for the ARR and PREP

A.2 - Identify the purpose and users of the ARR in a user flow chart

A2.1 - Modify user flow chart for submission and approval of the ARR and incorporate into ARR guidance

A3.1 - Require explanation of any indicator targets in IPTT that vary by more than 10% in either direction

A3.1.1 - Include a comments column in the IPTT template to standardize the location of target variance explanations

A3.5.2 - Require CBOs to submit special studies to the DEC

Monitoring & Evaluation

B1 - Define a minimum percentage of the budget for M&E in RFA guidance and incorporate into budget approval process

B1.1 - Ensure appropriate allocation of resources to M&E

The following recommendations may take longer or require more resources, but should be considered high priority because of their potential to improve the use of data to develop evidence-based programming.

<u>Annual Reports</u>

A1 - Create a standard feedback loop for the ARR and PREP

<u>Monitoring & Evaluation</u>

B5 - Identify evaluation criteria to ensure quality data collection for reliable analysis from outside contractors.

B6 - Design baseline and final evaluations as complementary activities and when possible contract baseline and final evaluation surveys as a single task

<u>Knowledge Sharing</u>

C1 - Develop FFP policy for standardizing file names

<u>FFP Training</u>

D3 - Ensure M&E training for FFPOs processing reports

II. BACKGROUND

FFP Initiatives for Improving Title II Programming
The present study is one of several FFP initiatives to improve overall efficiency and effectiveness of Title II food aid programs. In addition to the FAQR, in 2010, FFP established the Technical Operation and Performance Support (TOPS) Program to strengthen the capacity of Title II awardees and improve the quality and effectiveness of food aid by fostering collaboration, innovation and knowledge sharing within the food security and nutrition community. TOPS created the Food Security Network (FSN) to build a community of practice as part of their capacity building and knowledge sharing strategy. Food for Peace upgraded the Food for Peace Management Information System (FFPMIS) from the Food for Peace Information System (FFPIS) to enhance program management and reporting capabilities. FFPMIS includes proposal, program and financial management data of individual Title II programs for FFP and partners. The Second Food Aid Food Security Assessment (FAFSA II) (van Haeften et al, 2013) was the second comprehensive review commissioned by FFP to assess Title II development programs. FAFSA II reviewed programs from fiscal years (FY) 2003 to 2009 to document overall achievements and to identify promising practices, lessons learned, strengths, weaknesses and constraints to achieving results. Continued FFP efforts towards improved efficiency and accountability include plans to revise the FFP Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) policy and revise and update the FFP strategy.

III. METHODS

Document Review
The Tufts team reviewed documents pertaining to the reporting requirements of Title II development program awardees. These included FFP Information Bulletins (FFPIB) (https://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/agriculture-and-food-security/food-assistance/ guidance/food-peace-information-bulletins), report guidance and miscellaneous background documents such as the FFP Strategic Plan for 2006-2010 (USAID/FFP, 2005), a GAO report regarding Title II (GAO, 2007), and a 2003 Title II streamlining report (USAID/FFP, 2003).

Awardee Focus Groups
The team conducted three separate focus groups with headquarters staff of awardee organizations in July and August of 2012 to obtain their perspective on the potential to make use of data from Title II reporting.

Awardee Field Interviews
Based on feedback from the focus groups, the team created a qualitative interview guide for awardee field staff. TOPS provided a list of active Title II development food aid programs, and the research team, in consultation with TOPS, selected eight countries[2] based on reaching programs representing a variety of contexts and program experiences with Title II. In August and September of 2012 the research team interviewed representatives of up to two awardees working in a country. If more than two awardees were working within a country, the two that were least represented in other

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[2] Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, DRC, Guatemala, Liberia, Madagascar, Sierra Leone, Uganda

countries were chosen in order to diversify the pool of potential respondents.

Selected Title II awardees participated in the interviews to describe how data were collected and used for programming in the field. Overall, the team interviewed nineteen individuals, ranging from Chief of Party to M&E Manager from seven different awardee organizations, via Skype. The researchers identified themes from the transcripts and used them to create an agenda for a stakeholder workshop for awardee headquarters staff.

Awardee Stakeholder Workshop
With support from TOPS, the research team conducted a stakeholder workshop in October 2012 with twenty-three headquarters staff from eleven Title II awardees. The objective of the workshop was to establish the burden, usefulness and accuracy of data collection and to determine how data could be used more effectively to improve program design. Participants were divided into discussion groups to explore recurring themes that came from the field interviews and to offer additional or alternative suggestions. The four core topics were (a) feedback and guidelines, (b) outsourcing of evaluations, (c) indicators and data collection and (d) occasional field studies. Groups were tasked with discussing key issues in the identified themes and to develop actionable recommendations for FFP. A plenary session followed that allowed for a larger group discussion of themes and recommendations.

FFP Focus Groups
The research team also organized a focus group with FFP officers in October 2012 to ascertain how different FFP staff make use of reports and to get suggestions on ways to make them more useful. Eleven individuals working in five different countries and Washington D.C. participated. This provided an opportunity to hear about the different uses of reports by FFP staff, and to gain their perspective in contrast to that of the awardee organizations. In an additional focus group, six Country Backstop Officers (CBOs) and a FFP technical advisor based in Washington DC also discussed uses of the annual reports and evaluations.

FFP Field Interviews
Fifteen FFP officers including a CBO, several regional M&E staff and field officers participated in interviews via Skype in June 2013. Regions covered east, west and southern Africa as well as Guatemala. The interviews lasted approximately an hour and followed a semi-structured interview guide on the uses of different reports, reporting systems and training.

FFP Stakeholder Workshop
Sixteen FFP staff, including M&E specialists from East, West and Southern Africa, M&E DC team, FFP information officers, CBOs and FFP field officers, as well as AMEX International staff attended a stakeholder workshop in July 2013. After findings from FFP focus groups and field interviews were presented, participants were divided into discussion groups to explore recurring themes that came from the field interviews and to offer additional or alternative suggestions. The six core topics were (a) annual reports, (b) evaluations, (c) knowledge sharing, (d) FFPMIS, (e) Quarterly Web

Interfaced Commodity Reporting (QWICR) and (f) training. The groups discussed key issues in the identified themes and developed actionable recommendations for FFP senior management. A plenary session followed that allowed for a larger group discussion of themes and recommendations.

Meetings & Conferences
In addition, the team consulted throughout the study with experts from TOPS in M&E and Knowledge Management, as well as with several staff members from FFP, FANTA and AMEX International involved in M&E and report guidance, to craft appropriate recommendations. Findings from FAFSA II that were presented in July and October 2012 also helped to highlight recurring issues with regard to Title II reporting and improving the evidence base. The FSN Network also hosted a Knowledge Sharing Conference in November 2012 in DC and quarterly meetings with the Knowledge Management Task Force, which was integral to framing some of the issues around Title II reporting.

IV. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS
The data use study focused on reporting requirements of Title II development programs that can potentially improve programming effectiveness. This excluded a quarterly financial report and the close-out plan also required of awardees. Outlined below are the relevant reports included in the present review, and background on how they are used.

