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Special Study on Minority-Serving Institutions’ and Minority-Serving Organizations’ Engagement and Minority Participation in the F2F Program¹

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¹ This brief was prepared under the Farmer-to-Farmer Special Program Support Project (F2F SPSP) Cooperative Agreement No. AID-OAA-A-13-00053 implemented by Volunteers for Economic Growth Alliance (VEGA) under a subagreement with Cultural Practice, LLC. Caitlin Nordehn prepared the memo, drawing on background documents and interviews with current and former F2F program staff and implementers.

Introduction

The Farmer-to-Farmer Program (F2F)² program initially authorized by the 1985 Farm Bill provides short-term technical assistance to farmers, farm groups, and agribusinesses in developing and transitional countries that have requested assistance in furthering their agricultural sector development. Farmer-to-Farmer Volunteers are experts in a wide variety of agricultural disciplines, ranging from marketing, to production, to post harvest handling and storage, as well as a host of others. They have a strong commitment to volunteering and to representing the United States to people who have not had extensive interaction with Americans. Since inception, the F2F program has been implemented through cooperative agreements (CAs) awarded to private-voluntary organizations (PVOs) and universities. These five year awards are competitively bid. After working for about ten years with a core group of PVOs, the program began in 1996 to purposefully diversify its implementing partners by engaging minority-serving institutions (MSIs) including Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Hispanic-serving institutions, as well as other minority-serving organizations (MSOs). Drawing on reports, evaluation materials, and interviews with experts including former MSI program directors, this brief discusses the background of MSIs and MSOs experience with the F2F program and ways to increase their participation in the program. After further examination of constraints and opportunities, the report outlines recommendations for enhanced outreach and potential roles and relative strengths of MSIs and MSOs in international volunteer technical assistance programs.

From 1996-1999, F2F subgrants were awarded to six minority organizations to assist the PVOs with minority recruitment, developing scopes of work, and assisting with monitoring and evaluation. In the following phase (FY1999-2003), five implementing partners,³ under amendments to their CAs, funded institutional capacity building grants to five HBCUs and two minority private voluntary organizations (MPVOs)⁴ for a total of \$1.8 million. The MSIs and MSOs under these grants were mentored by the PVOs to develop project implementation skills.

The 2002 Farm Bill authorizing the 2004-2008 program called for increased participation from minority farmers, volunteers, organizations, and in particular HCBUs. As a result, the FY2003-2008 funding cycle increased funding for MSIs and MSOs, setting aside \$3 million for two MSIs and one MSO. Opportunities Industrialization Centers International (OICI) was awarded a cooperative agreement through a full and open competition. The RFA encouraged core implementing partners to allocate 20 percent of program awards to MSIs, accounting for \$2.3 million in sub-grants to ten MSIs and two MSOs.

No set-aside funds were identified for MSIs or MSOs in the most recent phase (FY2009-2013). Several interviewees noted that this was in large part because of the extra management effort required by USAID to support MSI and MSO implementers, who are often lacking in international program management experience. MSIs were encouraged to apply in full and open

² In 2001 the program was renamed the John Ogonowski and Doug Bereuter after Congressman Douglas Bereuter, a program supporter, and John Ogonowski, one of the pilots killed on September 11, 2001.

³ ACDI/VOCA, CNFA, Land O'Lakes, Partners of the America, and Winrock

⁴ Capacity Building grants were awarded by ACDI/VOCA to HBCUs: Lincoln University, North Carolina A&T, Tennessee State University, and Tuskegee University; by CNFA to HBCU, Florida A&M University (FAMU); by Land O'Lakes/Winrock to the MSO, Federation of Southern Cooperatives ; and by Partners of the Americas to the MSO, Opportunities Industrialization Centers International (OICI).

competition with PVOs and in addition were targeted under the Special Program Support Project (SPSP), through which one MSI was awarded \$1.3 million for a four-year program development project (Baize 2014).

The F2F program's engagement with MSIs is aligned with USAID Forward strategic initiatives including USAID's increased engagement with the higher education community, the policy on Human and Institutional Capacity Development, and the importance of Science, Technology and Innovation in agricultural development (Rubin 2011: 4-5). Given their experience working with underserved populations, MSIs are well placed to provide assistance to international agricultural development programs; unfortunately they do not often do so. MSIs bring strong cultural competencies, including cultural sensitivity and experience working with low-income as well as ethnically and linguistically diverse communities. These skills help in their work with local communities to address development challenges. MSIs have relevant agricultural-related technical expertise with comparative advantages in natural resources and agricultural sciences. The international networks of MSI students and faculties can be leveraged to build international linkages (Rubin 2011: 7). The involvement of MSIs also contributes to the diversification of the program. As noted in the Farmer-to-Farmer Program Manual (2005), increased diversification of the volunteer pool helps the program draw on all of the resources the U.S. has to offer, while simultaneously aligning with USAID's 2012 Diversity and Inclusion Strategy Plan to encourage USAID programming to reflect the diversity of the American people.

