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Livelihood & Food Security
Technical Assistance

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BACKGROUND

The Livelihoods and Food Security Technical Assistance (LIFT) project was initiated by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Office of HIV/AIDS (OHA) to provide technical assistance and strategic support to US government agencies, their implementing partners, and other public, private and civil society partners to improve the food and livelihood security of vulnerable households, with a particular focus on people living with HIV/AIDS (PLHIV), orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) and their caregivers. In addition, LIFT aims to provide global leadership and strategic learning to the field of economic strengthening through development of guidelines, trainings, and other tools to help vulnerable households – and those who serve them – engage in activities that enhance their economic and nutritional security.

Launched in Fiscal Year 2010 as a five-year Associated Award under the Financial Integration, Economic Leveraging, Broad-Based Dissemination and Support (FIELD-Support) Leaders with Associates (LWA) Cooperative Agreement, LIFT is managed and led by FHI 360 and implemented with the support of CARE International (CARE) and Save the Children USA (Save). The goal of the LIFT project is to build the continuum of care for people living with HIV/AIDS and other vulnerable households by increasing their access to high quality, context appropriate, market-led economic strengthening, livelihood and food security (ES/L/FS) opportunities that improve their economic resilience and lead to better health. An essential component of LIFT's approach is establishing links to integrate economic strengthening and food security as a component of Nutrition, Assessment, Counseling and Support (NACS) program approaches.

LIFT meets the customized needs of USAID and other United States Government (USG) agencies by undertaking assessments that provide concrete recommendations for strengthening existing ES/L/FS programs as well as identify strategic opportunities for new investments. LIFT works with implementing partners to strengthen their capacity to design and implement livelihood and food security interventions that sustainably improve the economic resilience and health of their beneficiaries. Through these approaches LIFT aims to heighten the impact and sustainability of investments made by USAID, the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), Feed the Future (FtF), the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), and the Peace Corps, as well as local governments, civil society, and the private sector.

I. **ACTIVITIES**

1. **Global**

1. **Input into Global Monitoring (M&E)**

a. LIFT's Research Agenda

LIFT continued to meet regularly with MEASURE Evaluation to begin implementing activities outlined in the concept note for MEASURE's collaboration with LIFT. MEASURE developed a logic model showing how LIFT's technical assistance (TA) activities could impact the economic resilience and food and nutrition security of vulnerable households. With significant input and in collaboration with LIFT, MEASURE Evaluation undertook a literature review, which identifies evidence of linkages between economic strengthening interventions, household economic resilience, food security, nutritional status, and HIV-related outcomes. LIFT also reviewed well respected household economic strengthening and food security frameworks and developed a causal pathways model that maps the ways that provision, protection and promotion activities could impact household food security as well as health and nutrition outcomes. In the next quarter, LIFT plans to publish and disseminate the literature review, logic model and causal pathways model. LIFT will host a consultative meeting to review the existing evidence and define a research agenda that will build the existing evidence base for economic strengthening and food security impacts on health and nutrition.

2. **Knowledge Management**

a. LIFT Livelihood and Food Security Conceptual Framework

Building on previous efforts to increase dissemination and use of the Livelihood and Food Security Conceptual Framework, LIFT worked with FHI 360's Design Lab to update the LIFT conceptual framework for distribution at upcoming conferences and country visits.

b. Development of LIFT website

During the reporting period, LIFT made significant progress in developing LIFT's project website. As the project matures, LIFT envisions a website which allows us to widely disseminate project materials and to provide practical, user-friendly tools and resources to key stakeholders including USAID mission staff, program implementers and other practitioners across a range of sectors including economic strengthening, food security, HIV/AIDS and other health areas. The LIFT website will be complemented by our continued presence on several sector specific hubs including Microlinks, Agrilinks and OVCnet. The LIFT project site will include relevant and timely information such as updates on global and country specific activities, dissemination of emerging findings from LIFT's research and learning agenda and key project information for USAID missions, practitioners and host governments who are interested in partnering with LIFT.

Building on meetings held during the previous quarter with internal web developers to discuss the purpose and structure of the site, LIFT prepared a web development strategy with the Design Lab based on the evaluation of several cost effective, flexible, and project managed content management website platforms. In addition, LIFT identified several appropriate web hosting, platform recommendations and project website URL options. In the next quarter, LIFT will work with the FIELD Knowledge Management team and other internal and external stakeholders to finalize plans and launch LIFT's website presence.