Annual Results Report (ARR)
The ARR is due each year on the first Monday in November from awardees to the AOR in FFP Washington, to the Office of Food for Peace/Mission and/or Regional Office(FFP/M/R), as appropriate, and to the Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC), USAID's public access repository for project documentation. The report includes a 12-page narrative detailing project activities from the previous fiscal year, as well as several tables and attachments, including the Indicator Performance Tracking Table (IPTT), Detailed Implementation Plan (DIP), Standardized Annual Performance Questionnaire (SAPQ), Tracking Table for Beneficiaries and Resources, Expenditure Report, Monetization Tables, Evaluation Reports, Supplemental Materials and Completeness Checklist.

Pipeline Resource Estimate Proposal (PREP)
The PREP is also an annual report due between August and November depending on project implementation dates; reports are due based on implementation year. It is submitted to FFP Washington and FFP/M/R and describes planned activities in order to justify commodity call-forwards for the upcoming project year. The PREP is not submitted to the DEC because it is a planning document for the upcoming implementation year, while the ARR focuses on results and deals with the previous year.

Baseline Study Report
The baseline study, used as the basis for judging program impact in the final evaluation takes place before the end of the first project implementation year, and the corresponding report should be submitted no later than three months after that. It is

submitted to FFP Washington, FFP/M/R and to the DEC. In the past, external evaluators hired by the awardees conducted the baseline, but for FY 2012 and FY2013, FFP Washington contracted the baseline surveys to a competitively selected research firm. Baseline surveys collect population level data for a series of impact and outcome indicators to be tracked, collected again after project implementation, and used to evaluate project impact and outcomes. The information collected at baseline also helps to set indicator targets.

Midterm Evaluation
The midterm evaluation is to be conducted midway through the life of a five-year award, and the corresponding report is due three months afterwards. It is also submitted to FFP Washington, FFP/M/R and to the DEC. The awardee manages the midterm which usually collects qualitative data at the beneficiary (not population) level. This allows program implementers an opportunity to assess progress and barriers and take corrective action if necessary.

Final Evaluation
The final evaluation should be conducted as close to the expiration of the project implementation as possible, or two months before submission of a new proposal, but should be conducted during the same season (e.g. rainy or dry season) as the baseline survey. The report is due three months after the survey is conducted and is submitted to FFP Washington, FFP/M/R and to the DEC. External evaluators collect population level data to compare to baseline indicators to determine the overall outcomes and when possible impact of the program. Final evaluations are also a key factor in determining approval of a follow-on proposal by the awardee in the same country.

Special Studies
Awardees often conduct special studies on an ad hoc basis in response to specific program-driven information needs. Though not required by FFP, they are included in this study because of their potential to improve programming. Through requests for applications (RFAs), FFP encourages applicants to incorporate research and learning into implementation plans. This could include formative research or a project-specific field study. Awardees can also qualify for funding through the TOPS Program Improvement Awards that offer up to $100,000 to conduct special studies. Such studies, if conducted, should be submitted to the DEC.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS
The following sections present recommendations concerning the reports listed above. Each section, describes the report, summarizes the recommendations, and then explains and justifies each recommendation. As this report covers recommendations that are already in process, a summary table that identifies the current status of each recommendation (as of November 2013) is provided on pages 4-7.

A. Annual Reports
The ARR and the PREP constitute the two major reports that are due annually throughout the life of the award. The PREP describes a program's commodity resource needs and activities for the upcoming implementation year and is used to place a call

forward for specified commodities. The ARR describes activities from the previous fiscal year and is used to report to stakeholders, including the Department of State's Office of U.S. Foreign Assistance (F Bureau), Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and Congress.

The ARR, in particular, has potential not only for reporting to FFP on current program progress, accomplishments and challenges, but also for contributing to improved program management and institutional memory for both FFP and awardees. Because the ARR contains information that can be aggregated to look at regional or sectoral trends, it could be very useful for understanding how different types of programs are implemented across regions or years. For awardees, a robust ARR could serve as orientation for new staff coming into a project. Similarly, new FFP personnel could use ARRs to familiarize themselves with a portfolio or a particular type of intervention. These examples demonstrate the potential importance of the ARR in building a Title II evidence base. Below are recommendations regarding the ARR and PREP that will help to streamline reporting and allow for the optimal utilization of Title II data.

Recommendations for Annual Reports
A1	Create a standard feedback loop for the ARR and PREP
A1.1	Establish a process to ensure submission of the ARR to the DEC after final approval
A1.2	Establish deadlines for issues letter, awardee response and CBO approval of the ARR
A1.2.1	Establish timeline from ARR submission to final approval that is no more than three months
A1.3	Provide separate issues letters for the ARR and PREP
A1.4	Establish deadlines for issues letter, awardee response and CBO approval of the PREP
A1.4.1	Establish timeline from PREP submission to final approval that is no more than three months
A1.5	Ensure sufficient time for ARR approval prior to PREP submission
A1.6	Channel all ARR and PREP feedback to awardees through the CBO
A2	Identify the purpose and users of the ARR in a user flow chart
A2.1	Modify user flow chart for submission and approval of the ARR and incorporate into ARR guidance

A3	Refine guidance for the ARR narrative to meet user needs
A3.1	Require explanation of any indicator targets in IPTT that vary by more than 10% in either direction
A3.1.1	Include a comments column in the IPTT template to standardize the location of target variance explanations
A3.2	Include explicit instructions to report on significant context changes
A3.3	Include instructions to link previous ARRs to current narrative

A3.4	Extend the ARR page limit from 12 to 14 pages
A3.5	Include instructions to identify any formative research or field studies being conducted or completed during the past fiscal year
A3.5.1	Include document names for any special studies or evaluations conducted during the life of the award in the ARR narrative
A3.5.2	Require CBOs to submit special studies to the DEC
A3.6	Simplify the language of key questions

A1 Create a standard feedback loop for the ARR and PREP

Awardees submit both the ARR and the PREP to their headquarters; from there it is submitted to the FFPMIS where the Policy and Technical Division (PTD) and CBOs can access and approve it. The CBO may provide feedback, with input from FFP/M/R, and request changes, but the process and timeline for feedback from FFP to awardees are not standardized for the ARR or the PREP. Since the PREP needs to be based on the information contained in the ARR, and shipment of commodities is contingent on the PREP, it is important to standardize how these reports are processed. Creating a standard feedback loop that specifies the timeline, who is responsible for providing feedback, and the process for confirming that the report is acceptable, will optimize the use of these reports. The following recommendations will help to establish such a feedback loop.

A1.1 Establish a process to ensure submission of the ARR to the DEC after final approval

Current guidance stipulates that awardees are responsible for submitting the ARR to the DEC. There are two barriers to achieving this. First, CBOs must approve the ARR before it is considered finalized, only after which awardees can submit to the DEC. However, the new FFPMIS does not provide a notification to awardees when a report has been approved; therefore they must be motivated enough to go back into the system to check if the report has been approved and then submit to the DEC. This leads to the second barrier, which is the disincentive, in general, for awardees to submit to the DEC, which is publicly accessible, ARRs that might contain information or tools that they prefer to keep internal. Since private voluntary organizations (PVOs) bid against each other for Title II awards, there is little incentive to provide materials that may help the competition. However, these are publicly funded projects, and the information should be made available through the DEC. Development of a process for ensuring submission should increase the probability that these reports are submitted.