Despite these many strengths, MSIs face a number of constraints that limit their successful application to and participation in the program as implementers and recruiters. Many MSIs are unfamiliar with USAID mechanisms and may have limited resources to develop competitive proposals in a short period of time (USAID 2013). MSIs are less likely to invest in international operational programming other than student exchanges and therefore may not have staff and facilities that can be leveraged to support F2F programming efforts. Furthermore, insufficient support for international programming constrains faculties' time and ability to justify participation in short-term international volunteer programs. Faculty teaching responsibilities also limit their availability to provide technical assistance abroad.

The Farmer-to-Farmer SPSP mechanism can help to address some of these constraints so that the MSIs can more effectively implement international agricultural development programming and expand their universities' awareness, engagement, and interest in similar opportunities.

Increasing Minority Volunteer Participation in the F2F Program

Evaluations of the F2F program covering the periods 2004-2008 and 2009-2013 found no evidence to suggest that MSIs are better able to recruit minority F2F volunteers than the core non-MSI implementers. During the FY2004–2008 period of the program there was an expectation that MSIs would be better placed to recruit minority agricultural and agribusiness volunteers than non-MSI implementers; however, the 2007 evaluation team's review found that most implementing partners and MSIs interviewed did not find a strong indication that MSIs were better able to recruit minority volunteers compared with other types of organizations (Singer et al. 2007: 24). The 2012 mid-term evaluation team found it difficult to assess the level

of volunteer diversity, based on the standard indicator data provided, because approximately one-third of the volunteers did not self-identify their ethnicity.⁵

In contrast, more recent data tracking F2F volunteers' ethnicity from the FY2009-2013 period shows that 13% of the 2,982 volunteers self-identified as minorities, with 24% declining to answer and 9% unknown. Of the volunteers fielded during this period, 64% of the volunteers fielded under FAMU, the sole MSI implementer, identified as minorities (57% Black/Non-Hispanic, 4% White/Hispanic, and 3% Other). While FAMU only fielded 2.5% of F2F program volunteers, a total of 12% of the self-identified minority volunteers for the F2F program as a whole during this period were recruited by FAMU and 30% of the volunteers identifying as Black/Non-Hispanic during this period were also recruited by FAMU; however, this does not account for the 33% who declined to self-identify their ethnicity or were not reported. There is no comparable data available from earlier years.

Table 1: F2F FY09-13 Volunteers by Ethnicity

| Ethnicity | All F2F Vols.¹ | | FAMU Vols. | |
|--|----------------------------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------|
| Indian | 11 | <1% | 0 | 0% |
| Asian | 79 | 3% | 0 | 0% |
| Black/Hispanic | 16 | 1% | 0 | 0% |
| Black/Non-Hispanic | 138 | 5% | 42 | 57% |
| Hawaiian | | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| White/Hispanic | 132 | 4% | 3 | 4% |
| Other | 16 | 1% | 2 | 3% |
| <i>Subtotal (Self-Identified Minority Ethnicities Only)</i> | 392 | 13% | 47 | 64% |
| White/Non-Hispanic | 1584 | 53% | 27 | 36% |
| Decline | 728 | 24% | 0 | 0% |
| Not Reporting | 278 | 9% | 0 | 0% |
| Total | 2982 | 100% | 74 | 100% |

Source: Baize 2014 from USAID F2F Program Indicator Data.¹ 'All F2F Vols.' data includes FAMU volunteers

FAMU had a target of 30% minority volunteer participation during the FY2009-2013 phase of the program. Their strategy for recruiting minority volunteers has been to design projects with integrated opportunities for minority volunteers in sectors where minorities have high levels of expertise. Such areas have included horticulture, agribusiness, and marketing.⁶ Since starting to work with the F2F program in 2002, FAMU has developed and maintained a database of F2F volunteers. By 2012 the database had sufficient numbers of volunteers to easily match minority volunteers with assignments and meet minority volunteer recruitment goals. To build the capacity of first-time minority volunteers, FAMU has also paired first-time minority volunteers with repeat non-minority volunteers.

⁵ Of the people who did not self-identify their ethnicity, 78% were from CNFA/ECCA and East Africa programs.

