

The Food Security and Nutrition Network

The Food Security and Nutrition (FSN) Network is an online and in-person community of practice, creating opportunities to share information, shape agendas, understand and influence donor priorities, build consensus on promising practices, and widely diffuse technical knowledge. The FSN Network is the preeminent space for food security and nutrition knowledge exchange.

The FSN Network has four major mechanisms for connecting the food security and nutrition community:

- **FSN Network News:** A bi-weekly newsletter; sign up at <http://bit.ly/FSNnews>
- **FSNNetwork.org:** The online home for the community of practice, hosting online discussions, and housing 500+ resources and a calendar of upcoming events
- **Knowledge Sharing Meetings:** Meetings bringing together grantees, donors, and researchers for peer learning and networking and stimulating cross-organizational collaboration by prioritizing participatory sessions and small group discussion
- **Global Task Forces:** Groups enabling practitioners from around the world to directly contribute their expertise developing and adapting crucial information, tools, and methods that are responsive to stakeholder needs

The TOPS FSN Task Forces focus on:

- Agriculture
- Commodity Management
- Gender
- Knowledge Management
- Monitoring and Evaluation
- Nutrition and Food Technology
- Social and Behavioral Change

About TOPS

The Technical Operations Performance Support (TOPS) Program is the USAID/Food for Peace-funded participatory learning initiative that generates, captures, disseminates, and applies the highest quality information, knowledge, and promising practices in development food assistance programming. The TOPS Program ensures that more communities and households benefit from the U.S. Government's investment in fighting global hunger.

The TOPS Program strengthens innovation and learning within the food security and nutrition community through:

- Technical trainings and capacity strengthening
- A small grants program to fund research, documentation, and innovation
- The FSN Network, a face-to-face and online community of practice

The TOPS Program is a 5-year, US\$20 million Leader with Associate Cooperative Agreement, led by Save the Children in a consortium that capitalizes on the expertise of each partner:

- **Save the Children** (Award leader, Commodity Management, Gender and Nutrition and Food Technology)
- **CORE Group** (Knowledge Management)
- **Food for the Hungry** (Social and Behavioral Change)
- **Mercy Corps** (Agriculture and Natural Resource Management)
- **TANGO International** (Monitoring and Evaluation)

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The TOPS Program: Driving Innovation in Food Security and Nutrition

Technical Capacity Strengthening

To strengthen the skills of staff implementing Food for Peace-funded food assistance programs around the world, TOPS conducts in-person, sector-specific technical trainings for implementing and donor staff at the country, regional, and home office levels. Each training is customized based on context and participant-identified needs and based on the core competencies identified by the technical task forces. Offered in French, Spanish, or English, depending on the local context, these workshops also include training of trainers components to ensure wider knowledge transfer amongst staff.



A commodity management training in Malawi included time both in a classroom setting and in a warehouse discussing proper storage techniques.

Previous trainings have included:

- Food assistance commodity management for new and ongoing development food assistance programs
- Designing for behavior change
- Quantitative data analysis for M&E
- Value chain development

The Small Grants Program

The TOPS Program Small Grants Program helps organizations design, test, and share promising practices, tools, guidance, and skills that can help others in the food security community design and implement stronger programs. There are two types of small grants available through The TOPS Program: Micro Grants and Program Improvement Awards (PIAs). More information, including the RFAs and full guidance, can be found at www.thetopsprogram.org.

Micro Grants

The TOPS Program Micro Grant award is designed to build and sustain high quality technical skills and capacity of Food for Peace grantees, implementers, partners, and collaborators. Improving and strengthening technical and managerial skills in the overall community of practice is important for increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of development food assistance programs. These awards focus on developing innovative approaches, strengthening existing practices, disseminating promising new practices and skills, and reaching a wide audience of practitioners in the operating environment.

Program Improvement Awards

PIAs are designed for food security and nutrition implementing organizations to conduct and/or document innovative approaches, promising practices, operations research, or pilot programs to strengthen the quality and effective delivery of Food for Peace-supported food security programs. PIAs support activities that will produce evidence-based results and recommendations to help members of the food security community improve their organizational technical capacity.

Community-Identified Topics of Interest for Small Grant Submissions

- Conduct primary and secondary research on time and labor savings recommendations for households, specific and relevant to food security programming
- Develop and field-test practical guidance on the “how” of core competencies in infant and young child feeding (IYCF) practices
- Develop guidance for nutritionists to assist agriculturalists in selecting and measuring nutrition indicators for nutrition-sensitive interventions and programs
- Develop guidance addressing promising practices in commodity fumigation
- Test Community-Led Total Sanitation in food-insecure areas to measure changes in mothers and children resulting from the intervention, comparing results in behavior change to other standard methods used in nearby areas
- Create a manual to help organizations use Care Groups or other peer educator-based programs in post-disaster settings