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Institutional Capacity Building Grants (2004-2008) Review

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Acronyms

		IPTT	Indicator Performance Tracking Table
BCC	Behavior Change Communication	IHD	Integrated Human Development
CF	Conceptual Framework	IR	Intermediate Result
CHS	Community Household Surveillance	ISA	Institutional Support Assistance
CMAM	Community based Management of Acute Malnutrition	LDM	Local Determinants of Malnutrition
CP	Country Program	LQAS	Lot Quality Assurance Sampling
CS	Title II Cooperating Sponsor	MAHFP	Months of Adequate Food Provision
CTC	Community Therapeutic Care	M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
DAP	Development Assistance Program	MCHN	Mother and Child Health and Nutrition
DIP	Detailed Implementation Plan		
EWS	Early Warning System		
FACG	Food Aid Consultative Group		
FAM	Food Aid Management	MIS	Management Information System
FAMC	Food Aid Managers Course	MTCT	Mother to Child Transmission
FANTA	Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance	MTE	Mid-Term Evaluation
FE	Final Evaluation	MYAP	Multi-Year Assistance Program
FFP	Office of Food for Peace	NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
FIU	Fully Institutionalized Unit	OVC	Orphan and Vulnerable Children
FSCI	Food Security Capacity Index	PD/Hearth	Positive Deviance/Hearth Model
FSU	Food Security Unit	PLHIV	People Living with HIV
FY	Fiscal Year	PVO	Private Voluntary Organization
GWISER	Geospatial, Warning, Information, Surveillance, Evaluation, and Response	RFA	Request for Assistance
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus	RRA	Rapid Rural Appraisal
HLS	Household Livelihood Security	SFU	Small Food Unit
HR/EA	Humanitarian Relief/Emergency Assessment	SMU	Small Management Unit
HQ	Headquarter	SOW	Scope of Work
ICB	Institutional Capacity Building	TFC	Therapeutic Feeding Center
ICRW	International Center for Research on Women	TRM	Technical Reference Materials
		TWG	Technical Working Group
		USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Executive summary

1. INTRODUCTION: GOALS, ANTECEDENTS AND METHODOLOGY

Since 2003, the Office of Food for Peace (FFP) has provided Institutional Capacity Building (ICB) grants to fourteen Cooperating Sponsors (CSs) that also receive PL-480 Title II (T-II) funds, to help them build their technical capacity in implementing food security (FS) T-II interventions. The objective of this review is to assess the effectiveness of the current ICB grants in meeting FFP's capacity building objectives. Specific objectives of the review are to:

- (i) examine how the ICB grants were used in relation to the Request for Application's (RFA) intent;

- (ii) identify innovations made possible by the ICB grants; and
- (iii) identify the challenges that affected progress in grants operation

The methodology included a desk review of selected background documents of the ICB grants, an ICB Tool Index compiled by FFP, the indicator performance tracking tables (IPTTs) submitted annually by CSs, the T-II ICB Final Evaluation (FE) results, and evaluators' responses to four questions addressed in the FEs upon FFP's request. The report is organized to answer the four FE questions:

1. How was the grant used in relation to its intent under the RFA?
2. How did the ICB strengthen CS capacity to implement food security programs?
3. What key challenges affected progress in implementing and managing the ICB grant?
4. What innovations and best practices were made possible by the ICB grant?

2: FINDINGS FROM THE FOUR FE QUESTIONS

2.1. How was the grant used in relation to its intent under the RFA?

CSs generally focused their efforts on the development of tools (guides, training materials, papers, survey reports, etc.) and on disseminating these tools among their field staff. Thus, overall, grantees used their ICB resources in a way that was appropriate given the intent of the RFA.

CSs were quite successful in finalizing the tools they had initiated and bringing them to completion (84% of all tools had been finalized by the end of Year 4 of the grant). Looking at the IPTTs, however, only 29% of Outcome and Impact indicator targets had been met by September 2007, raising questions about those activities that were not directly related to the development of tools (e.g., dissemination, networking, etc). The success of CSs in their undertakings varied when looked at individually. CSs with larger ICB units (called Fully Institutionalized Units or FIUs) performed better than CSs with smaller, less experienced units (Small Food Units, or SFUs) in achieving their goals.

Questions are also raised about the usefulness of the IPTT as a method for tracking ICB grants. Suggestions are made in the text to streamline this task in a way that is more likely to be useful to both CSs (by helping them better manage their activities) and FFP (by helping the Agency improve its tracking of the grant mechanism).

2.2. How did the ICB strengthen CS capacity to implement FS programs?

CSs credit the ICB mechanism for a large number of advances in improving their T-II programs. The ICB Tool Index lists 173 different tools, manuals etc. funded by the grants. Topics covered include Emergency Response/Humanitarian Assistance (ER/HA), Needs Assessment, Program and Sectoral Interventions Design, HIV and Gender.

ER/HA tools included assessment tools and guidance for responding to crises. Given the typical environment in which CSs operate and the strategic framework that orients FFP's work, these types of tools are of interest to all T-II programs. ICB grantees should partner

closely in refining existing advances, so that coherent, jointly defined approaches can be made available to the entire community.

In terms of program and sectoral interventions, CSs produced a vast quantity of materials, representing a valuable stock of experience and know-how. Here again, CSs should take advantage collectively of many of their mutual advances to enrich their general practices. Certainly, not all tools and methods are universally applicable; further, the quality of individual tools was not tested and from evaluators' comments, some of them might not stand up to detailed scrutiny. However, a critical examination of the tools developed by ICB grantees would identify many items worth sharing among the T-II community. Coordination and collaboration in areas such as Maternal and Child Health and Nutrition (MCHN), Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), or monitoring and evaluation (M&E) could yield greater utility since CS efforts often duplicate one another in those areas. Coordinating CSs to share materials that meet common demand and need with the aim of harmonizing approaches would benefit and facilitate the progress of all CSs.

This review also found that CSs appear to spend considerable resources and efforts in building the capacity of their own staff, whether at headquarters (HQ), in the field, or among their local partners. But no systematic tracking was made of such activities, hence progress made by grantees in disseminating their tools and training their staff is not well documented. Adequate monitoring of capacity building efforts is crucial for improving program implementation, and a simple tool that properly documents this process should be adopted by CSs. Specific suggestions are made in this review to help in that respect.

In summary, the ICB grant has indeed strengthened CSs capacity in many useful ways, and several of the tools developed merit further dissemination. However, the coordination mechanism to do so efficiently is lacking. It may be useful to examine how a central mechanism could be used to fulfill collective functions, including the coordination of working groups on common topics and the dissemination of information on what tools, training, studies and papers are being developed by each CS. Such an initiative would help promote the valuable advances made in strengthening CS capacities.

2.3. What key challenges affect progress in implementing and managing ICB grant?

Most FEs included a section describing the key challenges faced by the ICB grantees. The challenges are many, and confront CSs at multiple levels. This review divides these into four topics: integration of the ICB unit within the organization, staffing, training and capacity building.

Integration of the ICB unit within the organization

All grantees managed to set up an ICB unit within their organization. However, the integration of this unit within the organization is often problematic. This is especially so for smaller grantees. While ICB units in larger and more experienced organizations usually have established their legitimacy and place within the organization, units in the smaller/newer CSs often have to struggle to create their own operating space. This affects several aspects of operation, among which staffing is key. Staff turnover is actually a critical problem for several CSs, as shown by the problems faced by two SFUs that tried

to use volunteers to staff their unit. Although economical in the short term, this ended up having negative effects in the long run, when measured in terms of loss of institutional memory and ability to complete ongoing work. Aside from the lack of follow up or frequent changes in direction or priorities, staff turnover also significantly constrains the establishment of a discipline to seek program improvement. The problem seems to affect SFUs more significantly than FIUs. Issues at play may include visibility, empowerment within the organization, staff motivation, and budgeting (larger organizations may fund their units from several streams; smaller units only have the ICB grant). Thus, at a minimum, creation of a FIU appears critical to ensure the stability and progress of ICB grants.

Training and capacity building

One FE noted that it is not only the technical capacity of field staff that needs to be built; HQ staff also needs training on how to manage the grant. Several FEs pointed out that administrative, technical and logistical guidance would help ICB staff realize more fully the potential of this resource. This raises interesting questions as to the role of FFP and whether it is effective in the long run to support less experienced organizations until they become fully operational.

With respect to the training of field staff, FEs provide abundant evidence that training often fails to yield solid technical mastery at the local, program level. Challenges include poor capacity to assess needs, deficient communication between HQ and country programs (CPs), poor follow up on tool implementation, late delivery of ICB products, inadequate synchronization between ICB interventions and implementation, and the promotion of tools that have not been fully tested or validated. Unfortunately, such disconnects seem frequent. Lessons learned that may help future training efforts are outlined in this review.

2.4. What innovations and best practices were made possible by the ICB grants? What examples exist of inter-organizational learning and capacity building?

CSs acknowledge that partnerships are key to build capacity; and indeed, the FEs pointed out that ICB grantees actually spend a good amount of resources in inter-institutional collaboration. However, these efforts are not systematic, especially when it comes to networking within the ICB group itself: for example, the ICB Tool Index and the FEs listed more entries describing collaborations with outsiders than activities within the group. Also, the fact that a substantial proportion of the items listed as “partnering among grantees” correspond to Food Aid Managers Course (FAMC) or FFP/Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance (FANTA) project trainings, or attending Food Aid Consultative Group (FACG) meetings, do not indicate a strong “drive to network” among ICB grantees.