⁶ Harriett Paul, personal communication. April 28, 2014

Florida International University (FIU), which awards the most Bachelor's and Master's degrees to Hispanic students in the U.S.,⁷ had a sub-grant with Winrock International during the 2003-2008 funding period. It was unable to use its network of minority experts as volunteers because of the demand-driven and results-oriented character of the F2F program, i.e., the program needs did not match the expertise FIU was able to provide. Interviews with former FIU staff revealed that staff had anticipated that FIU's business program could be leveraged to recruit experts on the regional exporting of goods; however, the needs within Central America where Winrock/FIU was operating focused on assisting farmers to market at the local level. Given the goal of matching the most appropriate expert to an assignment to achieve the best results, FIU was unable to recruit volunteers from alumni or faculty-based pools of experts.

Longstanding F2F implementers that manage other volunteer programs have comparatively more robust volunteer databases that also include some minority volunteers. These can be better utilized to increase the number of minority volunteers, but these implementers view their databases as proprietary and are not open to sharing across the program.

Constraints for MSI and MSO engagement in the F2F Program

The F2F program has used different approaches to engage MSIs and MSOs as recruiters and implementers, e.g., through sub-grants where core implementers supported MSIs in mentor-mentee relationships as well as through set-aside grants. F2F program evaluations have found mixed results in how well these different mechanisms have strengthened the skills of MSIs and MSOs so that they can compete with longstanding core implementers.

Procurement Constraints

An early report investigating USDA's outreach efforts with MSIs found that a lack of resources, faculty equipment, and facilities have made it difficult for MSIs surveyed to compete with major land grant universities for National Research Initiative (NRI) grants (GAO 2003). In 2010, USAID's MSI coordinator conducted a survey that identified a number of barriers for HBCU institutions including:

- Insufficient capacity to develop robust applications/proposals in a short amount of time
- Lack of time, assistance, and understanding needed to develop partnerships and align relative resources in the pre-application/proposal period,
- Perception that requirements are geared towards large or traditional partner organizations (USAID 2013: 5).

These barriers are also relevant to the broader set of MSIs and MSOs (including Hispanic-Serving Institutions, Tribal Colleges and Universities, and other minority-serving organizations) and their engagement in the F2F program.

⁷ Florida International University (2013) "Rankings and Facts." Available at: <http://www.fiu.edu/about-us/rankings-facts/index.html>

International Programming and Research Constraints

Many MSIs do not invest in international programming (aside from student international exchanges) and often lack experience and/or dedicated faculty, and staff to work with USAID and other international programming mechanisms. A 2007 evaluation of the program found that many universities lack the capacity to manage a F2F program, given its multiple dimensions: e.g., hiring and managing overseas staff, establishing and running field offices, contracting with organizations, and recruiting volunteers.

MSI's general lack of investment in international programming can also limit faculties' ability to justify participation in international exchange opportunities. A 2001 study found that at MSIs without doctoral programs, faculty on average are required to spend 70% of their time on classroom teaching. MSI's limited research funding, faculties' teaching responsibilities, and limited funds to replace faculty travelling and working internationally, makes it more difficult for MSI faculty to participate in development programs (Rubin 2011: 8). Associations like the Minority Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Association which include minority volunteers with international experience and relevant technical expertise could be engaged by the F2F program to recruit qualified minority volunteers.

Box 1: Examples of MSIs with Agricultural Capacity

HBCUs

- Arkansas at Pine Bluff (Fisheries Center)
- North Carolina A&T University (Peanuts)
- University of Maryland, Eastern Shore (IPM)
- Tuskegee University (Animal nutrition, crop science, biotechnology, small business development)
- Lincoln University (International experience)
- Prairie View University (Animal Production)

Tribal Colleges and Universities

- Haskell Indian National University in Kansas (Water quality monitoring)
- College of Menominee Nation (Sustainable Management and NRM - Agreement with Galen University)

Source: Rubin 2011:9

A study on how USDA's outreach could help MSIs to win research grants found that the 18 MSIs with doctoral programs surveyed submitted 37 proposals in 2001 for NRI grants with a success rate of 32%, compared to three major land-grant universities of comparable size that submitted 70 proposals with a 25% success rate (GAO 2003:30). While MSIs may have similar challenges as other universities, 43 MSIs surveyed in this study argued that limited resources, faculty, and facilities constrained them from applying and winning grants, and operationalizing research and programs. This was particularly true for the 24 institutions that did not offer doctoral programs where 70% of faculty time was allocated for teaching. Only four of the 43 MSIs surveyed felt they had adequate resources to successfully compete with major land-grant universities (GAO 2003: 2). Senior administrators at five of the HBCUs surveyed said that they were better able to compete with other HBCUs for capacity building grants than with major land-

grant universities for NRI grants. Tuskegee University was the only HBCU that felt it had adequate resources to compete.⁸

USDA addressed these constraints identified by MSIs through outreach including on-site reviews, grant writing workshops, and increased communication between USDA and MSIs about competitive grants. Overall MSI senior administrators reported that these outreach efforts were ineffective because of insufficient university funds to pay for faculties' travel to cities for workshops and USDA's indirect contact with university officials about grant opportunities and lack of follow up with MSI officials who had directly contacted USDA about grant opportunities. In lieu of USDA's outreach efforts, MSIs' senior administrators recommended increased collaboration with major land-grant universities through multidisciplinary research to build MSI's research capacity, USDA support for conferences that promote scientific collaboration, and increasing funding designated for MSIs (GAO 2003:14).