Development of a process to ensure submission, taking into account the key responsibility of CBOs as AORs for project management can address these barriers to DEC submission. Since CBOs are the agreement officer's representatives (AOR) of the award, they are responsible for ensuring that the terms of the award are met. Any process to be developed should help them to facilitate the submission of all appropriate reports to the DEC. According to USAID Evaluation Policy, documents should be uploaded no more than three months after being finalized. Once the ARR has been approved, it may be possible for an action to be included in FFPMIS that would automatically submit appropriate ARR documents including the narrative and special

studies to the DEC. The FFPMIS team should explore this with CBOs and agree on a process.

A1.2 Establish deadlines for issues letter, awardee response and CBO approval of the ARR

If there are questions or clarifications about the ARR, the CBO may send an issues letter itemizing changes to be made to the report. Awardees do not know, however, when and if to expect such feedback. An open-ended timeline means the awardee may not know whether changes to the report are necessary or whether the program itself would need modification. With a fixed timeline, they would know when to expect feedback so they can plan for the time needed to respond to any issues raised by the CBO. Moreover, a delay of more than a program quarter (3 months) may mean that any recommendations come too late to be applied to what is happening on the ground. Having an ARR issues letter deadline will ensure that awardees receive comments in a timely manner, when they are still relevant and useful. Lastly, a fixed timeline would allow sufficient time for awardees to respond to an issues letter. This timeline should be established in the next set of ARR guidance documents based on the experience with FFPMIS submission for 2013.

A1.2.1 Establish timeline from ARR submission to final approval that is no more than three months

Since ARRs are due the first week in November, the entire feedback and approval process should not be more than three months. This ensures the feedback will still be relevant and actionable. Awardees should not be obligated to respond to issues if they are sent later than this deadline.

A1.3 Provide separate issues letters for ARR and PREP

Issues letters for the ARR and PREP are sometimes combined. This can result in awardees receiving issues letters several months after submission of one of the reports and being given a short turnaround time – sometimes as little as one week – to respond to several threshold (priority) issues. When ARR and PREP issues letters are combined, awardees may be required to address multiple issues from the two reports, without additional time to respond. Moreover, waiting to combine responses to two reports may result in delayed feedback. Providing issues letters separately in response to the ARR and the PREP will allow for the feedback, response and approval of each report to conform to its recommended time line, and will allow the awardee to focus on issues from a single report.

A1.4 Establish deadlines for issues letter, awardee response and CBO approval of the PREP

In order for awardees to place a call forward and receive commodities, they must obtain PREP approval from their CBO. Since currently there is no deadline for when to expect PREP feedback via an issues letter, there is also no clear deadline for PREP approval. There have been instances when an awardee waited ten months or a year for PREP approval. Although these are extreme examples, they highlight the need to set a clear time frame for feedback and approval of the PREPs. Timely approval of the PREP will ensure commodities are received when they are most appropriate for programming.

Timely feedback, via an issues letter, is essential for expediting such approval.

A1.4.1 Establish timeline from PREP submission to final approval that is no more than three months
Since PREPs are now scheduled on the U.S. Government fiscal year, FFP can establish appropriate time frames of no more than three months total for approval based on date of PREP submission, CBO feedback, awardee response, and subsequent PREP approval. Standardizing the timeline for PREP approval will ensure more efficient use of time and resources for FFP programs by promoting timely shipments of food.

A1.5 Ensure sufficient time for ARR approval prior to PREP submission
Many awardees discussed the need to time the PREP to be due after the ARR. In this way results from the ARR could be used to inform plans for the upcoming year, reflected in the PREP. Currently, the ARR due date is fixed, reflecting the fiscal year; the PREP due date is based on project implementation year and is determined at the discretion of the AOR, who is usually the CBO. Often, awardees find themselves doing the PREP before or simultaneously with the ARR.

Starting with FY14 new program submissions, FFP changed the implementation year to be equal to the fiscal year. The grants management team is considering this change for ongoing programs as well. Regardless of which cycle the PREP is on, however, it is important that it be due after the ARR, so that awardees can make use of the information collected in the ARR to properly plan for the upcoming year with the PREP. This recommendation is made recognizing the time constraints for CBOs to process ARRs and provide feedback and approval, holiday schedules and the need to time food shipments so they arrive when expected.

A1.6 Channel all ARR and PREP feedback to awardees through the CBO
Awardees also do not know from whom to expect feedback on the ARR and PREP. Mission staff, FFP regional office, FFP field officers and CBOs in FFP Washington all have access to these reports and may or may not provide feedback to the awardee. In most cases, the FFP/M/R does provide feedback, but this may be sent directly to the awardee working in the field or it may be sent to the CBO who then includes it in an issues letter that is sent to awardee headquarters, which then is relayed to the awardee field office. Awardee experience has shown when feedback comes from multiple sources, it may be conflicting or repetitive, and it is not always clear to them whose feedback takes priority in such a case.

In order to consolidate feedback and ensure consistency, FFP should require all stakeholders wishing to provide feedback to the annual reports to send comments directly to the CBO. If the CBO agrees with the feedback or thinks it should be considered, s/he can include it in the issues letter. This would eliminate potentially conflicting feedback being sent to awardees.

A2 Identify the purpose and users of the ARR in a user flow chart
There are a number of stakeholders who use the ARR for different reasons. They include: CBOs, USAID Missions, FFP senior management, FFP Information Officers,

AMEX International, Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance (FANTA) III Project staff and awardees. Discussions with awardees revealed that they were unclear as to how FFP used the ARR. According to FFPIB 09-07, issued in 2009, the ARR is used by FFP to demonstrate the impact of Title II programs on food security to stakeholders such as Congress, the F Bureau and OMB. Impact can really only be demonstrated with evaluation data and not from the monitoring or output data that are reported in the ARR; nonetheless, one use of the ARR is to provide anecdotes and success stories to show positive benefits to the target population.

In order to produce an ARR that meets all of the needs of stakeholders, it is important for awardees to know what those needs are. Articulating the purpose of the ARR will also align the expectations of FFP with what can realistically be provided by awardees with the beneficiary data they report.

While it is not in the format of a flow chart, the most recent ARR guidance issued for FY 2013 provides the needed explanation of how the ARR is used.

A2.1 Modify user flow chart for submission and approval of the ARR and incorporate into ARR guidance
The user flow chart provided below in Figure 1 identifies stakeholders and how they use the ARR. This flow chart does not reflect upcoming changes due to the introduction of the FFPMIS. Figure 2 shows the flow chart reflecting the changes recommended in this document. Once this new flow chart has been approved by FFP (with any modifications deemed necessary), it should be incorporated into ARR guidance. While ARR users have been identified in the most recent guidance, a visual would still be a helpful quick reference.