It is therefore not surprising that concrete evidence of partnerships is elusive. One would hope to see joint statements on issues of common concern, or collaborative products being rolled out to streamline particular approaches. But such tangible signs of collaboration are largely absent. Several evaluators remarked that the loss of the FAM mechanism left the community without a means to organize and coordinate learning

among CSs. This may be true: while FAM was not perfect—it did not receive much direct financial support from CSs during its fifteen years of existence—a central consensual platform, endowed with a strong mandate and adequate resources, could play a key role in organizing inter-institutional collaboration around ICB issues. Furthermore, several of the issues raised in this review—from the lack of quality control to the overlap among products—could be addressed by such a structure.

3. CONCLUSIONS

The SOW for this review quoted the findings of the ICB Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE), which summarized many critical challenges facing ICB grantees as a group. Unfortunately, as documented in this review, most of those challenges still exist. At the same time, this review recognized that while challenges exist, there are also several areas of accomplishment. We note, for example, an abundance of tools to (1) help program design; (2) help carry out needs assessments; and (3) improve the design of sectoral interventions (MCHN, gender, HIV, etc). Likewise, we documented diverse models of networking and inter/intra-CS interactions that could be exploited. Those advances could be shared for the greater benefit of the community. For this to happen, however, attention will have to be paid to the key following aspects:

- (i) The structure of the ICB unit within the CS is critical. To have a functional unit, a CS must ensure that its unit (1) is properly staffed; (2) operates with strong internal oversight; and (3) is provided with HQ support when the need arises.
- (ii) Priorities in tool development efforts must respond to field demand. Tools should (1) focus on the “how”; (2) be simple and streamlined; and (3) be developed in partnership with (and not in isolation from) field activities. Also, CSs must ensure their final products undergo appropriate quality control before being released to the field.
- (iii) Communication and coordination between HQ and field staff is critical; the role of the ICB grant must be better understood by field staff so they can work with HQ in defining their requirements, using appropriate needs assessment tools.
- (iv) Capacity building efforts must be consistent and responsible, ensuring that field mastery is achieved before going to implementation; and providing tools and training in time for their use by CPs that initiate new MYAPs.
- (v) M&E systems must be improved at all levels (needs assessment, IPTT structure, indicators) to ensure the proper tracking of the outputs, outcomes and impacts generated by the program. They should also be able to account for activities like capacity building workshops, etc.
- (vi) The role of partnerships should be considerably improved. CSs should consider establishing a central mechanism for sharing, coordinating and networking amongst themselves. This mechanism could be used to identify common tasks, ensure quality control, and preserve the legacy of the ICB grantees’ activities.

1. INTRODUCTION: GOALS, BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

1.1 Goal

The goal of this review is to assess the effectiveness of the current Institutional Capacity Building (ICB) grants in meeting the intents of the ICB Request for Application (RFA).

The specific objectives of the ICB review are to:

- (iv) examine how the ICB grants were used in relation to the RFA's intent;
- (v) identify innovations made possible by the ICB grants; and
- (vi) identify the challenges that affected progress in grant implementation

1.2 Background and previous assessments

1.2.1 Background

Since 2003, the Office of Food for Peace (FFP) has provided ICB grants to fourteen cooperating sponsors (CSs)¹ that also receive PL-480 Title II (T-II) funds. The aim of the current round of ICB grants is to help T-II CSs build their technical capacity to deliver T-II funded food security interventions. The main focus of the ICB grant is to build CSs' institutional capacity, focusing on improving the efficiency of programming tools, systems, processes and structures; their organizational capacity, focusing on improving partnerships, joint programming and networking or consortium mechanisms in T-II programs, including activities that enable mentoring and partnering with other CSs and/or sub-recipients; and their human capacity, focusing on staff skills and knowledge in T-II program policies, strategies, monitoring and reporting requirements. Capacity building activities may include training, technical assistance and attendance at workshops and conferences; as well as the preparation of capacity building tools and materials. Key results to be achieved by the grant include:

1. Strengthening the management and technical capability of CSs (particularly new and prospective ones) to plan and implement effective programs that reduce the vulnerability of food insecure populations, including in emergency situations.
2. Identifying the most effective technical and sectoral methodologies for using T-II resources in conducting "developmental relief" activities and programs which address both immediate needs and root causes of food insecurity.
3. Foster CS partnership in identifying and promoting effective T-II approaches to mitigate the risks that lead to food insecurity; and enhance CSs' ability to report results that show national or global impact of USAID food security programs.

Taking into account that CSs may have different levels of experience and expertise in implementing T-II programs, the RFA indicated three categories of grants (Entry, Mentoring and Follow-On Awards). All three categories have largely similar goals, but the RFA recognized that new CSs need to focus more on building up their capacity to implement and manage T-II programs; whereas CSs with five or more years implementing T-II programs are encouraged to use the grant to build on their field

¹ ACDI/VOCA, ADRA, Africare, American Red Cross, CARE, Catholic Relief Services, Counterpart International, Food for the Hungry, Land O Lakes, Mercy Corps International, OICI, Project Concern International, Save the Children Federation and World Vision. We do not refer to the CSs by name in this report, using a code in the few cases (essentially in Tables) where we felt it necessary to illustrate variability among grantees.

experience and develop the experiences into state-of-the-art program models and approaches; and to improve capacity to identify the causes of food insecurity. All three categories of awards emphasize M&E (systems and standardized indicators); and inter-organizational collaboration.

1.2.2. Assessments of the ICB grant program

In March 2007, a FFP ICB working group assessed grantees' mid-term evaluations (MTEs) and annual performance reports. FFP then sent letters to all grantees in April 2007, which identified a number of challenges. In August 2007, FFP advised the CSs that ICB final evaluations (FEs) should be submitted by December 21, 2007; and requested that each grantee incorporate into its FE four questions, to be used subsequently by FFP's ICB working group in planning the next round of ICB grants. This document compiles the responses to those four FE questions, which are listed below:

1. Demonstrate how the grant was used in relation to what it was intended for under the RFA. How was this shown/supported in annual reports and MTE?
2. Demonstrate how the ICB activities have strengthened the capacity of the organization to implement effective T-II and/or food security programs. Specify: What have been the main linkages between the ICB strategies and activities with T-II project outputs and intermediate results (IRs)? What would not have been accomplished if the ICB grant had not been available?
3. What are key challenges affecting progress in the implementation and management of ICB grant? Describe the efforts made to overcome these challenges. Specify: Are these institutional or policy-related challenges linked to the grant, to the T-II program or to other areas?
4. Identify innovations and best practices including successful approaches made possible by the ICB grant. Specify: Provide examples of inter-organizational learning and capacity building on best practices and/or successful approaches.

1.3. ICB Review Methodology and Report Organization

FFP requested the Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance (FANTA) Project to assist with this review. To address the objectives described above, FANTA carried out a desk review of selected background documentation of the ICB grants, an ICB Tool Index compiled by FFP, the indicator performance tracking tables (IPTTs) submitted annually by CSs, the T-II ICB FEs, and the responses of individual evaluators to the four common questions listed above². FANTA derived common themes and findings on the successes and challenges of CSs in meeting the objectives of the ICB grants from the compilation of this material.

The remainder of this document is divided into four sections, each one corresponding to one of the four FE questions. FANTA used both quantitative and qualitative methods to analyze the materials available. To answer the first question ("how the grant was used in relation to what it was intended for") we quantified the performance of grantees, in terms of their production of tools and methods; and in meeting their performance targets as laid

² While all 14 grantees were asked to insert the four questions in their FE's SOW, only 9 of them did.

out in their IPTTs. We addressed the second question (“how the ICB activities have strengthened the capacity of the organization to implement effective programs”) by regrouping the types of activities listed in the ICB Tool Index, and analyzing the advances made in key T-II programming areas. We used a qualitative, “text analysis” approach to review the third question (“what are the key challenges affecting progress in ICB grants”) as well as the fourth and last question (“provide examples of inter-organizational learning and capacity building”).

For analysis purposes, grantees were categorized in two categories: the first corresponds to CSs who have already established a unit to support their T-II programs, and for whom the ICB grant is usually one among many streams of funding (we call this the Fully Institutionalized Unit, FIU); the second category corresponds to those for whom the ICB represents the main source of support to improve the quality of their T-II programs (we call this the Small Food Unit, SFU). FIUs tend to be associated with experienced and larger CSs: the CSs have from 9 to 15 ongoing MYAPs, and can use funds from individual MYAPs, in addition to the ICB, to support quality improvements. SFUs, by contrast, are (usually) located within new grantees to T-II, which have fewer MYAPs. Such differences were foreseen in the ICB grant’s RFA, which distinguished between Entry and Follow-on awards³. Not all “Follow on” grantees have FIUs however, (e.g CS12 and CS13), creating a need for this alternate classification.