MSIs' and MSOs' Agricultural Capacities

Many MSIs, including HBCUs, have both agricultural and international interests and capacities with comparative advantages in applied research in natural resource management and agricultural sciences (Rubin 2011). Based on an assessment of existing minority-serving institutions, about 15 percent of the 217 MSIs identified have an agricultural department. A number of HBCUs and Tribal Colleges and Universities bring expertise in a variety of sectors including aquaculture, peanuts, integrated pest management, animal nutrition and production, small-business development, natural resource management and conservation agriculture (Box 1).

Box 2: HBCU Engagement with Feed the Future Innovation Labs

- **University of Texas, El Paso** (Rift Valley Fever Control)
- **Alabama A&M University** (Sustainable Aquaculture, Innovation Lab for Collaborative on Aquaculture and Fisheries, Kenya and Uganda)
- **City College of New York** (Rural adaption of livestock systems, Innovation Lab for Collaborative Research on Livestock-Climate Change, Nepal)
- **Delaware State University** (Soybean Value Chain Research Innovation Lab, Ghana and Zambia)
- **Fort Valley State University** (Potato storage pests, Innovation Lab for Collaborative Research on Integrated Pest Management, Ghana and Senegal)
- **North Carolina A&T University** (Drip irrigation, Innovation Lab for Collaborative Research on Horticulture, Cambodia; Small-Scale Irrigation Innovation Lab, Ethiopia, Ghana, and Tanzania; Conservation agriculture, Cambodia and Philippines)
- **Tuskegee University** (Orange fleshed sweet potato, Innovation Lab for Collaborative Research on Horticulture, Ghana; Maternal and child nutrition, Innovation Lab for Collaborative Research on Nutrition, Nepal and Uganda)
- **University of Arkansas, Pine Bluff** (Aquaculture supply chain management, Innovation Lab for Collaborative Research on Aquaculture and Fisheries, Ghana and Tanzania)
- **University of Maryland, Eastern Shore** (Soybean Value Chain Research Innovation Lab, Ghana and Zambia)

⁸ The HBCUs surveyed included Alabama A&M, Alcorn State University, Delaware State University, Florida A&M University, Fort Valley State University, Kentucky State University, Langston University, Lincoln University, North Carolina A&T State University, Prairie View A&M University, South Carolina State University, Southern University and A&M College, Tennessee State University, Tuskegee University, University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, University of Maryland – Eastern Shore, Virginia State University, and West Virginia State College.

Currently, nine HBCUs are engaged in applied agricultural research with Feed the Future Innovation Labs either as leaders or research partners (Box 2). Through these awards HBCUs are working with other land-grant universities in developing country contexts in over ten countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia.

MSIs' and MSOs' Cultural Competencies and Community Development Skills

MSIs and MSOs bring relevant cultural competencies to international development work by representing and working with underserved groups including indigenous populations who come from a diverse set of ethnic, linguistic, and cultural communities. These skills can help them to work collaboratively with similar type of groups overseas.

MSIs may also have self-identified interests linked to some world regions or ethnicities. FAMU, for example, has found that African-Americans have an interest in working in Africa and have identified with the region. From 2009-2013, 57% (42) of the volunteers fielded by FAMU were African-Americans fielded to the South Africa project. FAMU has also engaged minority students in their F2F project in South Africa; these students participated in a two-week immersion program in South Africa with field visits to F2F project sites. Parallel opportunities exist for Hispanic-Serving institutions interested in working in Latin America, Native American organizations, or Tribal Colleges working with other indigenous groups. A three-year program funded through a USAID cooperative agreement beginning in fall 1999, linked the Haskell Indian Nations University with Gorno-Altai State University in Russia to work with indigenous populations in the Altai Republic of Siberia and tribal areas on a community-based water quality monitoring program. The program was facilitated through student and faculty exchanges with Kansas State University and the University of Kansas provided support services (Godfrey 2000: 6-7). MSIs have a long history of engaging in community development and are familiar with participatory research methodologies including Rural Rapid Appraisal, Community Based Participatory Research, and Appreciative Inquiry (Rubin 2011:7). In recent years, implementing partners in F2F have engaged foreign-born volunteers living in the U.S. to provide assistance to projects in their countries of origin by bringing technical as well as cultural and linguistic knowledge.