FIGURE 1

Annual Results Report – Submission Flow Chart (Current)

This chart identifies to whom the ARR is currently submitted and how different stakeholders use it.
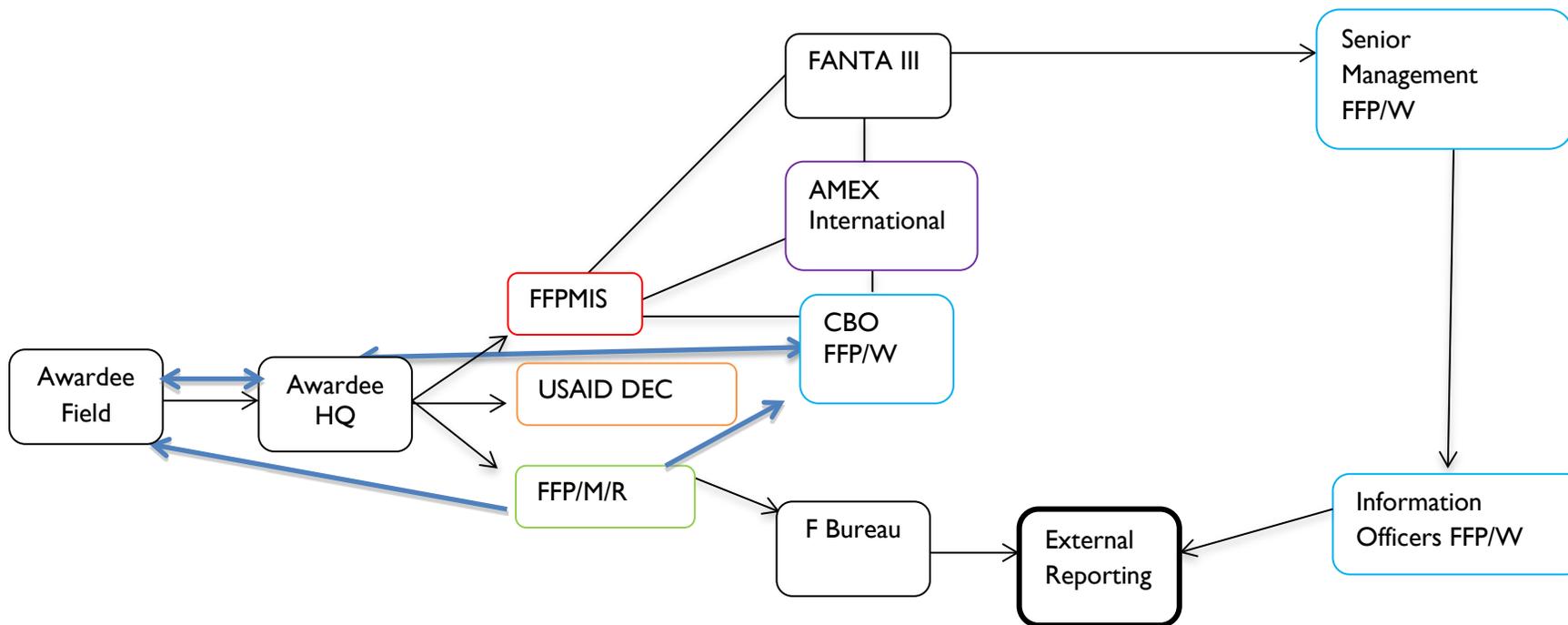
Key:
DEC = Development Experience Clearinghouse
FANTA = Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance
F Bureau = Office of U.S. Foreign Assistance
FFPMIS = FFP Management Information System
FFP/M/R = Office of Food for Peace/Mission and/or Regional Office
FFP/W = FFP Washington
→ = Feedback

Food Aid Quality Review

OVERVIEW

FFP uses the ARR as a monitoring tool to review project results from the past fiscal year and ensure adequate progress against strategic objectives, and to see if the PREP is reasonable. The awardee field office typically submits the ARR to headquarters; awardee headquarters staff review it before submitting to the FFPMIS. The FFPMIS is the updated information system for FFP that went live starting in FY 2013. The Mission or FFP regional office use the IPTT to inform the Performance Plan and Report, that feeds into the F Bureau information system FACTS Info, which, among other purposes, helps satisfy Congressional requirements. FFP has multiple uses for the ARR including dissemination of success stories, development of the International Food Aid Report (IFAR) and having a summarized snapshot of program activities for CBOs and for portfolio reviews. Awardees are required to submit the ARR to the DEC once it is cleared by the AOR(CBO) and provide proof of submission. This does not always happen for reasons discussed in section A.1. Ideally, once ARRs are approved awardees can use them to inform the PREP.

FFP PTD first accesses the ARR through the FFPMIS and provides initial approval of the SAPQ. The CBO then accesses the report through the FFPMIS and may provide feedback in the form of issues letters via email to awardee headquarters. Awardees usually have one week to respond to these issues and re-submit the ARR to the CBO through the FFPMIS. Currently there is no deadline for the CBO to provide feedback to the awardee, and no system notification that the revised ARR has been approved. This report highlights the importance of timely report submission and feedback in section A.1.

FANTA also accesses the ARRs through the FFPMIS. They prepare summary reports and success stories from the ARRs as well as tabulate SAPQ data and send this to FFP for use in external reporting and publications such as speeches, the FFP website, reports to Congress (including the International Food Aid Report), USAID publications such as Frontline (a monthly publication) and on Facebook and Twitter.

FIGURE 2

Annual Results Report – Submission Flow Chart (Recommended)

This chart identifies how the ARR flow would change if recommendations herein were implemented.
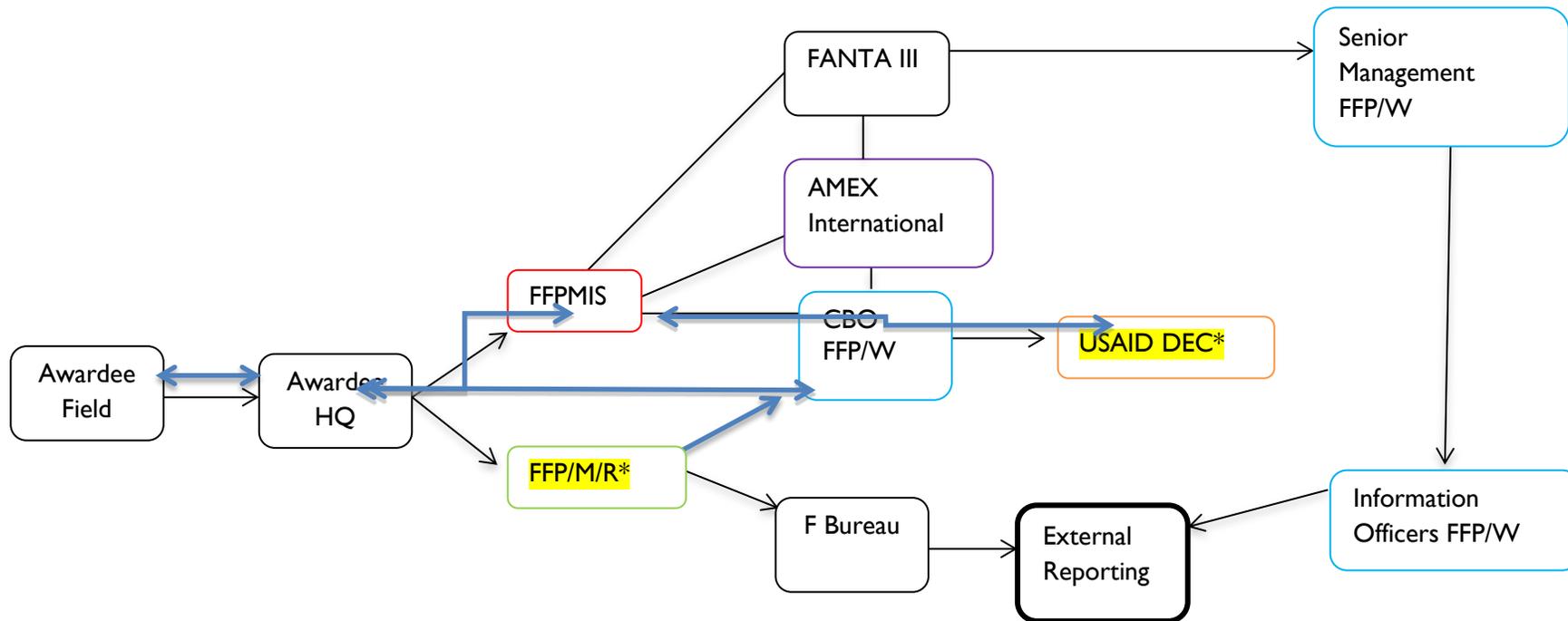
Key:
DEC   = Development Experience Clearinghouse
FANTA   = Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance
F Bureau = Office of U.S. Foreign Assistance
FFPMIS   = FFP Management Information System
FFP/M/R = Office of Food for Peace/Mission and/or Regional Office
FFP/W   = FFP Washington
          = Feedback