FIUs	SFUs
CS09 (15 MYAPs)	CS13 (9 MYAPs)
CS10 (12 MYAPs)	CS12 (6 MYAPs)
CS01 and CS02 (9 MYAPs each)	CS07 and CS14 (3 MYAPs each)
	CS04 (2 MYAPs)
	CS03, CS05, CS06, CS08 (1 MYAP each)

2: FINDINGS FROM THE FOUR FE QUESTIONS

2.1 Question 1: *Demonstrate how the grant was used in relation to what it was intended for under the RFA. How was this shown/supported in annual reports and MTE?*

We examine this question by reviewing (i) the ICB Tool Index compiled by FFP; and (ii) the IPTTs submitted by CSs in their penultimate year of operation.

2.1.1 The ICB Tool Index

A ICB Tool Index was compiled by FFP in 2007 using a list of ICB products developed by grantees. CSs provided a total of 227 items to be listed in the ICB Tool Index. However, many of these did not correspond to tangible tools and thus were excluded from this analysis⁴. We retained five tool types which together represent 173 tools. They are described in Table 1:

³ Since only two “Mentoring awards” were granted, one of which had a short life, we do not review those here.

⁴ Omitted items include conferences or seminars; staffing an ICB position; and training workshops.

Table 1. Classification of the tools listed by CSs in the ICB Tool Index

Tool type	Description of the category	Number (%)
Manual or Guide	Written document aimed at HQ, regional staff or other CSs. Usually covers a discrete, well identified aspect of design—for instance: how to incorporate a particular policy specific to that CS (e.g. the Integral Human Development (IHD) Framework); a well identified activity (e.g. how to design an irrigation system or a water pump) or materials prepared with the specific intent of accompanying a training session on a topic.	97 (56%)
Paper	Publication of a quality document meant to inform programming. May be the result of CS's research; a literature review; a report from a compilation of evidence; etc.	35 (20%)
Survey Report	Document reporting qualitative or quantitative results from a data collection activity (survey, RRA) in a particular program.	29 (17%)
Advocacy or Informational Document	Product meant for staff or the general public to convey general information or advocate for a particular program or approach. May include CD ROMs, newsletters, posters; etc.	10 (6%)
Information Systems	Preparation of website, database systems or data compilation processes that use digital methods to inform or report.	2 (1%)

A summary analysis of the ICB Tool Index using this classification offers the following insights: first, the mean number of items listed by CS is 12, but this varies by grantee from a high of 46 to a low of 3 (data not shown). The most frequent type of item is the Manual (56% of all items) followed by Papers (20%), Survey Reports (17%) and Advocacy or Informational Document (6%). Only 1% are Information Systems.

FY05 was the most productive year in the number of tools initiated but in the aggregate, the intensity of production was spread more or less evenly over time. A disaggregation of this information by CS (considering only FY04 - FY07) shows some distinct patterns: one group of CSs started early and rapidly in FY04-FY05 but reduced its initiation of new tools in subsequent years; another group followed the reverse route, making a late start but catching up afterwards in the number of tools initiated (Table 2).

Table 2: Number of Activities started by Year, by CS

CS (n of activities)	2004	2005	2006	2007	Average n	Completed as of 2008?
CS01 (15)	13%	13%	7%	40%		40%
CS02 (22)	18%	41%	23%	14%		91%
CS03 (3)	33%	33%	33%			100%
CS04 (17)		94%	6%			100%
CS05 (14)	14%	29%	7%	50%		100%
CS06 (12)		33%	33%	25%		92%
CS07 (10)		20%	30%	30%		50%
CS08 (10)	20%	20%	20%	20%		60%
CS09 (47)	6%	15%	45%	30%		87%
CS10 (24)	13%	33%	13%	33%		96%
CS11 (8)		13%	38%	25%		50%
CS12 (14)	7%	14%		79%		100%
CS13 (5)			60%	20%		40%
CS14 (26)		62%	15%	12%		92%
Total (227)	8%	33%	23%	28%		84%

The status of tool development also deserves examination. The last column in Table 2 indicates the proportion of all tools started that were completed. Again, it suggests a rather good performance on the aggregate, with the ratio of tool completed to tool started as high as 84%. However, four CSs show a rate of completion of 50% or less. Especially striking is the situation of two CSs that have completed less than half of the tools started, even though they listed less than 10 tools each. To be sure, there was still 12 months left in the life of activity (LOA) at the time those figures were submitted; yet it appears that serious productivity challenges affected 4 of the 14 CSs—and three of those were SFUs.

In summary, the examination of the ICB Tool Index suggests a solid effort overall, but disaggregating the information across CSs shows that FIUs performed better than SFUs, with some of the latter displaying challenges in meeting their grant’s objectives, as evidenced by a greater proportion of incomplete products in this group, and SFUs’ lower productivity overall than FIUs. Further, judging from the type of products that remained incomplete, it seems that a common cause of challenges in finalizing some of the products is that the task may have been overambitious to start with. Of the tools that remain to be completed, for instance, we note an “Integrated Planning Process Handbook”, a full “Emergency Response Training” manual, and a large “Guide on Agriculture Rehabilitation” (all proposed by SFUs). This suggests that CSs might do better by limiting their goals to the development of smaller, more focused (and more manageable) tools. Alternately, products could be developed in modular “bite-size” form, independently from one another—leaving the option to progressively reassemble them later in a general manual or an ever expanding compendium of Technical Reference Materials (TRMs).

2.1.2 Performance tracking

All CSs requesting an ICB grant must specify how they will track their performance in fulfilling grant objectives using an IPTT, which gets updated every year. Thus the IPTT is a key source of information on CS accomplishments. However, several issues affect the quality of IPTTs (e.g., design, completeness), as well as the quality of the indicators used in the IPTTs to report on performance—to the point of raising doubts on the ability of current tracking systems to accurately represent the program. On average, IPTTs scored “Poor” on our quality rating, with “Timeliness” and “Use of Outcome/Impact Indicators” being most problematic (see rating criteria in Annex 1). Similarly our review of indicators yielded a rating of “Fair” on average (with four CS IPTTs rating “Poor” overall; and only one obtaining a “Good” rating). The indicator quality criteria that seems most problematic is “Integrity”; with “Reliability” and “Precision” also scoring low amongst Impact/Outcome indicators (Table 3; see also Annex 1).

Table 3: Mean scores for individual rating criteria by indicator type

Rating criteria							
Indicator type	Valid	Reliable	Precise	Integrity	Accepted	Realistic	Means
Input	1.75	1.70	2.15	1.20	1.20	2.00	1.7
Output	2.09	2.04	2.02	1.88	2.01	2.10	2.0
Outcome/Impact	1.83	1.59	1.48	1.30	1.65	1.67	1.6
Means	1.89	1.78	1.88	1.46	1.62	1.92	1.77
Overall Scoring	Fair	Fair	Fair	Poor	Fair	Fair	Fair

Scoring: 0 = Very poor 1=Poor 2=Fair 3=Good

It is with these caveats in mind that we proceeded to examine the general performance of the grants according to the IPTTs submitted in September 2007. At that time, only 40% of all indicators had been fully met. Disaggregating by indicator type, 50% of all input indicators; 47% of output indicators; and 29% of impact indicators were accomplished (see complete analysis in Annex 1)⁵.

A final point on the tracking of the ICB grants is that the IPTT approach used to track and evaluate grantee performance may not be the most useful way to support the production of capacity building materials. Elements of the IPTT could be retained, but the M&E approach should focus on the production process itself. Borrowing, for instance, from industrial models, which begin by laying out clear and explicit product development plans—from initial conception to final delivery to end users—grantees should be encouraged to develop development plans that include, for each tool:

- A brief outline describing and justifying the need for the tool
- Specifics of the development process, including
 - Review the evidence base and summarize experience
 - Any additional research that may be needed
 - Plans for field validation
 - Staff training steps and training materials to be developed
- An overall production timetable with clear milestones for key production steps with associated delivery dates
- The human and physical resources required to develop the tool (person in charge, consultant(s), field trials, publications, equipment, etc)
- An overall budget

Tracking production in such a way could offer several benefits to CSs: smoothening their throughput over time, managing tool production budgets, tracking progress, identifying delays (and the reasons for those), forecasting when the tool will be ready for implementation, planning training, etc. Tool development plans would further facilitate tracking of individual activities by FFP—if it chose it is in its interest to do so—while providing a means of reviewing the overall direction of the grant portfolio, and where collaborations and synergies may exist or be indicated.

⁵ Note that CSs still had one year left until the end of the grant; they might still fulfill their objectives by end of LOA.

2.1.3 Conclusion on Question 1

From a global standpoint, it appears that CSs have successfully focused their efforts on the intents of the RFA: the preparation of guides, papers, and survey reports, as well as the dissemination of materials through the training of field staff. In this respect, we thus conclude that grantees as a whole have used their ICB resources in a way that appropriately followed the intent of the RFA.

Aside from focusing their ICB resources on the right topics, CSs were also quite successful in finalizing the tools they had initiated. With 84% of all tools finalized by the end of the fourth year of the grant, one can hope that grantees will near the 100% mark by the end of the fifth year.

However, the findings from the analysis of IPTTs introduce some caveats about grantees' performance. For instance, only 29% of Outcome and Impact targets had been achieved by September 2007. Why this discrepancy in performance between the completion of tools and the attainment of IPTT targets? One issue is that an IPTT refers to much more than the preparation of tools and manuals—it encompasses the entire spectrum of grant objectives, from preparing tools to having them adopted by local users. A second related point is that the IPTT as a model may not be the best means to supervise the type of activities undertaken under the ICB grant program. A proposal was made here to improve the tracking of grants in a way that may help CSs better manage their activities and facilitate oversight by the donor. Finally, it was noted that CSs' success in their undertakings is more variable when looked at individually than as a group, with FIUs apparently performing better than SFUs in achieving their goals.