There have been occasional difficulties with this approach, however. Winrock tried pairing a few Salvadoran-American volunteers with their project in El Salvador, but found that volunteers were using their time to visit friends and family instead of engaging with beneficiaries and providing technical assistance. Winrock found that it was more effective to place Salvadoran-Americans in other countries in Central America where they could draw on their language skills and knowledge of the region and its cultures (Singer et al. 2007).

Box 3: Minority Farmers in the US: A Potential Pool of Volunteers

Data from the USDA's Census of Agriculture shows that from 2007 to 2012 there has been an increase in the ethnic diversity of the nearly 152,000 minority farmers making up about 7% of all U.S. farmers (USDA Census of Agriculture 2014). Nearly 57% of minority farmers including Hispanic, American Indian, Black, and Asian have annual sales less than \$10,000 with only 18.4% of minority farmers selling \$100,000 or more annually.

Source: USDA 2014

Minority Farmers and Associations

There are many minority farmer, volunteer, and academic associations that offer minorities technical assistance, training, and networking opportunities, illustrated below:

[*American Agri-Women*](#) founded in 1974 is a coalition of 50 state, commodity affiliate organizations, and individual members that represent women engaged in agriculture. Their [Facebook page](#) also provides relevant information,

[*Hmong American Farmers Association \(HAFA\)*](#) founded in 2011 is based in Minnesota. A USDA study found that 40 - 75% of all producers at farmers markets located in the Twin Cities' metropolitan area are Hmong. HAFA is staffed by farmers with over 40 years of experience supporting Hmong American farmers through economic development, capacity building, advocacy and research with a particular focus on improving their access to land, capital, and training.

[*National Hmong American Farmers \(NHAF\)*](#) was founded in 2003 to promote economic opportunities for Hmong Americans. They have partnered with a number of agencies including USDA, Oxfam America, and the Jessie Smith Noyes Foundation. Their [Facebook page](#) also provides relevant information,

[*National Black Farmers Association*](#) founded in 1995 with the mission to “encourage the participation of small and disadvantaged farmers in gaining access to resources of state and federal program administered by the USDA” and to effectively provide technical assistance to farmers. [Their Facebook page also provides relevant information.](#)

[*Minority Peace Corps Association*](#) was founded by minority returned Peace Corps volunteers (MRPCVs) to promote community service, provide support to MRPCVs and applicants, and increase the participation of minorities in international experience, careers and affairs. Their [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) pages also provide relevant information.

[*Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences \(MANRRS\) National Society*](#) is a membership organization for minorities participating in agriculture or related science-based fields supporting professional development through mentorship. [Their Facebook pages also provide relevant information.](#)

[*National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education*](#) provides an international voice for HBCUs with over 115 HBCUs as members. Their website provides a portal for internship opportunities. [Their Facebook page also provides relevant information.](#)

[*National Latino Farmers and Ranchers*](#) is an organization founded in 2004 to serve Latino farmer advocacy groups promoting sustainable farm policy and safe food systems. Their [Facebook page](#) also provides relevant information.

[*Traditional Native American Farmers Association \(TNAFA\)*](#) is an organization that promotes indigenous family-scale farming and provides educational programs on sustainable, traditional, and organic farming for indigenous communities. TNAFA course offerings include: sustainable indigenous community design course, developing youth gardens, marketing traditional crops,

value added crops, outreach programs where indigenous groups share agriculture and cultural knowledge with other indigenous communities. Founded in 1992, it is an affiliate of the [Seventh Generation Fund](#).

Past and Future Investments in MSIs and MSOs

The F2F program has engaged MSIs and MSOs through a variety of mechanisms including subgrants, cooperative agreements, and program development projects (Table 2). From 1996-1999, six minority-based organizations held subawards with core implementers.⁹ The MSOs were responsible for recruitment, developing scopes of work, and assisting with monitoring and evaluation. In 2001, grants focusing on building the institutional capacities of five HBCUs and two MPVOs were awarded through amendments to five implementing partners' cooperative agreements for a total of \$1.8 million (Jepson et al. 2003, Baize 2014). Through each grant HBCUs and MPVOs were paired with an established core implementer in a mentor-mentee relationship. They also received training and in FAMU's case participated in field visits and oversaw project activities. Of the seven involved only two eventually graduated to the implementer phase.¹⁰ The 2003 F2F Program Evaluation found PVOs were primarily engaging HBCUs and MPVOs for recruitment purposes rather than helping them to develop the skills necessary to compete as implementers as intended (Jepson et al. 2003, Baize 2014). In light of the limited success achieved by core implementers in these mentoring programs, it is recommended that the SPSP develop alternative approaches to enhance MSI/MSO institutional capacities for implementation (see below).