Food Aid Quality Review

*HIGHLIGHTED CHANGES

USAID DEC: Since the ARR needs to be approved and considered final before being submitted, FFPMIS should have a system that triggers automatic submission to the DEC only after it has been approved by CBO and marked approved in FFPMIS (Recommendation A1.1).

FFP/M/R: Without a defined feedback loop, the FFP/M/R may send feedback either directly to the awardee field office or to the CBO. Recommendation A1.5 calls for streamlining feedback by sending all feedback to the CBO to be included in a single comprehensive issues letter.

A3 Refine guidance for the ARR narrative to meet user needs

There are many factors that could affect the quality of ARRs. These may include: English language skills of the staff preparing it, CBO-specific instructions to awardees, and Title II experience of staff. Though these factors vary by individual, certain adjustments to the guidance may provide the structure needed to improve the quality of the ARR so it may be more useful to its users.

A3.1 Require explanation of any indicator targets in the IPTT that vary by more than 10% in either direction

The IPTT is one of the most important components of the ARR. It reports indicator targets compared to what was achieved, allowing CBOs to track progress. Establishing a consistent benchmark for reporting indicators that differ from their targets will result in consistent reporting of these differences. This benchmark would be consistent with USAID standard practice with annual reporting (i.e. Performance Plan and Report), which requires Operating Units to explain indicator targets that fluctuate more than 10% in either direction. Additionally, new FFP ARR guidance requires deviation narratives (i.e. an explanation for why an indicator varies by more than 10%) for indicators captured in the SAPQ that vary by more than 10%. Because the SAPQ is not used to assess individual programs, though, it is important that the IPTT also provide such insight with the use of deviation narratives.

A3.1.1 Include a comments column in the IPTT template to standardize the location of target variance explanations

Variances between indicator targets and achievements require explanation to permit the CBO to assess whether action is needed and to provide context to any other users of the IPTT. Methods vary as to how CBOs ask awardees to report significant target variances. Some add a comments column to the IPTT and DIP, while others ask awardees to highlight in the narrative activities that weren't completed and explain why. A brief (one sentence) explanation should be included in the IPTT (see example below); standardizing where within the IPTT explanations are provided will also make these explanations easier to find. If further explanation is needed, it can be included in the narrative. Below is a sample IPTT which gives a general idea of the type of information a comments column would include, for the given year.

Table 1. Example of IPTT with Comment Column

Indicators	Target	Actual	% Target Met	Comments
Number of vulnerable households benefiting directly from USG assistance (Beneficiaries)	30,000	26,533	88%	Roads to x region were inaccessible during the rainy season

A3.2 Include explicit instructions to report on significant context changes

Reporting on significant context changes that may affect the program helps not only to

explain fluctuating targets but also to anticipate future challenges. Such changes may include unforeseen issues such as political instability, changes in government policy, emergencies, or natural disasters. CBOs need this information to understand the IPTT and DIP that detail activity progress. Because the context will frame the rest of the information contained in the ARR, it should be included in the introduction of the narrative.

A3.3 Include instructions to link previous ARRs to current narrative

CBOs commonly express concern that ARRs, in general, do not place the current year's report within the context of the entire project. This makes it more difficult to assess overall progress of the project as a whole. If ARRs were explicitly formatted to incorporate reference to previous reports, it would make the ARR one of the most useful tools for institutional memory necessary to build an evidence base.

One or two paragraphs should be dedicated to linking previous ARRs and the one being submitted. This section should articulate what challenges were identified in the previous ARR and how they were addressed during the current report year.

Note that the most recent ARR guidance[3] has already incorporated this recommendation: "Reference should be made to any sections of the approved award or previous ARR that are relevant to an issue or point being addressed in the Narrative (include page number and/or section references)."

A3.4 Extend the ARR page limit from 12 to 14 pages

The narrative of the ARR must include discussion of annual results, success stories and lessons learned with a 12-page limit. Many awardees find the page limit difficult because often more time is spent cutting the report down than putting it all together. The general sentiment is there needs to be more space for discussion of qualitative aspects of the project not explained by indicators alone. While recognizing that CBOs have limited time to review ARRs, an extra two pages used to explain program changes, link the current report to previous years, and place the quantitative information in context, could ultimately save time by providing a more comprehensive report that may not require follow-up questions or requests for clarification.

A3.5 Include instructions to identify in the ARR any formative research or field studies conducted or completed during the past fiscal year

Formative research and occasional field studies (hereafter referred to as special studies) are essential tools available to awardees to respond to immediate information needs to inform programming. At present, there is no systematic way for capturing or sharing the results of these studies being conducted by individual Title II projects. There are two ways a special study could be captured by FFP. One, it could be submitted on the

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[3] USAID/FFP (United States Agency for International Development/Food for Peace). 2013. Annual Results Report Guidance. Washington, DC.

FFPMIS as supplemental material to the ARR. However, submission to the DEC might have the issues previously identified around ARR submission, and there is currently no system for tracking this submission. Two, it could be submitted to the DEC directly. While ARR guidance instructs awardees to submit any assessments, evaluations, analyses or special studies directly to the DEC, there is still no system to ensure that studies are indeed submitted. Such a system should be developed.

The ARR guidance should require explicit mention of these studies, and incorporate information regarding study objective, context and findings (if available) in the narrative. If studies are required to be identified in the ARR, CBOs can track study progress and can also help to disseminate findings to a wider audience such as other FFP colleagues and through the DEC. Including study information in the ARR is also a way to provide a more complete picture of the project and link all project documents together. The extra two pages allotted for the ARR narrative could be used, in part, to provide this information. Special studies are a rich source of information relevant to the design of other related programs and could contribute to the evidence base for program design. It should be possible to develop a system for tracking this or triggering this in FFPMIS.