2.2. Question 2: *Demonstrate how the ICB activities have strengthened the capacity of the organization to implement effective T-II and/or food security programs. Specify: What have been the main linkages between the ICB strategies and activities with T-II project outputs and IRs? What would not have been accomplished if the ICB grant had not been available?*

CSs credit the ICB mechanism for a large number of advances in improving their T-II programs. As mentioned earlier, the ICB Tool Index, based on submissions from the CSs, lists as many as 173 different tools, manuals and the like that were directly or indirectly funded by the ICB grant. To anyone, such production will sound impressive—and this review indeed agrees that the record is remarkable. However, a few caveats are needed to put this claim in its right context.

First is the virtual absence of checks and controls over the quality and completeness of the end product. Aside from the external FEs (which vary themselves in the extent to which they reviewed individual tools), each CS is sole judge of the entire process—whether it meets quality standards, is complete, and is ready for distribution to the field. Many tools viewed as complete by CSs were actually seen as insufficiently ready by FEs.

Second, the types of activities listed by CSs in the Tool Index vary widely, going from the preparation of a meeting report to the multi-year development of a program design aide—yet both get counted as one in the Tool Index. What a tool is should be defined

more rigorously—it would help streamline the IPTT, on the one hand, and would provide more objective criteria to judge or compare CS performance, on the other.

Third, many activities (especially among CSs with a FIU) were paid for by other sources of funding in addition to the ICB grant. This is desirable, and CSs cannot be faulted for successfully leveraging their resources to accomplish more, but the issue of attribution must be kept in mind when looking at such items.

The result of all this is that the number of accomplishments may be lower than suggested by the Tool Index. Even then, however, CS performance in using ICB grants remains impressive. The compilation below tries to organize this material by classifying it and identifying common threads so we can reflect more clearly on how the grant strengthened CS capacity. The review begins with Materials Developed, and then moves to Networking, Training, and Institutionalization issues.

2.2.1 Materials developed

One of the most frequent activities of ICB grantees is to develop dissemination and training materials for use at HQ or field level. Such materials touch on a wide variety of topics, e.g., Emergency Response/Humanitarian Assistance, Needs Assessment, General Program Design, Sectoral Interventions Design, and the Incorporation of HIV and Gender Concerns in T-II programs. Each of those topics is discussed below.

Emergency Response/Humanitarian Assistance(ER/HA)

Work done on the ER/HA front can basically be divided along two types: (i) assessment tools; and (ii) guidance for responding to crises.

Assessment tools for ER/HA

Work on emergency assessment tools was mainly conducted by two CSs and includes the development of indices to measure household vulnerability and resilience, the development of Early Warning Systems to monitor local conditions and warn of impending crises, the development of trigger indicators for emergency response and their implementation in country programs, and a guide to document good practices in risk and vulnerability assessments.

Guidance for responding to crises

Five CSs worked on tools to help program staff and/or target populations organize a response to emergencies. Materials produced include manuals on reducing risk and on developing social protection measures, programming guidelines in conditions of chronic vulnerability, programming in pre-crisis and post-crisis situations, a pocket guide on policies and procedures for humanitarian assistance, and training materials for first responders in rapid onset crises, including training on the provision of equipment for emergency response. Also, tools were developed to train communities in disaster-prone areas to mitigate emergencies, and to consider the obstacles faced when organizing emergency prevention and response programs.

What to do with ER/HA tools

Given the typical environment in which CSs operate (areas highly vulnerable to shocks and food insecurity), and given the strategic framework that orients FFP's work, the type of tools listed above are of interest to all T-II programs. Work is being undertaken by FFP in collaboration with the Famine Early Warning Network (FEWS NET) and FANTA to develop Early Warning Systems models and to define standard approaches in identifying trigger indicators. The centrality of the ER/HA issue to FFP's mandate suggests that ICB grantees should partner closely in the development ER/HA tools, so that coherent, jointly defined approaches can be made available to the entire community. However, resources need to be made available for individual CPs to adapt those tools to the specific context they work in.

Needs Assessment

CSs critically need methods to assess program needs. Correspondingly, an abundance of materials was prepared on this. However, aside from one tool to assess the general needs of beneficiaries, CSs' work focused essentially on assessing their own program capacity needs, whether at the individual, organizational or managerial levels.

Most of these tools aim at better understanding the needs of field programs—CP staff, or local NGOs with which they collaborate. Five CSs were most active in this area, focusing on (i) identifying the local skills that are needed to effectively manage and implement a T-II program; (ii) developing tools and surveys to measure the technical and managerial capacity of local personnel to implement components of the program (e.g., handling food distribution); and (iii) doing “Systems Review and Gap Analysis” of existing programs to improve quality and accountability. One interesting innovation was the use of “institutional capacity scorecards” as a means of measuring institutional capacity and technical training needs. Another one is the development of a tool for mapping food insecurity based on a household livelihood security and rights based approach.

What to do with Needs Assessment tools

The central place given by CSs to the issue of Needs Assessment reveals the importance of the issue across the board. It seems that great benefits would be obtained by bringing together the various experiences in this regard, so that needs assessment methods can be streamlined and validated for use across the community; an excellent first step in that direction was the 3-day workshop on Assessment, held in September 2006 in Washington. But this did not exhaust the issue: knowledge was shared but was not taken to the level of cross-CS harmonization. Core methods are strongly needed in this area. Also, developing a Needs Assessment is a skill that is critical for CPs to master. Thus, resources to understand, adapt and implement core methods will be needed at the local level as well.

General program design

Investments were made by several grantees to develop tools meant to improve the general design of their DAPs or MYAPs. Two main categories of items were developed in this regard: (i) tools to improve the capacity of CS staff to design a T-II program; and (ii) tools to improve the content of the field programs themselves.

Tools to improve the capacity of CS staff to design a T-II program

A good example of tools to improve the capacity of CS staff to design a T-II program is the “ProPack” manual. Initiated with the previous ISA grant as a tool to help staff improve the quality of proposal writing and project design, it was upgraded by the CS during the current ICB cycle into “Pro Pack II: Project management and implementation guidelines”. Other efforts in the same line include a “Integrated planning process” tool, to help align technical design with policy; and a “Detailed implementation planning” tool, providing step-by-step guidance to staff charged with preparing a T-II proposal.

Tools to define the content of T-II programs

All CSs have their unique institutional personality and philosophy of development, reflected in the program theory and technical approaches of their interventions. Some CSs (usually the largest and most experienced ones) have formalized those models into explicit guidance to ensure that their proposals bear this philosophical imprint from the start. The IHD model, the Child-Centered Framework, and the Rights-Based Approach are good examples. These philosophies directly influence the guidance provided on programming—affecting how the causes of food insecurity are analyzed, how beneficiaries are selected, or how communities are supported.

Another useful approach adopted by some CSs is to provide tools to help CP staff integrate specific (usually cross-cutting) elements to their program. Examples include the use of conflict mitigation approaches; gender analysis tools; social-political analysis to improve targeting; and participatory methods to develop exit strategies for programs about to phase out.

Finally, several CSs mentioned having used some of their grant to fund the development and (re)design of their T-II CPs, including assessments of ongoing programs with the specific purpose of redesigning the MYAP.

What to do with Program Design tools

Solid materials were developed by ICB grantees on the design and writing of proposals. The broad dissemination of such materials could yield great benefits for all CSs. For instance, the step by step, thoughtful approach used in the ProPack manual could help all CSs develop solid, complete proposals. ProPack is structured around the CS’s IHD model, but this would not pose a problem as the template is basically a technical tool that could easily be adapted to each CS philosophy. As to those philosophies, *per se*, whether the ICB grant is an appropriate resource to use when defining one’s own institutional position perhaps should be examined. One might consider, for instance, that ICB resources should be used only to answer technical issues.

Sectoral program design

ICB grantees devoted a lot of effort to technically enrich their sectoral interventions. Sectors covered include MCHN, HIV, agriculture and gender. Also, M&E was given special attention. We list the main efforts reported in the FEs below, divided by sector.

Tools for MCHN programs

Efforts spent on MCHN interventions indicate that CSs are well aware of recent advances in this sector, and many dedicated ICB resources to the elaboration of tools and methods that are at the cutting-edge of the field. For instance, a CS developed guidance on the use of Positive Deviance (PD)/Hearth in urban settings that offers insights in an area that presents unusual challenges to field staff and for which not much evidence is available yet, at least to our knowledge. Another grantee used ICB resources to help integrate Community-based Management of Acute Malnutrition (CMAM) approaches in its field programs, scale up those activities, and facilitate the transitioning from therapeutic feeding centers to CMAM—all aspects that have been recently flagged as requiring more evidence-based knowledge. One CS used ICB resources to further develop its Child-Centered Risk and Vulnerability framework; while another CS prepared guidelines on identifying the local determinants of malnutrition (LDM), an interesting initiative to adapt scientific knowledge to concrete field conditions. Other innovative efforts include work with CORE to develop and disseminate a Behavior Change Communication (BCC) manual based on the BEHAVE model for health and nutrition. Overall therefore, grantees have used their resources wisely to advance MCHN programs, developing methods and tools that, as a whole, represent potentially important contributions to this type of program.