3. **Standardized Assessment Methodology**

In preparation for new country-level situation and opportunity assessments to analyze existing economic strengthening (ES) activities and identify opportunities for scale-up and replication, LIFT worked closely with consultant, Ben Fowler to document and standardize the project's approach to the different types of assessments LIFT undertakes in support of USG missions. During this reporting period, LIFT developed a range of assessment planning and guidance tools as well as templates for assessment scopes of work (SOWs) and specific assessment deliverables that together will form an assessment tool kit to efficiently prepare for and carry out assessments that respond to the needs of missions and other partners in a timely and efficient manner. These tools build on the lessons and experiences of previous LIFT assessments and aim to bring a standardized process and approach to LIFT's assessment methods, allowing for increased comparability of assessment results across different countries. LIFT is now in the process now of finalizing these tools with the consultant and will begin using them in the next quarter.

4. Household Economic Strengthening (HES) One Day Training Development

During the reporting period, LIFT began defining the goals, objectives and content for a one-day introductory HES training curriculum, based on LIFT's experiences to date. The technical team worked with consultant Ben Fowler to define the intended audience and scope of the training based on the anticipated training needs for upcoming technical assistance in the DRC and Nigeria. LIFT plans to field test the training course, and based on the results, will adapt and roll it out in other countries and with other appropriate audiences in the coming months. The draft curriculum will be completed in the next quarter and will likely be initially field tested in the DRC.

5. NACS Technical Note

LIFT contributed to the FANTA-3 NACS Technical Note, which is a brief document outlining the NACS approach to improve the nutritional status of individuals and communities. LIFT incorporated content related to the project's working model to integrate ES/L/FS activities into the continuum of care, and outlined considerations and key elements of a viable referral system to link NACS clients with community-based support services. This technical note will be disseminated early in the next reporting period in a NACS orientation workshop in South Africa.

6. Life in the Village Simulation Activity Tool

During this quarter, LIFT provided technical input on a learning simulation activity entitled Life in the Village, developed by USAID's Bureau for Food Security (BFS) and Microenterprise Development (MD) office. This activity will be used in a USAID Agriculture Core Course in Bangkok in July 2012 to provide an opportunity for USAID mission staff to explore concepts around vulnerability and household decision making. Participants engage around concepts of assets, shocks, financial services, food security and livelihood strategies for poor and vulnerable groups. This tool represents an exciting new area of potential LIFT collaboration with USAID's BFS and MD office. In the next quarter, LIFT will work with the Life in the Village developers, Anicca Jansen and Lena Heron, to identify next steps for LIFT's potential use of the tool.

7. USAID Coordination Meeting and Follow-Up

In this quarter, LIFT participated in the first USAID NACS coordination meeting to enhance collaboration among nutrition-focused TA and implementing partners (FANTA-3, SPRING, HCI and LIFT). LIFT provided input on the meeting agenda and structure, and presented an overview of current and upcoming LIFT activities during the half day meeting. The event provided a platform for sharing project objectives and priority activities, and allowed partners to identify

synergies and areas of potential coordination in terms of technical and country activities. The group agreed to participate in quarterly headquarters meetings and establish joint country level TDY's, where possible, to enhance coordination and identify specific activities for collaboration. LIFT completed follow-up requests from USAID and will remain actively involved in the group. Additionally, LIFT has worked closely with FANTA-3 and HCI to test this coordinated approach in upcoming field work in Malawi, South Africa and DRC.

8. International AIDS Society Conference (IAS) Satellite Session Support to FANTA-3

In this quarter, LIFT participated in several planning meetings with FANTA-3, OHA and other nutrition experts in preparation for an IAS Conference satellite session on NACS. The two-hour session, entitled *Integrating Nutrition Assessment Counseling and Support into HIV Services*, will take place in the next reporting period and will provide policy makers, donors, program designers and implementers, clinicians, and people living with HIV access to the knowledge and experience of technical and programmatic experts implementing NACS.

9. LIFT Outreach Materials

Building on the work that began during the last quarter to develop outreach materials and an engagement strategy with missions, LIFT revised the content and design of these materials to reflect LIFT project services and expertise in a clear and compelling format so that missions can easily understand LIFT project capacities. The final product will be a series of four key LIFT TA service areas and will be used in the next quarter to engage in discussions with USAID missions (specifically Malawi and DRC), CDC, Peace Corps and other USG agencies to showcase how LIFT's TA and support can integrate livelihood, food security and economic strengthening activities as a part of the continuum of care.

10. STEP UP SEEP Group Engagement

LIFT participated in a planning meeting of SEEP's Strengthening the Economic Potential of the Ultra Poor initiative (STEP UP). The initiative will advance learning in this important area and will develop guidelines, tools, and training methodologies to be shared with the larger development community. STEP UP will refine graduation and livelihood approaches – already showing promise with ultra poor households – for replication in new contexts. STEP UP will also explore other emerging ultra poor approaches, such as income support (conditional cash transfers), integrated health services, micro-insurance and savings programs to identify how these approaches can best be structured to help the ultra poor accrue, consolidate and protect tangible and intangible assets. The STEP UP initiative is relevant to LIFT's work to identify appropriate economic strengthening interventions for NACS clients.