A3.5.1 Include document names for any special studies or evaluations conducted during the life of the award in the ARR narrative

In order to track other project documents and link all of them together, the ARR narrative should list the exact document names, after lessons learned and before attachments. This will ensure the list is included in the ARR section available on the DEC with the rest of the narrative and allow others to find these documents once they too are submitted to the DEC.

A3.5.2 Establish a process that ensures submission of special studies to the DEC

As AOR of the award, the CBO should be responsible for assuring the submission of special studies to the DEC to ensure their availability. Though the recommendation has already been made in this report highlighting the importance of establishing a process for assuring submission of ARRs to the DEC[4], this will not capture special studies. When a special study report is submitted as an attachment to the ARR, the process should ensure submission to the DEC as a separately searchable report.

A3.6 Simplify the language of key questions

Key questions included in the ARR guidance mostly determine the information that is covered in the ARR narrative. One participant in a CBO focus group observed that even when key questions are answered in the narrative, it does not provide necessary information for understanding the project. These questions could be written in simpler language, making it easier for those preparing the report to be sure they are including what is needed.

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[4] Recommendation # 1.1

Below are the suggested changes:

Original question:
Which circumstances or factors led to exceeding or falling short of expected targets? Were targets set too high or too low and why? How will problems be corrected? How will experiences of prior fiscal years be incorporated into the upcoming fiscal year's implementation to improve performance?
Suggested change:
Provide an explanation of any indicator in the IPTT that varied by more than 10% of its target and explain how shortfalls will be corrected.

Original question:
Have any key assumptions changed? Have assumptions held true?
Suggested change:
If any key assumptions have changed from your original proposal or most recent ARR explain why.

Original question:
In what ways were the strategies in achieving the food aid program objectives influenced by feedback from recipients and/or beneficiaries? Did this feedback confirm the food aid program is on track or do issues remain?
Suggested change:
Identify ways in which beneficiary feedback has informed programming.

Original question:
How has food aid program management been influenced by partnering with various actors (i.e. non-governmental organizations, the private sector, host country government officials or representatives, etc.) and changes in the institutional and policy framework?
Suggested change:
Identify any partnerships, policies or institutional changes that have affected the program.

Original question:
How have sectoral activities of the fiscal year being reported affected LOA food security objectives and what is the potential for sustainability (e.g., what is the food security impact of improved water and sanitation infrastructure, service and practices for the affected households and the region or country as a whole)?
Suggested change:
How have sectoral activities affected overall food security objectives?
E.g. how have water sanitation activities affected the food security of beneficiaries and the population as a whole?

B. Monitoring and Evaluation

As the FAFSA II recognized, FFP has made great progress in standardizing evaluations, including the most recent move for FFP to manage external evaluators conducting baseline and final evaluations. This is in line with the updated USAID Evaluation policy that calls for rigorous, standardized evaluations by a third-party firm. The policy also states: "USAID acknowledges that more intensive evaluation efforts may increase the need for dedicated monitoring and data collection resources within contracts and grants to implementing partners"[5] (USAID, 2011). The FAFSA II also recognized the need for FFP to strengthen monitoring of project performance. Recommendations made below will help FFP to continue to strengthen M&E which is essential for capturing Title II program data and building an evidence base.

FFP is now developing an M&E policy and guidance for development (non-emergency) programs that will include information contained in the FFPIBs. This has been in process for quite some time, and has been evolving rapidly during the period of the present review. Many of the recommendations herein may now or soon be in process or already adopted. The new guidance should include the information outlined below on policy changes, including the alternatives for baseline and final surveys, and will be available at the end of FY 2014. The guidance should take into account many of the recommendations of this section, which came out of the internal and partner discussions on M & E both in focus groups and through the TOPS task forces.

Recommendations for Monitoring and Evaluation	
B1	Define a minimum percentage of project budget for M&E in RFA guidance and incorporate into budget approval process
B1.1	Ensure appropriate allocation of resources to M&E
B2	Provide harmonized output level indicators for annual monitoring
B3	Provide standard annual monitoring tools
B4	Improve awardee M&E capacity with periodic TOPS workshops
B5	Identify evaluation criteria to ensure quality data collection for reliable analysis from outside contractors.
B5.1	Conduct a process evaluation of new baseline management
B6	Design baseline and final evaluations as complementary activities and when possible contract baseline and final evaluation surveys as a single task
B7	Issue an updated consolidated FFPIB on M & E policies
B8	Send trip reports to awardees as feedback

B1 Define a minimum percentage of project budget for M&E in the RFA guidance and incorporate into budget approval process

While M&E is an essential part of project success, it often becomes a lower priority than

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[5] http://www.usaid.gov/evaluation/policy

Food Aid Quality Review

the need to reach beneficiary targets. Awardees typically under-budget for M&E in order to try to reach more beneficiaries and therefore be more competitive in the bidding process. Also, for a project under way, if there are budget constraints, M&E is usually the first thing cut, according to participants of the October 2012 awardee stakeholder workshop. Without sufficient resources for M&E, Title II projects will not reach their full potential or be able to properly capture end results.

Automated Directives System (ADS) 203[6], USAID's policy and procedures guide (USAID/PPL, 2012), stipulates that five to ten percent of program budget, including three percent specifically for evaluations, should be allocated for monitoring and evaluation. The Title II RFA process is an opportunity for FFP to prioritize M&E in alignment with this USAID policy. The minimum percentage should also take into account annual monitoring, midterm evaluations and special studies, reports regarded by awardees as the most valuable for informing programming decisions. The FFP M&E team should establish an appropriate minimum percentage and include it in future RFAs.

B1.1 Ensure appropriate allocation of resources to M&E
To ensure that awardees maintain a minimum M&E budget throughout the life of the award, PREP approval should be contingent upon compliance with this policy. This would require enforcement by CBOs as the AOR of the award and the support of FFP senior management.

B2 Provide harmonized output level indicators for annual monitoring
FFP has made a significant effort to harmonize and standardize output, outcome, and impact indicators between FFP, Feed the Future, and F Bureau indicators. As a result of this effort, a list of monitoring and evaluation indicators was posted in April 2013. In a number of interviews and stakeholder workshops, participants suggested that a comprehensive list of intermediate-level output indicators, including some common indicators for each program element, would allow for further utilization of ARR data. The recently issued list of output, outcome, and impact indicators developed by FFP has largely met that goal.

FFP staff, including CBOs and regional M&E staff, expressed interest in collating ARR data across programs and regions; using this list of common indicators will facilitate this effort, contributing significantly to understanding how common program elements work in different settings. Given the wide variety of individual projects, it is likely there will always be some output indicators that are specific to a given project, location, and context, and awardees need to be able to collect data on these as well. Nonetheless, the discussion on indicators could continue if stakeholders feel it is necessary, until a complete list of possible indicators both required as applicable and optional is developed. TOPS can play a useful role in facilitating this discussion: this could be a coordinated effort of TOPS with the FPP M&E team..