Tools for HIV programs

A few CSs also developed tools to help their programs take advantage of new options to use T-II resources in the context of HIV. One CS was particularly active in this regard, proposing tools and methods to evaluate appropriate uses of food to support people living with HIV (PLHIV), offer guidance to field staff in reducing stigma, and develop nutrition trainings and growth monitoring instruments for orphans and vulnerable children (OVC). Another CS dedicated resources to help its staff address the special nutritional needs of PLHIV, while others prepared materials to incorporate the risks presented by HIV into existing approaches and developed guidelines for HIV and food security assessment and mitigation. These efforts, although restricted to a few CSs, offer a store of knowledge that might serve as a basis for identifying promising practices.

Tools for Agriculture programs

ICB grantees dedicated fewer efforts to agriculture, relative to MCHN. This lower emphasis might need to be rethought, as the programming of agricultural interventions is arguably the least developed area in the T-II portfolio, and guidance is much needed in that sector. Nonetheless, good efforts were made to address agriculture and natural resource management issues. These included:

- (i) tool to improve the understanding of local farming systems
- (ii) guide to adapt dairy production to T-II programming
- (iii) tool to help address land rehabilitation efforts
- (iv) series of manuals on farm planning and setting up agro enterprises
- (v) “Homestead Farming System” guide to help field staff diversify/intensify peasant production.
- (vi) guide to help manage crop/livestock interactions in small farming systems

Other issues suggested in the ICB Grant RFA as focus for development—especially, the development of agricultural approaches targeted at vulnerable groups (e.g. HIV-friendly

agricultural activities, approaches that link nutrition with agriculture) appear to have not received attention, however.

Tools to support Gender programming

The ICB RFA specifically mentioned gender as a cross cutting area and, indeed, most CSs incorporate gender considerations into their routine programming. While few grantees appear to have dedicated resources to improve their approach to this issue, we must note one CS's preparation of materials to increase the awareness of gender and the integration of gender analysis in its T-II programs, and a similar initiative by another CS, in association with the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), to develop a gender analysis tool for MYAPs. Those efforts are important, and given the importance of the gender issue to food security, the products of those two CSs should be examined and, if found valuable, disseminated more widely.

Tools for M&E

M&E is a subject of vast importance to CSs, and accordingly, they gave much attention to this issue. One particular thrust was to develop tools and methods to assess specific issues. A good example of this is the development of a tool to assess the degree of community vulnerability to shocks and food insecurity. Similar efforts are represented by the preparation of early warning systems, which a number of grantees initiated using ICB resources. Also, several CSs chose to develop more general M&E tools and systems, to keep track of progress and orient decision making. For instance, one CS made progress in disseminating the use of LQAS methods to monitor country programs, while another developed a food security Management Information System (MIS) based on the Alchemy software. Finally, several activities correspond to supporting CPs improve the quality of MYAP M&E systems.

What to do with sectoral programming tools

The vast quantity of materials produced by ICB grantees to improve the impact of their interventions represents a highly valuable stock of experience and know-how. CSs could collectively take advantage of many of the advances and approaches proposed to enrich their general practices. As noted above, not all tools and methods are universally applicable; further, we could not rate the quality of each individual tool, and some of them might not stand up to detailed scrutiny. However, it is clear that a critical examination of the tools and methods developed under this ICB cycle would yield a number of technical advances that are worth disseminating within the T-II community.

In particular, our review of accomplishments suggested areas of universal concern—MCHN, HIV, M&E—where joint work could greatly advance core concepts, tools and methods. Getting the parties to share materials that meet common demand with the aim of harmonizing approaches would benefit everyone. However, the effort should not just focus on standardization. The richness of the portfolio listed here confirms that CSs are great innovators, and nimble at finding and adapting solutions through their direct contact with field realities. FFP should continue to encourage experimentation by CSs and, as important, to document new approaches in rigorous ways.

Thus, a three pronged approach emerges from this review: (i) look at ICB legacy to identify what has value and deserves to be scaled up and replicated; (ii) identify areas of

common concern where a critical mass of experience exists and bring the CSs to collaborate in refining their models; and (iii) encourage experimentation in developing new solutions to common problems and support the documentation of those initiatives.

2.2.2. Training

Training is a key step in building individual and organizational capacity. Accordingly this absorbed a sizeable portion of the ICB resources. Training, coaching, dissemination workshops and mentoring were the main approaches used by CSs to build capacity. The main focus of capacity building is difficult to establish as no systematic count was kept of these activities; however, we note the mention of the following topics: development relief, gender, Initial Environmental Evaluation (IEE) requirements, M&E, supply chain management, monetization, growth monitoring, PD/Hearth, Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission of HIV (PMTCT), CMAM—in addition to unspecified trainings (e.g. “forty eight training workshops in country programs”, “long distance training modules on DVD and CD”, and “training in the use of best practices guidelines”. Table 4 below presents a summary of the data we could identify in the materials reviewed, stating how many staff was trained in each issue; but this is obviously incomplete. Likewise, it was not possible to establish who was being trained (i.e., the head office or the field staff). Hence the data we present here is unreliable. It would be useful to CSs to keep tallies of those activities in the future.

Table 4: Number of field staff trained by capacity building topic by CS

CS	Food Security Assess't	Supply Chain Manag't	Commodity Tracking	HIV & Food Security	Program Manag't	Food Security Concepts
CS14		16			1	
CS13		25		2000		
CS11		2				
CS12			50		39	2
CS08			16	43	20	32
CS07	70	25	5	63		8
CS05	14				4	
CS04	38	52		84		
CS01			15	21	20	
Total	122	120	86	2211	84	42

2.2.3. Empowering the ICB Unit

CSs used various modalities to manage their ICB grant. Little was found in the materials at our disposal that specifically discusses the grant management aspect, yet differences among grantees— whether at the level of staffing, internal coordination, or the resources available to support the unit’s activities—emerge readily when reading the evaluations. The differences are substantively important. They also seem critical to the dynamism of the unit and its ability to achieve the grant’s objectives. Empowering the ICB unit in fact emerges as a crucial element of success. The distinction made earlier between FIUs and

SFUs seems particularly relevant here: while FIUs already have established their legitimacy and structure, SFUs must create their own space within their organization.

We postpone our review of staffing to section 2.3, where it is discussed at length. With regards to internal coordination, grantees use a variety of models: establishing a food security advisory committee at HQ level comprising agricultural, health and nutrition experts; holding annual food aid management meetings at HQ level; and instituting bimonthly interest group meetings for information sharing to improve the design, and M&E of programs; etc. These steps are all valuable, although it is not clear exactly what the ingredients of a successful ICB unit are. ICB units also use various means to make themselves more visible within their organization: five CSs publish an internal newsletter; one also produces posters and documents its good case studies on video and CD. Many ICB units also offer digital tools to help their staff manage the T-II programs, including a digital resource library on assessment tools, and a website offering competency standards, assessment tools and training materials. One CS developed and upgraded a “Grove Archive”—a common space for sharing information on programming—and also redesigned the food security web resources www.foodaid.org on www.foodsecuritynetwork.org/ in order to ensure that the site remains an active learning space.

In addition to the above, global tracking and accounting systems of various types were developed with ICB resources to help manage MYAPs, including a worldwide MYAP reporting system using standard indicators; commodity management information systems and standardized commodity management procedures; software for management and accounting; commodity management systems for review and gap analysis; and a management information system able to track progress on key indicators by program component, strategic objective, geographic location and time period.

2.2.4. Conclusion on Question 2

The review above shows that CSs have done a lot to build their capacity; several of these efforts deserve to be built upon, scaled up, replicated and shared. However, the coordination mechanism to do this efficiently is lacking— as illustrated by the frequent overlap of CS efforts in the tools they develop. The call of the GAO report for “...better coordination among implementing organizations...”⁶ spoke to this issue. The ICB Tool Index is useful in identifying what is available and in guiding CSs to collaborative learning and partnerships experience. To go beyond the ICB Tool Index and to make progress in this regard will require additional effort from the CSs in terms of coordination and collaboration. Instituting working groups on common topics (e.g., Needs Assessments; Nutrition and Agriculture) and establishing regular channels to share information (e.g., establishing an active web site, publishing newsletters) would help to keep CSs informed about what tools, training, studies and papers are being developed by one another. Certainly, not everything needs to be done in common: adaptations are needed for specific modes of operation and philosophical approaches, but the overlap of

⁶ GAO’s Recommendation 6 reads as: “Enhance the reliability and use of needs assessments for new and existing food aid programs through better coordination among implementing organizations, make assessments a priority in informing funding decisions, and more effectively build on lessons from past targeting experiences”. US Government Accountability Office, 2007. “Various Challenges Impede the Efficiency and Effectiveness of U.S. Food Aid.” Report to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry. Washington, DC: GAO-07-560.

tools and the limited sharing of achievements should not be due to a failure to communicate.

Our review also showed that CSs appear to spend considerable resources and efforts in building the capacity of their staff, whether at HQ, in the field, or among their local partners. But the lack of a systematic tracking system does not allow them to document the progress made in disseminating information and training their staff. This is an issue that comes up again in section 2.3, where the monitoring of capacity building efforts emerges as a critical challenge in the task of improving the quality of implementation.