The FY2003-2008 funding cycle increased levels for MSIs and MSOs. A total of \$3 million was set aside for two MSI programs-and one MSO-implemented program was competitively awarded. The RFA encouraged core implementing partners to allocate 20 percent of program awards to minority-serving organizations, which accounted for approximately \$2.3 million in sub-grants to ten MSIs and two MSOs. This increase in funding responded to the 2002 Farm Bill, which encouraged participation with minority farmers, volunteers, and organizations as well as HBCUs. Core implementers working with MSIs and MSOs as mentors were less supportive of building the capacities of MSIs and MSOs because they now viewed them as competitors (Baize 2014).

Set-aside funds for MSIs and MSOs were not distributed in the FY2009-2013 phase because these targeted grants were seen as being too management-intensive (Baize 2014: 3). MSIs were encouraged to apply to compete with PVOs; however, MSIs were targeted under the Special Program Support Project (SPSP) through which one MSI (FAMU) was awarded \$1.3 million for a four-year program development project (Jepson et al. 2003, Singer et al. 2007, Baize 2014).

⁹ The mentoring teams during the 1996-1999 period were: International Indian Treaty Council with Land O'Lakes, Bureau of Applied Research in Anthropology at University of AZ with ACDI/VOCA, Daikanar Limited Liability Partnership, Mercy Corps, Self Help International and Tajik Public Committee for the Exchange of Students with Winrock International.

¹⁰ Virginia State University (VSU) also participated in the F2F program as an implementer; however, it did not 'graduate' from a recipient of a subgrant to a recipient of a cooperative agreement like FAMU and OICI.

Table 2: F2F Investment in MSIs and MSOs (FY1996-FY2013)¹¹

| Periods | Total Funding for MSIs and MSOs | No. of MSI Awards | | No. of MSOs | |
|-------------|---------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|-------------|---------------------|
| FY1996-2003 | \$1.8 million | 6 | 6 Subgrants | 10 | 10 Subgrants |
| FY2004-2008 | \$5.3 million | 12 | 2 CAs 10 Subgrants | 3 | 1 CA 2 Subgrants |
| FY2009-2013 | \$1.3 million | 2 | 1 PDP 1 Subaward | 0 | |

Source: Based on data in Baize 2014.

FY2004-2008 MSI and MSO Implementer Experiences: OIC International, FAMU, and VSU

The three MSI/MSO implementers (OICI, FAMU, and VSU) experienced varying levels of success because of their varied structures, international experience and facilities, and level of engagement from core-implementers in the mentor-mentee relationship.

OIC International had participated in the F2F program in a mentor-mentee relationship with Partners of the Americas. They became an implementer during the FY2004-2008 period, winning an award in a full and open competition. OIC International was equipped to more easily operate internationally because it had field offices and staff in West Africa where it was implementing projects. Additionally, their agriculture and agribusiness development activities were similar to the projects they were implementing under the Food for Peace program. Their facilities, structure, and prior international experience gave them greater capability to manage a project than VSU and FAMU. In contrast, FAMU, which was implementing a project in South Africa, partnered with a local university to assist with the management of the project on the ground. VSU took a similar approach in Ethiopia through a local organization.

While, FAMU and OICI are structured differently, they were both mentored by CNFA and Partners of the Americas respectively, prior to becoming implementers, and were both relatively more successful than VSU. Both FAMU and OICI reported that their mentor-mentee relationships allowed them to more easily ‘graduate’ into the implementation role. VSU had not engaged in F2F through a sub-grant prior to winning a cooperative agreement for the FY2004-2008 phase. Furthermore, VSU’s mentorship from ACIDI/VOCA during the FY04-08 period lacked the capacity building activities that OICI and FAMU participated in with their mentors. Unlike FAMU, VSU did not continue to be an implementer during the next period.

These three MSI/MSO experiences suggest that the mentors’ level of engagement with the MSI/MSO implementers, as well as the MSI/MSO’s prior experience, structure, and preexisting capacities, led to varying levels of ease in engaging with F2F as an implementer.

