FSN Network Agriculture Task Force Meeting

Save the Children Office

November 15, 2011

Attendance: Rupert Best, Matt Ellingson, Nestor Mogollon, Jozimo Santos, Melissa Teuber, John Russell, Jindra, Cekan, Laurie Timmermann, Kristi Tabaj, Binta Cisse, Andy Barnes, Bill Fiebig, Paul Sommers, Keith Polo, Patricia Bonard, Andrea Watrum, Amy English, Merideth ? from Land O’Lakes

* Southern Africa Regional Meeting in Maputo in September 2011.
	+ 13 regional interests groups were created but it is questionable how active they are, if at all.
		- They have virtual conversations around specific topic areas we hear but are not copied.
	+ Another similar meeting is being planned in East Africa mid next year. This will probably have more of a focus on increasing resiliency to and capacity for recovering from shocks.
* Information sharing
	+ FFP wants TOPS to set up web-portal mechanisms to share information and best practices broadly through the FSN Network and this is well on its way to becoming operational.
		- Programs / consortiums working in the same countries do not always communicate what they are doing with each other- or within their own organizations.
			* This is a project management issue that the AgTF shoud follow-up on.
			* The task force would like to find disincentives or barriers to achieving this and identifying the enabling conditions to true collaboration.
				+ One disincentive cited is the perceived belief that sharing will make you less competitive in the next round of MYAPs and that is true and a real barrier.
		- TOPS wants all Title II implementers to have access to information.
			* TOPS will have a resource library on its web portal filled with tools and resources that the community of practice believes is useful. The AgTF would hopefully contribute to this effort.
				+ Perhaps a link to the World Bank gender and agriculture website would be a good example.
		- The task force believes that the information is out there, but the challenge is to collect and share everything on the web portal.
			* TOPS is expected to provide a promising best practices that are not necessarily tied to any one organization.
				+ An issue is that promising practices are not necessarily founded in the annual, quarterly, and midterm reports.
		- The information on promising agricultural practices should serve as a design guide for trainings in proposal development.
			* Field agents need to know how to transfer promising practices in trainings for farmers. This brings proper messaging for behavior change into the program design.
	+ The task force would like to standardize promising practices & tools and help influence strategies of FFP future RFAs for TII programming.
		- Tools and resources should be vetted for broader standardization.
			* Individuals will be able to rate tools in the resource library.
			* In another section of the web portal FSN Network Task Force Approved tools will be posted.
			* A past strategy of TOPS was to create a series of Technical Reference Materials for FFP.
				+ Bill will follow up to see the status of this because they are not necessarily technical staff who would appreciate all the TII lessons learned that identified or would appreciate all the work that went into this effort.
				+ Bill has also suggest that TOPS creates a series of promising practices in whatever, agriculture, integrating ag & nutrition, understanding resiliency, DBC, etc. That would a clear definition of TRM.
		- Will advocate to FFP the use of the standardized examples of promising practices, tools & other lessons learned in TII program as examples in forthcoming RFAs.
	+ TOPS does have resources to move information sharing forward. The task is to find good information from TIII partners on promising practices in food and nutrition programming.
	+ The web portal will have a collaborative work space – whatever that means.
		- This is a felt need of the task force, and they would like to use it on a short list of topics.
* Role of task force
	+ Share information of what different projects are doing.
		- * What MYAPs are doing now and what they have in the pipeline.
			* Information needs to be found, synthesized, and vetted so best practices can be shared and can be promoted.
				+ It was proposed to have a consultant conduct a survey of agriculture practices being used in current MYAP, prepare his/her report and then the AgTF would convene a more formal workshop to discuss the way forward. These resources are available to the TOPS AgTF.
			* Analyzing TIII program experiences to find common factors for success and pitfalls/barriers could be another task of the consultant while visiting the TII MYAPs.
* Core Competency Topic Areas in the broad definition of agriculture was discussed at length as it is one of the deliverables expected under TOPS. This difficult discussion was evident by the following:
	+ Look at different levels?
		- The field officer.
		- The designer of the program.
		- Headquarter staff.
	+ The themes themselves are very general.
		- If an organization feels strongly about an certain aspect of the theme, they can showcase what they are doing.
			* These can be done in a 2-3 times a year meeting at American University or George Washington University.
* Conservation Agriculture is a hot topic in the donor world/
* Value Chains – another hot topic but TII food security target the most vulnerable and can they enter the value chain of whatever crop?
	+ This includes small value chains, not just large staple crops.
	+ Need to look at bottlenecks to participation and how to create incentives and enabling conditions.
* Inputs and this is a real tough topic for the most vulnerable.
	+ Financial services –can they access them?
	+ Information – can they get it and/or understand it?
	+ Tools – can they afford to purchase them?
* Extension services – in most part of the developing world these do not exist because they get no support from the host-country government.
* Integration of Agriculture and Nutrition
	+ It was agreed that this would be framed under diversified homestead development to increase the production of morw nutritious food (say in household gradens) and/or more nutritious tree crops (like Moringa) or other cash tree crops like mango, avocado, cashew and the like.
	+ It was also mentioned that diversified farming systems with cereal and grain legume crops along with root and tubers complement well with the above and greatly reduce homestead vulnerabilities to food and nutrition insecurity.
* Urban Agriculture
	+ Since by 2020 60% of the rural population is expected to have migrated to urban/peri-urban areas, Bill feels that this type of programming is inevitable down the road and will present opportunities for proposals that can go into this domain.
* Approaches
	+ Wat are the best and/or essential elements of effective food and nutrition security program design to consider.
		- Farmer Field Schools for behavior change with farming systems.
		- The 3-4 core principles of conservation agriculture
			* CA interest groups are discussing and mainly are focusing on the need for behavior change as this is a big change from traditional homestead cropping systems.
			* TOPS has approached a consultant to prepare a discussion paper on CA to frame another AgTF meeting down the road.
* Behavior Change
	+ You need to have the right message and delivery approach in order to get farmers to change their behaviors to intensify traditional farming management systems.
	+ John Russell agreed to report out on the Barrier Analysis that he conducted in Mozambique recently in a future meeting that the AgTF will announce.
* Small Grants
	+ Micro-grant -$20,000
		- Helps with workshops / capacity building.
		- Anyone outside the TOPS 5 consortium members can apply.
		- Takes some time for approval.
	+ Small grant- $100,000 – are on the horizon once USAID contracts offie approves the RFA.
* Next Steps
	+ Bill will send around questions to the task force asking what programs are doing, a short questionnaire
	+ Bill suggested having shorter meetings on a bi-monthly basis but John Russell noted that lunch was not provided so next time, it will be to encourage participation.
	+ Invite Joan Whelan to attend next meeting and discuss Knowledge Management component of TOPS.
* Keep in mind:
	+ The task force should serve activities FFP is willing to fund so come to the AgTF ready to share any networking messages with the group.
	+ The role of gender in agriculture is hugely important.
		- Interested people are invited to attend the FSN Network Gender Task Force Meetings. Contact MTueber@savechildren.org
	+ Link to others who have a similar mandate(s).
		- University of Illinois has the modernizing extension advisory and services project.
			* Have good practice and best fit review(s) in motion.
			* CRS is creating a curriculum to help farmers link to markets within this project.

Thanks to all AgTF members for their time and participation. in this and hope to see you at the next one in the new year.

Cheers, Bill