2.3. Question 3: *What are key challenges affecting progress in the implementation and management of ICB grant? Describe the efforts made to overcome these challenges. Specify: Are these institutional or policy-related challenges linked to the grant, to the T-II program or to other areas?*

Several challenges are presented in building staff capacity in programs as complex as T-II MYAPs. CSs' ability to resolve those challenges seems more related to internal staffing, organization and decision making than to funding. This section examines some of the constraints faced by the CSs in fulfilling their capacity building objectives and brings a few observations to light from this experience, based on comments offered by the FEs.

2.3.1. Focusing and Prioritizing ICB Activities

Deciding which activities to prioritize and where to focus resources seems difficult for CSs. This is an enduring issue, mentioned in the 2006 MTE reviews and raised again in the FEs. Several suggestions were made in the FEs to help prioritize and focus initiatives under the grant. One evaluator mentioned that “the impact of ICB grants could be improved if goals and objectives were better streamlined to guide activities and tool development”—that is, if CSs adopted a more systematic approach to defining the objectives to pursue. Another suggestion is that ICB activities be demand driven as opposed to supply driven—and by this, it is essentially meant that greater attention be paid to the needs of the field. CP staff often commented that ICB resources seemed to focus on models and tools that appeal to HQs, but do not neatly nor necessarily correspond to their actual needs. One FE commented: “there is heavier emphasis on headquarters than the field. There needs to be equal focus on both head office and field operations”. Another FE called for CSs to “...focus on concentrating ICB resources on tools and trainings that specifically help to improve T-II programming at field level”. Carrying this suggestion further, another proposed that ICB activities be “inserted in the MYAP to become an integral part of MYAP design and implementation”. This, it is believed, will help “link ICB activity to food aid programming and identify areas where ICB can (...) improve program delivery and performance”. In the same light, one field office indicated that HQ “... could have used ICB funds to focus on specific challenges they faced in their location” but, continued the field staff, “we were not informed nor consulted”. As one evaluator puts it, “ICB strategies can improve T-II program performance *if and only if* ICB activities are designed to address factors that hamper T-II program performance”. Some go on to say that this lack of tools and methods explains the “limited link between capacity building activities and the performance of T-II

programs”. For instance, in one case the CS “proceeded to take on a number of ICB micro-projects which appear to be exploratory in nature with no immediate or long term effects on T-II programming”. Another evaluator stressed that “the efforts on tools is often isolated from the other programming parameters”. Evidence for such disconnects is common in the FEs.

The FEs identified a number of suggestions made by CS staff in terms of focus. Many want help in doing their work better: how to identify and manage risk and vulnerability; how to integrate programming across T-II program sectors; and how to use resources more flexibly when facing changing situations. They also demand tools to better organize the capacity building efforts: M&E indicators to measure individual and organizational capacity, or baselines on institutional capacity before initiating an intervention. The message that emerges from those opinions thus seems consistent: field staff demand tools and methods that are directly applicable to program implementation, i.e., not so much “what to do” but “how to do it”. This is helpful advice to those at HQ who set ICB grant priorities.

2.3.2. Structure of operation and organization of the ICB Units within the CSs

The task of improving the delivery of field programs requires that a structure be set up within the grantee organization to manage the ICB portfolio. In the Methodology Section, we identified two models in this regard (the FIU and the SFU). This distinction is useful since the way a CS manages its ICB portfolio seems associated with its accomplishments under the grant. It is surely not coincidental that the least empowered SFUs in terms of generating and promoting an agenda within their organizations are also those with the poorest overall performance.

Staffing is at the core of this issue. There appears to be some uncertainty among SFUs on how to properly staff their ICB unit. Two CSs tried using volunteers. Although economical in the short term, this turned out to be counter productive in the long run as volunteers could not ensure the continued presence needed to follow up on ICB-related activities. In one of those cases, the consequence of relying on volunteers further resulted in several tools never getting beyond the early development stage—and even if they had been completed, as the evaluator notes, the volunteers who developed them would not have been available later to train HQ and field staff in their use. Thus the temporary windfall represented by low cost volunteers is rapidly undone by the loss of institutional memory and technical continuity.

Another point noted by evaluators is the detrimental effect that liberal oversight can have on a unit’s incentive to perform. This allowed one ICB unit, for instance, to confine its role to the production of MYAP proposals and to dispense with the quest for program improvement. Given the limited control that the grant mechanism confers to the donor over the use of the resource, the incentive to perform has to reside with grantees themselves, hence the importance of building units that are able to define their mandate and have the internal authority needed to fulfill this mandate.

The FSUs that exist in a few of the CSs were generally more successful in fulfilling the need for leadership and a focal point for T-II activities, and for establishing within their

organization a discipline to seek program improvement. They did so by being involved from the start, leading the preparation of the ICB proposal, ensuring the implementation of the plan, and coordinating the different units involved in the delivery of products, services or training. This is not to discredit the SMUs—some of them performed in fact quite well in their task—but the formalization of the structure seems to help. We thus conclude that institutionalizing the ICB unit within the parent organization is desirable. The terms on which the ICB unit relates to the parent organization should be clearly specified in the ICB proposals, and minimum guarantees of support from HQ should be made explicit. These requirements might be ensured by having the donor specify minimal expectations in each of those aspects in the RFA itself.

2.3.3. Capacity Building

The previous section suggested that both HQ and field staff have capacity building needs. This section summarizes comments made by the evaluators on what the needs are and how to focus efforts to build capacity in each group.

Training HQ staff

One of the evaluators noted that “the aim (of ICB grant) is to build capacity at individual, institutional, program and community levels”. Doing that well is difficult, so another FE suggested that training be developed “to guide the design of ICB proposal and activities themselves.” Just as training is now available from FANTA (e.g. the M&E workshop) in developing good MYAPs components, it is suggested that guidance be offered to CSs in developing and implementing their ICB activities. Ways of doing so might be to (1) use the “mentoring” grant—for instance, by having “Experienced CSs” provide models for ICB units to “Newcomer CSs” or (2) develop the equivalent of the ProPack tool for ICB grantees. It is most probably not the role of the donor to provide the means to do so, yet such suggestions are useful as they remind everyone of the necessity of raising HQ staff capacity, as well as that of field staff.

Training of Field Staff

One evaluator wrote that “training is the beginning of capacity building, not an end in itself”. Yet, the FEs are replete with quotes suggesting that trainers often fail to follow up and do the necessary hand-holding to yield solid technical mastery in the field. Some in-country staff stated, for instance, that “there is little direction after training to apply what is learned”; others said that “training was completed without a plan to enact it in the field”; or that “training took place without a plan for implementing what was learned from the training.”

The aspect mentioned most frequently by evaluators is that of tailoring training to staff needs: “Understanding capacity needs must be the basis for planning staff capacity development,” said one. Thus, CSs should “improve the measures of assessing the capacity challenges of T-II program staff” and “create standard indicators for measuring capacity building needs.” However, another evaluator said, “...indicators to measure changes in capacity are not clearly defined and methods to measure changes in capacity

are not available.” Developing standard indicators to assess capacity building needs thus might help improve the outcomes of the ICB grant.

One evaluator stressed that “training in new methods and tools can best contribute to institutional capacity when it is tailored to the specific needs of the program.” Various ways were proposed to tailor training to local needs. One evaluator suggested to “update field capacity annually to fit the changing operating conditions of the T-II program.” This is an interesting idea, as it presupposes that the data and analysis necessary to inform the content of the yearly update already exists. Such an activity would indeed promote HQ/CP exchange and foster the culture of critical appraisal that is essential to improve any operation. Another reviewer suggested facilitation of regional staff exchanges, as this seems to work well in fostering adoption among peers and promoting local leadership.

Communications between HQ and Field staff

The fluidity of communications between HQ and CPs is essential to improve capacity. Yet here again, many challenges were mentioned. Several CP staff said that they were not briefed on the ICB program and its objectives and pointed at a “lack of link between T-II and ICB,” “reduced communication of ICB purpose from head office to field offices,” and the low level of understanding that CPs have of what the ICB is, how it operates, and what it is meant to do. This lack of communication can have serious consequences: some mentioned “confusion between HQ and the field regarding scheduling of trainings,” “duplication in the development of tools,” “uncertainty about which indicator or index to use,” and other such logistical confusion.

To relieve the communication bottleneck, it is suggested variously to:

- “increase cross learning and collaboration”
- “establish mechanisms for filtering knowledge and skills from head office to field offices”
- “create regular communication or knowledge sharing and learning objectives between head office and field”
- “have regular staff meetings to increase communication”
- “use reviews and annual plans as an opportunity for reflection (...since...) now, the plans do not present a coherent strategy for identification, review and adoption of best practices”

Those suggestions are all useful. That they were raised so frequently by evaluators suggests it is a real issue and needs to be addressed more systematically by grantees across the board.

In the case of the most ambitious approaches (which are usually driven by FIUs,) a difficulty seems to reside in the complexity of the model: in one example, the IHD is seen as a success by HQ, yet feedback from the field reveals that “a large section of CPs are not yet well informed on the IHD and do not have the skills to translate and apply the framework to their respective T-II program.” Two FEs mentioned limited field knowledge of the Household Livelihood Security (HLS) approach; “staff is not aware of the need to integrate new tools in their programs,” said one evaluator; while another reported that the “CS saw very little institutionalization and application of tools or new

methods on the existing or new T-II programs.” The knowledge acquired by headquarters on some issues often does not trickle down to the field, or else, is not supported sufficiently. One CS’s application of its indicators and indices to field programs, for instance, ended up confusing the staff more than it helped: “there are too many indices to deal with and it is very confusing” said one staff, who continued, “a few well selected T-II indicators would be most appropriate, as it would focus at raising capacity in applying something that is simple and effective.”