¹¹ Funding rounded based on available data

Engaging MSI/MSOs through a Graduated Approach

Many MSIs and some MSOs have less experience engaging in international activities than established PVOs and therefore require more hands-on management and support from USAID, core implementer mentors, or other organizations. MSIs and MSOs have engaged in the F2F program at multiple phases: (1) **Beginning**: Subgrant with core implementer with responsibilities primarily focused on recruitment, at times with a formal mentor-mentee relationship; (2) **Mid**: Subgrant with a core implementer in a mentor-mentee relationship focused on building the MSI's capacity to hire overseas staff, establish field offices, contract with organizations, and recruit volunteers and build familiarity with USAID; (3) **Mid/Final**: Project implementation.

By establishing a graduated approach to engaging MSIs/MSOs in the F2F program, they will gain the skills and knowledge outlined below needed to eventually effectively implement F2F projects independently. **Please note that the graduated approach to MSI engagement in the F2F program outlined below is a recommendation. Nothing in this study should be construed as committing USAID or VEGA to any course of action or to any allocation of resources towards the goal of engaging MSIs in the F2F Program.** The entry point for MSIs' engagement in the F2F program is dependent upon their pre-existing institutional capacities to support international volunteer programs. The grant amount provided below for the beginning and mid phases is based on grants previously awarded to MSIs performing similar activities over five years. The amount in the final stage is based on the average funding provided to core implementers as a leader award in the most recent five-year funding cycle.

Figure 1: Graduated Approach for MSI Engagement in F2F Programs

| Phase | No. of Phases | Grant Amt. (5 years) | Type of Engagement |
|---------------------|---------------|--|--|
| 1) Beginning | 1-2 | \$100,000 <i>(1 year with potential for follow on based on performance)</i> | Small Grant (Supported through SPSP, recruitment, develop familiarity with USAID mechanisms, monitoring and evaluation, and F2F implementation with visits to the field). |
| 2) Mid | 2-4 | \$1.4 million <i>(5 years)</i> | PDP Award (Responsible for implementation of a small project building on skills from beginning stage, possibly engaged in a mentor-mentee relationship depending on capacity, supported through SPSP). |
| 3) Final | 3+ | \$6.56 million <i>(5 years)</i> | Core Implementer Award (MSI or MSO has developed essential skills and capacities to compete with or complement core implementers' regional programs). |

Future investments in the F2F program using this graduated approach could simultaneously engage MSIs at each phase (Beginning, Mid, and Final) with the goal of building MSIs and MSOs skills and capacities to manage the implementation of an F2F project with decreasing external management support over time. During the beginning and mid stages as appropriate, F2F implementers can engage MSIs and MSOs through a mentor-mentee relationship by (1) assisting them with the development of a recruitment database (2) providing opportunities to train MSI and MSO staff on USAID mechanisms and monitoring and evaluation methods and (3) providing opportunities for staff to participate in visits to the field to gain firsthand knowledge of project operations. Mentoring relationships in the past have caused some tension between the core implementer and the MSI or MSO mentee, because core implementers saw them as potential competitors (Baize 2014). In the most recent funding period, SPSP was responsible for providing mentorships to MSI-led PDP projects and should continue to provide similar support through this approach.

Using this graduated approach a minimum of three MSIs and MSOs could be contracted during one funding period. Using grant amounts listed in Figure 1, based on past allocations to MSIs and MSOs for similar types of engagement with F2F, up to \$8.8 million could be set aside for MSIs and MSOs for each funding cycle for up to two five-year \$500,000 small grant awards, one \$1.4 million PDP award, and one \$6.4 core implementer award.

Identifying Opportunities for the Capacity Building of MSIs and MSOs through SPSP

F2F can provide opportunities that match MSIs' and MSOs' competencies, capacities, and skill levels. FIU, for example, as a subgrantee under Winrock, was primarily responsible for recruitment but was unable to harness their network of Hispanic technical experts because the scopes of work for volunteers did not match their networks' technical areas of expertise. The successful engagement of MSIs and MSOs even at the early stages requires analysis of MSIs' institutional strengths and weaknesses. Designing a program framework that complements MSIs' areas of expertise could support MSIs' continued engagement. In the past, core implementers have had limited success mentoring MSI- and MSO-led programs. It is recommended that the SPSP be responsible for working with MSI/MSO implementers to strengthen

Box 3: Global Health Fellows Program and Peace Corps Minority Engagement Strategies

The Global Health Fellows Program has reached out to minorities by providing more information on the program through faculty meetings, student information sessions, career fairs, information interviews, and webinars.

In the past decade **Peace Corps** has enhanced its minority recruitment efforts by communicating short- and long-term participation benefits to prospective minority volunteers, including a stipend and medical coverage, international experience, development of foreign-language skills, and increased access to employment through the U.S. government. Recruiters also communicate with potential minority volunteers' families about the professional opportunities being a Peace Corps volunteer will bring for their family member. Additionally, opportunities have been advertised at schools with large African-American and Hispanic populations, in foreign language ethnic newspapers, and at minority conferences. In 2013, 24% of Peace Corps volunteers were minorities.