This harmonization of the intermediate level indicators – their definition and method of data collection – benefits both FFP and awardees by providing comparable outcome as well as impact data and permitting comparisons based on the data in the ARR.

B3 Provide standard annual monitoring tools

Equally important to standardized output indicators are the tools used to capture them. Each year, awardees conduct surveys among beneficiaries for any annual indicators to feed into the ARR and IPTT. During the awardee stakeholder workshop, participants agreed on the need for standard survey tools that could be used to capture reliable, quality data in a consistent way. For example, it is not uncommon to have community volunteers or lower level M&E staff collects this information.

Having a standard survey tool will help to decrease user error and provide accurate monitoring data. This will have the potential to improve project management by awardees as well as improve oversight by FFP staff reviewing the data. With FFP funding, FANTA has previously provided M&E support for evaluation survey tools and could spearhead efforts to create standard survey and other data collection tools for monitoring as well.

B4 Improve awardee M&E capacity with periodic TOPS workshops

Both awardees and FFP staff expressed the desire to increase awardee M&E capacity. Some PVOs are concerned that losing management of the evaluation process may reduce opportunities to develop staff M&E capacity. On the other side, FFP staff are concerned with the quality of ARRs and in particular how awardees communicate and interpret indicators. Both of these concerns can be addressed by planning regular capacity building workshops, either separately or as part of the TOPS knowledge sharing conferences already in place, developed strategically in coordination with FFP M & E team. The workshops could review harmonized output indicators and new standard survey tools and provide guidance on interpreting indicators and address any other priority areas identified by the Title II community.

B5 Identify evaluation criteria to ensure quality data collection for reliable analysis from outside contractors.

FAFSA II concluded that evaluations were not high quality when done or contracted by awardees, and assessments of program effectiveness could be improved with better quality evaluations. For FY 2012 baselines, FFP contracted ICF Macro International to conduct the baselines for newly funded programs in Guatemala, Niger, and Uganda, after a competitive bidding process. The idea was that external evaluators would provide third-party, high-quality data collection and analysis. Though this is made more likely by hiring a professional research firm, it is not a given. Therefore, it is important to put into place evaluation criteria for ensuring outside contractors are providing relevant, high quality and timely data and that partners are involved in a way that fosters ownership of the data from these surveys. These criteria would be provided by FFP and accessible to awardees and partners as a way of engaging stakeholders. This also creates transparency

and the opportunity for improving this relatively new process.

B5.1 Conduct a process evaluation of new baseline management

Since the management of baselines by FFP is a relatively new process it would be beneficial to conduct an informal process evaluation for the next several baselines. After the contractor has submitted the baseline study reports for all countries in a given fiscal year, a workshop including Title II awardees (from relevant countries), FFP M&E staff and the contractor would be held. The workshop would be used to discuss any issues and document lessons learned to inform future baseline survey planning and implementation. As of November 2013, this recommendation has begun to be implemented: FANTA conducted a workshop where FFP collected feedback from awardees on the experience with the baseline surveys in Guatemala, Niger, and Uganda. This feedback influenced the scope of work for the Haiti and Zimbabwe baseline surveys.

B6 Design baseline and final evaluations as complementary activities and when possible contract baseline and final evaluations as a single task.

Evaluations require the collection of comparable data using comparable methods at baseline and final. Contractors awarded FY 2012 baselines have not been assigned responsibility for the corresponding final evaluations. Awardees in the stakeholder workshop were concerned that if different contractors were doing the baseline and final evaluations there would be a risk that the data sets might not be fully comparable.

The importance of final evaluation results to awardees cannot be overstated. Approval of future program proposals is significantly influenced by demonstrated program success in meeting food security objectives at final. Since the objective of contracting the baselines to outside firms is to ensure better quality, less biased, and therefore more useful data, the contracting process should accommodate the need for consistency between baseline and final. If funding prohibits simultaneous contracting of the baseline and final evaluations for a given program, at minimum, the contract for baseline should incorporate end-line plans into a proposal for baseline.

B7 Issue an updated and consolidated FFPIB on M & Epolicies when they change

Awardees and FFP staff alike rely on FFPIBs for official notification of policy or procedure changes especially for field staff. During the initial transition in FY 2012, when baselines were first being managed by FFP, there was concern among the PVO community regarding their role in the new process and the accountability of outside contractors.

The transition of baseline management from awardees to FFP is a significant policy change that warrants the issuance of an FFPIB, once the details of the policy and its implementation are finalized. It should outline the background, objective, and date the policy was enacted; clarify the plan for final evaluations pending funding; and identify how

this process will improve the quality of evaluations and how outside contractors will be evaluated. The FFPIB should also clarify the role of the awardee and outline what activities can and can't be performed during baseline data collection.

B8 Send trip reports to awardees as feedback
CBOs or FFP field officers fill out trip reports after a visiting a project site. The report usually includes findings, recommendations and a follow-up action plan. During a focus group, CBOs commented that not all trip reports were shared with awardees, and when they were, they were highly valued feedback. It could easily be made standard practice to send trip reports to the awardees whose projects were visited. The new M&E policy guide should include this recommendation.

C. Knowledge Sharing
In addition to M&E, knowledge sharing has become another priority of USAID with the adoption of the Collaborating, Learning and Adapting (CLA) model. CLA is a "conceptual framework for some principles and operational processes that can enable USAID to become a more effective learning organization" (USAID Learning Lab, 2013). While the majority of the recommendations provided in this report could be categorized under knowledge sharing, the following recommendations are not specific to a particular report or reporting mechanism but address cross-cutting issues in making program-related information more widely available and easily accessible.

Recommendations for Knowledge Sharing	
C1	Develop FFP policy for standardizing file names
C1.1	Issue an FFPIB on the new file naming policy
C1.2	Include reminders of the file naming policy within repositories
C2	Create a regional monthly newsletter of program highlights

C1 Develop FFP policy for standardizing file names
The updated USAID Evaluation policy recognized that the DEC is underused agency-wide and calls for a renewed commitment to optimizing use of the DEC. Throughout this study, stakeholders from both FFP and awardees confirmed that the DEC was not a useful tool for knowledge sharing or program learning. Though it is intended to be a repository of all USAID project information available to the public, many stakeholders find it difficult to locate documents even if they themselves submitted them, demonstrating the need for a more systematic approach to DEC submissions. The way to make these files more accessible and searchable is to standardize file naming. Standard names would include: type of document (ARR, baseline, final evaluation, special study), country and region, PVO, possibly years to which the document refers, and date of submission to the DEC (that should coincide with date of approval of the document), along with key words to identify the subject of special sttudies.

All Title II documents, including those submitted to the DEC, FSN Network, FFPMIS and

internal shared drives of FFP or awardees should follow the new naming policy so that any Title II document, regardless of where it is housed, could be found easily by those with access.

C1.1 Issue an FFPIB on the new file naming policy
FFP PTD should issue an FFPIB once a file naming policy is put in place. This would include what the new policy is and its purpose (to make documents more accessible). It should include guidance on the file naming conventions, and one to two examples of what a file name would look like based on project information such as document type, country/region, program element, reference year(s), PVO. The FFPIB should establish that all future Title II documents are to conform to these naming conventions. The new M&E policy guide mentioned above should also include the new standardized file naming policy.