Timeliness in the availability of ICB products is also critical in their adoption. Several evaluators pointed at deficiencies in this respect. As one reviewer puts it, “the ICB interventions are not synchronized with T-II implementation. The implementation has gone ahead while activities of ICB which are necessary to improve performance of T-II are still being developed.” Also, tools must be ready and packaged for easy adoption. Yet it is noted by some that “tools and frameworks are not tested at field level. Scale up should be based on adequate field testing and evaluation at pilot learning sites. More evidence is needed before scaling up of frameworks and models.” Finally many tools were never finished, or are still in development, leaving to field staff the task of developing or adapting the methods it needs to operate. The lessons learned from those various findings suggest that “training done the right way” should pay attention to:

- Ensuring that the tool is fully developed before moving on with training, implementation and/or scaling up
- Announcing the training in advance so that field staff can accommodate their time around it
- Ensuring enough hands on practice and exposure to the variety of potential situations generated by the tool or approach, so that staff will be able to adapt it in concrete situations
- Identifying a local resource to serve as reference and point of contact for that approach after local training. Providing that person with additional training, access to key documents, and access to a hotline with HQ in case of problems

Another key way to promote capacity building is through partnerships. This is specifically contemplated under the third objective of the RFA. Concomitantly, the FEs quote staff stating that “partnerships are ideal capacity building and program learning mechanisms for T-II,” and that “tighter partnerships with PVOs experienced in T-II can help,” for instance by “sharing in the development of resource materials,” “conduct[ing] joint training,” and generally by “establishing strategic partnerships with other PVOs that have comparative advantages in food distribution in countries where the CS is implementing MYAPs or applying for new MYAPs. Partnership should include elements of cross learning, joint field visits, annual meetings etc.” Yet, as described in the next Section, progress in increasing partnerships has been limited. One reason invoked to explain this situation was the lack of a central mechanism like FAM. This leads to “differences in ICB priorities...” (among grantees) “...causing problems in ICB implementation plan.” Coordination among CSs will have to be addressed before those issues can move forward—creating consortia around specific issues when submitting ICB grant proposals might be one way of doing so.

2.4. Question 4. *Identify innovations and best practices including successful approaches made possible by the ICB grant. Specify: provide examples of inter-organizational learning and capacity building about best practices and/or successful approaches.*

A key means of improving program design and implementation is to associate with a community of practice to exchange and validate the tools or methods developed by each CS—this constitutes one of the three main results listed by FFP in the original ICB RFA⁷, and is the subject of Question 4. As shown earlier, grantees developed a wealth of products thanks to ICB resources. In this section we examine how well they performed in sharing this knowledge. The insights provided by the FEs are listed under two headings: (i) Collaboration among ICB grantees, and (ii) Collaboration with other organizations.

2.4.1. Collaboration among ICB grantees

Networking and collaboration among CSs takes many forms. CSs occasionally organize special events, to which they invite other ICB grantees. There are several successful examples of this strategy. We already mentioned the successful meeting organized in September 2006 in Washington to share knowledge and experiences on assessment methods. This provides a good example of a systematic effort to bring together all parties and offer them a venue to share their experiences, so their success may be replicated elsewhere. Another CS hosted a workshop in DC to review the newly published FANTA/WFP/TANGO “Food Assistance Programming in Context of HIV” guide. Elsewhere, two CS co-sponsored a Program Officers forum in Zambia to discuss issues of common concern; whereas one CS hosted the Africa Forum in 2006 in which food security and HIV programming issues were discussed. Yet another CS held a series of seminars in Africa, Washington and Haiti to present and disseminate its MCHN preventive model. Those activities are important and useful, and should be done more often. As of now, however, they are infrequent and no “critical density” is attained that would have the effect of creating a solid community of practice around T-II issues in general.

Yet another form of inter-organizational learning often listed is to attend special trainings such as FFP’s FAMC or FANTA’s M&E workshop, the goal here being to acquire standardized knowledge that is directly relevant and applicable to program activities. The target of those meetings is generally the ICB HQ staff; and the outcome should be an improved capacity among CSs to submit strong MYAP proposals. Anecdotal evidence from the current MYAP reviews suggests that those special trainings do help; but the gap is still large, particularly in areas such as M&E where few CSs are able to provide a satisfactory IPTT right from the start at MYAP submission stage.

Another type of networking is through occasional meetings organized by umbrella organizations such as the FACG, the Alliance for Food Aid and others. As those meetings are usually meant to share information and/or to provide a platform for discussion, no

⁷ Result 3 reads: “Foster improved PVO collaboration to identify and promote the best, most effective practices in Title II programming to mitigate risks that lead to food insecurity and enhance partners’ ability to report results that can be aggregated to show national or global impact of USAID food security programs” (RFA, p.29).

downstream products are expected from participants other than a better awareness of the general programming context.

Yet another approach to inter-organizational learning is to contribute to Technical Working Groups (TWGs) such as Sustain’s “Food Aid Quality Enhancement Project”, the FACG’s End User Group and Commodity Working Group; or CORE’s Nutrition and HIV/AIDS working group. Here again, no specific products were listed in the FEs to point at the benefits of such activities. The greater result seems to be a better awareness by individual HQs of new areas and approaches in programming.

Interestingly, in-country CS teams often partner with one another in training. Examples include one CS training another locally active CS in its Participatory Hygiene and Sanitation Transformation approach, while receiving training from the latter on Food Commodity Management. Similarly, two CSs collaborated in developing common indicators for their MCHN and HIV activities in Ghana; while one CSs’ staff in Tajikistan benefited from training by another CS in BCC and Community Mobilization for an Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses (IMCI) intervention. Also mentioned was a collaboration between two CSs to design and implement a Developmental Relief M&E system, including the selection of common indicators and the design of a community-based food monitoring system. Those are interesting examples of collaboration—although it is not clear that those actions are attributable to the ICB grants— they seem more like spontaneous arrangements coming out of local staff mutual needs.

Some CSs also promote exchanges among their country staff to enhance learning in specific areas. This might better be defined as training rather than collaboration, since it is internal to each CS but it is a form of networking nevertheless. Examples include peer exchanges between one CS’s Eritrea and Indonesia staff; and a CS leadership program using staff exchanges to promote regional learning. Another CS used its ICB grant to bring all its DAP/MYAP Program Managers around the world to “mega workshops”— three such events have been held so far and all involved reported good results from those exchanges, in terms of promoting internal learning and stimulating staff commitment. They are, however, costly and for that reason, infrequent and not very sustainable.

2.4.2. Collaboration with other organizations

CSs frequently turn to non-T-II organizations to carry out joint activities of various kinds. Some such collaborations are dedicated to learning: for instance, one CS contracted Oregon State University to obtain technical assistance in special areas; while another hired Tulane staff to develop its Geospatial, Warning, Information, Surveillance, Evaluation, and Response (GWISER) tool and to provide spatial analysis capacity in food insecurity. One CS contracted FARMSERVE to gain technical agricultural knowledge for its Ghana and Guinea programs, and another funded ICRW to develop a gender analysis tool for its T-II programs. Two CSs received training from Heifer International in the context of an animal husbandry project.

Aside from such mentoring arrangements, ICB grantees may collaborate with other organizations in the delivery of particular services. One CS, for instance, teamed up with

Helen Keller Foundation on M&E and Vitamin A supplementation in Senegal. Another CS established cooperating partnerships with WFP, the Feinstein Hunger Centre, and bilateral national Red Cross societies in emergency response, transition and recovery programs, and also collaborated with USAID Environmental Services Program to carry out a water and sanitation condition and needs assessment. A third CS works with WFP in developing and applying Community Household Surveillance System (CHS) to monitor food aid outcomes and assess the impacts of food aid on targeted households.

Collaboration with host country and local governments is also mentioned. Examples include participation in country level vulnerability assessment committees; and work with local governments and local NGOs to do participatory planning. These activities, however, seem more in line with normal DAP/MYAP activities, thus raising again the issue of attribution, staffing and grant management.

2.4.3. Conclusion on inter-organizational learning

The paragraphs above suggest that ICB grantees actually spend a good amount of effort on inter-organizational collaboration. However, those efforts are not systematic, especially when it comes to networking within the ICB group itself: the ICB Tool Index and the FEs listed more entries describing collaborations with outsiders than activities within the group. Also, the fact that a substantial proportion of the items listed as “partnering among grantees” correspond to FAMC or FANTA trainings, or attending FACG meetings, are not a strong indication of a “drive to network” among ICB grantees either.

It is therefore not surprising that the concrete impacts of partnerships are so elusive. One could hope to see joint statements on issues of common concern or collaborative products being rolled out to streamline particular approaches. But such tangible signs of collaboration are largely absent. Several evaluators remarked that the loss of the FAM mechanism left the community without a means to organize and coordinate learning among CSs. It may be true: while FAM was not perfect—it did not receive much financial support from CSs themselves during its fifteen years of existence—a central consensual platform, endowed with a strong mandate and adequate resources, could play a key role in organizing inter institutional collaboration around ICB issues. Furthermore, several of the issues raised in this review—from the lack of quality control to the overlap between products—could be addressed by such a structure.