Sources: Global Health Fellows Program 2013, Peace Corps 2003, Peace Corps 2013.

their institutional capacities for implementation. This could include conducting an initial analysis of the MSI and MSO awardees institutional strengths and weaknesses to determine the level and type of support each awardee will need, and to then tailor support to address each institution's needs. In previous phases, the structure of the MSIs and MSOs, their prior international experience, and their access to U.S.-based and field office facilities and staff have influenced MSI/MSO organizations ability to successfully implement their F2F programs. These particular areas should be considered in the initial analysis of the MSI and MSO awardees.

Strategies for Recruitment and Support of Minority Volunteers

Since 1996, MSIs and MSOs have been engaged in F2F as recruiters through both informal and formal mechanisms including subawards with core implementers in mentor-mentee relationships. It was expected that MSIs and MSOs would be better able to recruit minority volunteers, but evaluations found that MSIs and MSOs did not appear to be better able to recruit minority volunteers than more established core implementers; however, this conclusion was not supported by data on volunteers' minority status. This finding suggests that F2F should take a broad-based approach to recruiting minority volunteers by engaging MSIs, MSOs, and core implementers. However, recent data from the FY2009-2013 period found that FAMU had a minority volunteer participation rate of 64%, compared to a minority volunteer participation rate of about 12% for all the implementers aggregated together. FAMU was also able to exceed its target of 30% minority volunteer participation for that period. Data for the previous periods was not collected and therefore it is difficult to assess if other MSIs and MSOs have also been able recruit minority volunteers at higher rates than core implementers. The 2012 mid-term evaluation recommended that a central database be established for tracking indicator information, which was established. Data collected in the central database should continue to quantify the number of minority volunteers, their areas of expertise, and impacts.

If increasing the participation of minority volunteers is a broad-based objective across the program, implementers could design country project strategies for which minority volunteers are well suited. Many MSIs and MSOs have substantial technical capacity in the areas of aquaculture, peanuts, integrated pest management, animal nutrition and production, small-business development, natural resource management and conservation agriculture (Box 1). At the same time, implementers must take care not to compromise the demand-driven nature of the F2F program. The design would need to take into account and address the constraints faced by minority volunteers and to build on the unique perspectives and skills that minorities can bring to volunteer assignments. Such directed efforts might help meet specific targets and help to achieve a F2F program that supports diversity among its volunteers.

These new efforts on the part of implementing partners to collect data on the ethnic diversity of volunteers can be utilized to more accurately measure progress toward increasing minority volunteer participation. By setting specific targets, the F2F program will be better able to measure success in minority participation. The program should set a floor not lower than the 7% figure that represents the proportion of minority farmers in the U.S. A more appropriate target could be the percentage of minority graduate students, professors, or extensionists at Land-Grant Colleges and Universities, as this is a pool of experts from whom F2F volunteers are drawn. In the most recent phase of the F2F program, 10% of the volunteers were farmers with the majority

of volunteers coming from private enterprises (32%) and educational institutions (30%) (Baize 2014 from USAID F2F Program Indicator Data - “FY09-13 Volunteer Data Summaries 1-4-14”).¹²

Implementing partners could share lessons learned on best approaches for recruiting and providing support to minority volunteers. Minority volunteers could also be engaged in teams of volunteers where inexperienced minority volunteers provide complementary technical assistance with a repeat volunteer, with the goal of building up the inexperienced minority volunteer’s skills to provide technical assistance independently on future F2F volunteer assignments.

Similar to Peace Corps’ and the Global Health Fellows’ strategies to better engage minority volunteers to reflect the ethnic, geographic, and socio-economic diversity of the American people in their programming (Box 3), the F2F program can develop methods to ensure that minority volunteers are aware of F2F volunteer opportunities and the benefits of volunteering are communicated to individual volunteers and their institutions. Implementers can share information about volunteer opportunities through USDA and APLU listservs and also engage with MSI international programs, as well as associations like the Minority Peace Corps Association founded by Returned Peace Corps Volunteers.

¹² In the most recent phase, 13% of the F2F volunteers self-identified as minorities. That said the 7 percent floor is low given the current recruitment trends. It is likely that most of the minorities being recruited to volunteer with F2F are coming from this other pool of candidates (students, professors, or extensionists). The 2012 midterm evaluation report found that only 9% of the volunteers were actually farmers while 29% came from educational institutions, 36% from private enterprise and 13% were retired. As yet, the proportion of faculty and students that self-identify as minorities in Land-Grant colleges and universities has not been aggregated, although some universities provide it at the level of a single institution.

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