C1.2 Include reminders of the file naming policy within repositories
In addition to the FFPIB, reminders of the naming conventions should appear when someone submits a document in any of the document repositories. For example, the Document Upload screen of the FFPMIS has a text box for 'Document Title'. To the right of that could be the file naming policy, possibly with an example of what it should look like.

C2 Create a regional monthly newsletter of program highlights
Several FFPOs in the stakeholder workshop expressed the opinion that there were limited opportunities to exchange ideas, seek advice and otherwise collaborate and support each other, and the idea of a monthly newsletter emerged from the discussion as a way to connect with colleagues and stay informed about other Title II programs.

Creating a monthly newsletter with program successes, challenges overcome or field studies being conducted would create such a network sought by FFPOs. Each short narrative should include a point of contact with an email address to foster communication among FFPOs. This could be compiled and distributed by FFP information officers and sent to staff and TOPS to be included in the FSN Network newsletter. This sharing of information would likely lead to increased collaboration and consequently improved programming.

D. FFP Training and Guidance
In the FFP stakeholder workshops, focus groups and interviews, a common observation was the need for a standardized approach to training new FFP hires. Training would ensure that staff understand and make optimum use of the information provided in awardee reports. This would enable them to utilize this information in the advice they provide to inform the design and implementation of individual Title II programs.

Recommendations for FFP Training and Guidance	
D1	Adopt a standard FFP orientation plan to be completed in one year
D2	Designate a liaison to manage the training of new hires
D3	Ensure M&E training for FFPOs processing reports
D4	Supplement in-person training with online modules

D1 Adopt a standard FFP orientation plan to be completed in one year

There is currently no standard training plan in place for new FFP hires. Especially for those hired in the field, training can be highly varied depending on the Mission in charge of orientation and the background of the individual.

A draft training plan developed in 2009 outlined a set of basic training courses considered essential for all FFP employees. This plan should be implemented, incorporating these essential training courses and establishing the proper sequence. Ideally, all FFP staff should have access to these trainings within the first year of their tenure.

D2 Designate a liaison to manage the training of new hires

Currently, there are several FFP staff in charge of different training modules for FFP, but no one whose responsibility it is to coordinate multiple trainings for an individual hire. For example, FFP training unit manages the Food Assistance Manager Course (FAMC) while two regional FFPOs organize the FFP Boot Camp. FFP has created a position for an individual to oversee all training, and is working to fill it as of this writing. We would expect the responsibilities of this position would include liaising with Missions and FFP Regional Offices to ensure field FFPOs receive the required orientation and sequence of FFP trainings within their first year. In addition, they would coordinate with the FFP staff in charge of individual trainings to ensure sequencing. Lastly, the liaison could advise new hires on any additional training required based on position and experience.

D3 Ensure M&E training for FFPOs processing reports

Both CBOs and awardees identified the need for more M&E training of CBOs and FFP field officers. These are the FFP staff that provide the majority of feedback to awardees and assess project progress and success.

For those FFPOs without an M&E background, such training could cover areas such as interpreting indicators and statistical significance; the differences between annual monitoring data and evaluation data; and how to assess quality and usefulness of data within annual reports and evaluations. The FAMC includes an 'Informing Decisions' section which would be an ideal time to address these key M&E underpinnings for new hires.

D4 Supplement in-person training with online modules

A common concern of FFP staff was accessibility of training. Depending on training location, field staff are restricted by travel budgets and scheduling constraints. In

addition, others wanted learning opportunities outside of traditional in-person training, and opportunities to review training already received. For example, providing an online module of the 'Informing Decisions' section of the FAMC would give all FFPOs, not just new hires, the opportunity for more M&E training. FFP staff also recommended online modules for other types of training including for FFPMIS and QWICR.

E. FFPMIS

The FFPMIS was upgraded from the FFPIS to enhance program management and reporting capabilities. For example, it streamlines reporting to outside stakeholders such as the F Bureau and Congress and centralizes project management information so other FFP staff can access it if appropriate. FFP staff can also use it to access project proposals and reports submitted by awardees. Training and rollout for the system have been under way since November 2012.

Recommendations for the FFPMIS	
E1	Enter ARR IPTT as data rather than attachments
E2	Conduct FFPMIS user surveys as input into further training
E3	Provide video training for FFP staff
E4	Provide in-person training for FFP staff
E5	Link notification system with automatic email

E1 Enter ARR IPTT as data rather than attachments

Although the intention of FFPMIS, in part, is program management, many FFP respondents did not find it useful for that purpose. One reason is that performance data, such as the IPTT or DIP, are uploaded as attachments, thereby eliminating an opportunity to aggregate or analyze the data they contain. Entering performance data in readable format (as data, not documents) would allow for aggregation and analysis of information from the IPTT and DIP and thus make the data more useful for informing future programs. Having a choice of harmonized output and outcome indicators, including those beyond FFP indicators, that included PVO indicators with their PIRS (as mentioned above) would allow for more indicators to be aggregated. Implementing this recommendation would require development of a system for inputting data in this format. Since the original IPTT and DIP are prepared as data, it should be feasible to do this, with some investment of time and resources in the initial phases.

E2 Conduct FFPMIS user surveys as input into further training

During field interviews, FFP staff reported a lack of training and information that they had received regarding the new FFPMIS system, resulting in a low level of interest or ability to use the new system. Additionally, at the time of field interviews[7], FFP field staff, even if they had not received training had to sign a form confirming training in order to get access to the system.

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[7] June 2013

In order for all of the system functions to be used optimally, users need to be fully trained on the system capabilities. FFP could send surveys to all registered users of FFPMIS to determine the level of training received and what gaps remain. This would serve to inform future trainings and engage those who should be using the system.

E3 Provide video training for FFP staff

Currently there are video training modules available on the FSN website for FFPMIS. However, these are geared towards awardee users on how to submit reports and do not train FFP staff how to access and use those reports. FFP should provide additional training videos, specific to CBO or FFPO responsibilities.

E4 In-person training for FFP staff

In addition to video trainings for FFP users, FFP should make available FFPMIS in-person trainings to staff, possibly as a component of the FAMC and Boot Camp that target newer staff. Both of these training sessions are at least one week long, possibly allowing time for a FFPMIS module. Also, the FFP Global Meeting, an annual event for FFPOs, would be an opportunity to provide training or for users to ask questions about the FFPMIS. Note that the new training schedule for FY 2014 includes all FFPMIS users including FFP staff and awardees.

E5 Link notification system with automatic email

Recommendations A1 and A2 of this report called for the modification of the flow of information and feedback on required reports (ARR and PREP) that are submitted through the FFPMIS. Currently, awardees need to search actively to find out the status of a particular report. This was a policy decision made by FFP based on previous staff response to automatic notifications within a global system, because they went out to all CBOs; the system should be set up so that notifications could be sent only to the relevant individuals. However, it would facilitate the implementation of those recommendations if the FFPMIS were set up to provide notification to awardees when a report has been approved. Similarly, when a PREP or the ARR has been approved by PTD, the system could generate an email notification to the appropriate CBO that the report is ready for viewing.

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