3. CONCLUSIONS

The SOW for this activity quoted the findings of the earlier MTE, which summarized the main challenges facing the ICB grantees as follow: “...need for greater prioritization, varying degrees to which ICB funds were linked to Title II programs, use of ICB funds to support numerous activities resulting in diminished impact, extent to which funds are used for PVO field and headquarters staff, unrealistic and/or poorly established targets, incomplete/ unfinished research and/or tools, incomplete lifecycle of tool development, chronic problem of staff turnover and loss of institutional knowledge, need for a holistic approach to monitoring and evaluations, importance of cataloging success stories, limited creativity restricting both program innovation and incorporation of key lessons learned,

importance of involving external partners, and how to encourage greater collaboration among grantees—especially around important issues like assessments.”

Unfortunately, as documented in this review, most of those challenges still exist. But two key points must be made to put things in context. First, the time between the MTE and the FE was too short for CSs to transform their programs in ways that would address the problems identified by the MTE. Second, this review recognized that although challenges exist, there are also several areas of success. This ICB grant cycle yielded a number of tools and methods that have the potential to substantially improve the design and implementation of future MYAP programs. We note, for example, the abundance of tools to (i) help program design, (ii) help carry out needs assessments and (iii) improve the design of sectoral interventions (MCHN, gender, HIV, etc). Likewise, we documented diverse models of networking and inter/intra-CS interactions that could be exploited. Those solid advances could be taken to scale and shared for the greater benefit of the community. For this to happen, however, attention will have to be paid to the key following aspects:

- (i) The structure of the ICB unit within the CS is critical. To have a functional unit, a CS must ensure that its unit (a) is properly staffed; (b) operates with strong internal oversight; and (c) is provided with HQ support when the need arises.
- (ii) Priorities in tool development efforts must respond to field demand. Tools should focus on the “how”, be simple and streamlined, and be developed in partnership with (and not in isolation from) field activities. Also, CSs must ensure their final products undergo appropriate quality control before being released to the field.
- (iii) Communications and coordination between HQ and field staff is critical; the role of the ICB grant must be better understood by field staff so they can work with HQ in defining their requirements, using appropriate needs assessment tools .
- (iv) Capacity building efforts must be consistent and responsible, ensuring that field mastery is achieved before going to implementation; and providing tools and training in time for use by CPs.
- (v) M&E systems must be improved at all levels (IPTT structure; indicators) so they ensure proper tracking of the outputs, outcomes and impacts generated by the program. They should also account for issues like capacity building activities, etc.
- (vi) The role of partnerships should be considerably improved. CSs should consider establishing a central mechanism for sharing, coordinating and networking between grantees. This mechanism could be used to identify common tasks, ensure quality control, and preserve the legacy of ICB grantee’s activities.

Annex 1: Analysis of IPTTs and Indicators

To create a point of reference for the discussion on the M&E of ICB grants, we first looked at the quality of IPTTs across CSs. Their quality was assessed using the following criteria:

- The IPTT is coherent and easy to interpret
- Impact indicators are present
- Outcome indicators are identified
- Outputs are tracked
- Information is available to the manager in time to make decisions (timeliness)

Each criteria was rated either 0 (Very Poor); 1 (Poor); 2 (Fair); or 3 (Good). Ratings were next summed up across criteria to yield a score possibly ranging from 0 to 15, then averaged to yield a mean score which we used to qualify each CS's IPTT (from 0=Very poor to 3= Good).

Table I shows that using the rating for the overall IPTT, none of the IPTTs qualified as "Good". Four of them (25%) qualified as "Fair", and eight qualified as "Poor", earning the ICB group an overall score of "Poor" on the quality of their IPTTs.

Table I: Quality of IPTTs by criteria and overall score

PVO	Coherent/ Easy to Interpret	Impacts/ Outcome s Present	Outputs Tracked	Timely Data collection	Total	Means	Score (Rounded means)
CS14	2	2	2	1	7	1.8	Fair
CS13	1	1	1	1	4	1	Poor
CS12	0	1	1	1	3	0.8	Poor
CS11	1	1	2	1	5	1.3	Poor
CS10	3	1	2	3	9	2.3	Fair
CS08	2	1	2	1	6	1.5	Fair
CS09	2	0	2	2	6	1.5	Fair
CS07	2	2	1	1	6	1.5	Fair
CS06	2	1	2	1	6	1.5	Fair
CS05	1	2	2	1	6	1.5	Fair
CS04	2	0	3	2	7	1.8	Fair
CS03	2	1	2	2	7	1.8	Fair
CS02	3	1	2	2	8	2	Fair
CS01	2	1	2	2	7	1.8	Fair
Means	1.71	0.93	1.71	1.43	5.79	1.45	Poor
Rounded Rating	Fair	Poor	Fair	Poor		Poor	Poor

Scoring: 0 = Very poor 1=Poor 2=Fair 3=Good

Looking at individual criteria, "Coherence/Ease of understanding" and "Outputs tracked" rated "Fair", while the other criteria rated "Poor".

The quality of indicators used in the IPTTs was scored in a similar fashion. Criteria used in rating the indicators were as follows:

- **Validity:** the indicator is a good representation of the reality it is meant to portray
- **Reliability:** the indicator yields the same result upon repeated measurements
- **Precision:** the indicator is sensitive to change and has narrow confidence intervals
- **Integrity:** the indicator is verifiable and not susceptible to manipulation
- **Acceptability:** the indicator is acceptable to grantees and critics/reviewers

- **Realism:** expected achievements require solid but achievable performance (targets are not too modest nor too ambitious)

“Output” indicators are most commonly used, representing 54% of all entries; outcome/ impact ones represent 40% of the total; and the remaining 6% correspond to input indicators. Again, this mix varies substantially by CS—all of which speaks about the great variability we find in reporting formats across CSs.

The same procedure as for the IPTTs was carried out to score the quality of individual indicators. Our analysis rated them “Fair” overall for most CSs, with the exception of four CSs whose indicators scored “Poor” overall; and three(?) CS that obtained a score of “Good”. Further examination of ratings across criteria suggests that “integrity” and “acceptability” are the ones that seem most problematic. “Reliability” and “precision” do not score well amongst Impact/Outcome indicators either. Yet indicators in their ensemble rated “fair” overall.

Differences between CSs dovetail with the distinction made earlier between FIUs and SFUs: all FIUs scored “Fair” on their IPTT ratings; several SFUs also scored “Fair”; but all those who scored “Poor” are SFUs.

Table II: Scores and ratings for indicator quality by CS and type of indicator

PVO	Inputs	Outputs	Outcomes/ Impacts	Means	Score (Rounded means)
CS14	n/a	2.4	2.1	2.2	Fair
CS13	1.8	1.8	1.4	1.6	Fair
CS12	n/a	3.0	1.1	1.2	Poor
CS11	n/a	1.9	1.3	1.7	Fair
CS10	n/a	1.2	1.1	1.1	Poor
CS08	1.4	2.2	1.4	1.9	Fair
CS09	1.9	1.8	1.7	1.8	Fair
CS07	.3	1.9	1.7	1.3	Poor
CS06	n/a	2.0	1.6	1.8	Fair
CS05	n/a	1.7	2.1	1.9	Fair
CS04	3.0	2.7	2.1	2.6	Good
CS03	1.8	2.0	1.8	1.9	Fair
CS02	1.5	1.8	1.5	1.6	Fair
CS01	n/a	2.2	1.9	2.1	Fair
Means	1.7	2.0	1.6	1.8	Fair
Rounded Rating	Fair	Fair	Fair	Fair	Fair

Finally, we looked at the proportion of targets that had been fully achieved by the end of FY2007. We used two benchmarks to estimate performance: 100% and 75% (the latter because there is one more year left in the life of the LOA). Results are presented in Table III.

Table III. Proportion of IPTT targets met by CSs by indicator type

CS	Met 100% of target				Met 75% of target			
	Input	Output	Outcome/ Impact	TOTAL	Input	Output	Outcome/ Impact	TOTAL
CS14		28%	25%	28%		29%	25%	28%
CS13	50%	75%	25,0%	50%	50%	75%	50%	70%
CS12			6%	6%			6%	6%
CS11		58%	43%	54%		65%	43%	58%
CS10			10%	7%		25%	60%	50%
CS08	33%	72%	40%	59%	40%	72%	80%	69%
CS09	60%	62%	46%	51%	100%	63%	46%	51%
CS07		20%	21%	21%		22%	25%	23%
CS06		71%		50%		71%		50%
CS05		66%	43%	50%		67%	43%	50%
CS04	100%	71%		50%	100%	71%		50%
CS03		72%	43%	68%		73%	43%	68%
CS02		50%	0%	22%		75%	25%	44%
CS01		85%	78%	81%		86%	89%	88%
TOTAL	50%	47%	29%	40%	60%	49%	37%	45%

As of September 2007, 40% of all indicators had been fully met. Disaggregating by indicator type, 50% of all input indicators; 47% of output indicators; and 29% of impact indicators were accomplished. Changing the benchmark for 75% accomplishment did not change the situation much, moving the proportion of targets attained by 5% (from 40% to 45%).