11. Cracking the Nut Conference Participation

LIFT team members participated in the two-day conference *Cracking the Nut: Attracting Private Sector Investment to Rural and Agricultural Markets* in June. This participation facilitated connections with rural and agriculture practitioners including Opportunity International, as well as other leading experts in the field. LIFT staff participated actively in sessions and contributed to discussions on the linkages of rural and agriculture finance and private-public partnerships to vulnerable populations. While the focus was on small holders, the definition of small holders discussed during the conference was very broad and identified gaps and opportunities for initiatives such as CGAP to improve common terminology and typology of these for practical programming application. The issue of readiness of smallholders - in terms of assets and risk profiles - to engage in private sector approaches is also very relevant for LIFT's mandate.

2. Country-specific

1. **Namibia**

Findings from a recent assessment of some USAID-funded community and home-based care programs in Namibia highlighted the need for support to strengthen the links between clinics and ES/L/FS activities, paving the way for LIFT's support in this area. LIFT continued discussions with the USAID mission in Namibia to plan a Ministry of Health and Social Services (MOHSS) engagement meeting to finalize LIFT's technical assistance activities and determine sites for the NACS and economic strengthening integration pilots. LIFT developed talking points for USAID to highlight LIFT's experience and capacity at a meeting with the MOHSS to determine which unit would provide coordination for LIFT activities. This meeting was scheduled for June 1, but has been postponed until the next quarter. In the next reporting period, LIFT plans to participate in an in-country stakeholders meeting with USAID, MOHSS and other government representatives to discuss concrete next steps for LIFT's TA role in Namibia. LIFT has begun developing a SOW and budget for its Namibia activities, which will be finalized in consultation with USAID following the in-country meeting.

2. **Nigeria**

Following LIFT's introductory training on economic strengthening for OVC last year, LIFT facilitated a five-day intensive training on the Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA) methodology with 22 participants from 16 USAID Nigeria implementing partners and CDC. The training was conducted by leading VSLA expert, Hugh Allen. The training objectives were to: identify suitable savings led methodologies for participants' target populations and context, based on knowledge of various methodologies and industry best practices; build the capacity of staff and beneficiaries to design, roll-out, monitor, and evaluate savings-led and community managed approaches to microfinance; provide access to technical tools and resources, including an implementation guide and a management information system tool.

Following the training, 15 participants indicated that their organizations would develop savings groups based on the training they received from LIFT. Organizations already supporting savings groups stated that they would provide additional follow-up training to their community based organizations on the VSAL methodology.

LIFT presented a draft work plan to USAID Nigeria in early April. Based on the mission's feedback, LIFT further refined the Nigeria work plan to expand proposed activities and program the remaining designated LIFT funds from the Nigeria mission and anticipated COP 12 funds.

3. **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)**

After receipt of a draft SOW for high-priority LIFT activities from USAID DRC, LIFT engaged in several discussions with the mission and USAID Washington to finalize plans for upcoming support to PEPFAR implementing partner PATH's Integrated HIV/AIDS Program in the DRC/*Programme du VIH/SIDA Intégré au Congo* (ProVIC). This TA will strengthen the HES activities of their grantees through training and on-site support to implement community-managed microfinance methodologies, following-up on several recommendations from the joint FANTA/LIFT assessment completed in 2011. In the next quarter, LIFT will also work with the mission to develop a full SOW and budget for activities to be implemented with NACS acceleration funds designated for LIFT.

4. **Kenya**

LIFT AOTR, Tim Quick traveled to Kenya in June and discussed potential LIFT TA with USAID Kenya mission staff, including strengthening the community component of NACS, particularly in relation to ES/L/FS. Potential follow-up from this discussion may include LIFT conducting a preliminary assessment of ES/L/FS activities and making recommendations on how to strengthen that component of NACS programming. LIFT reached out to USAID Kenya in May to propose a July scoping visit but the details were not finalized before LIFT traveled to Malawi. LIFT will contact the mission again in August with the goal of finalizing dates for a scoping trip in the next quarter.

5. **Tanzania**

LIFT participated in a second discussion with Deborah Ash of the FANTA-3 project to identify possible areas of collaboration with current FANTA-3 and IMARISHA project efforts around NACS. Areas where LIFT support would add value to the existing projects include supporting referral systems to link ES/L/FS services with NACS clients, and conducting studies or operations research to better understand the impacts and cost-benefits of various HES activities. Early in the next quarter, LIFT will initiate a call with FANTA-3 and IMARISHA counterparts in Tanzania to discuss specific unmet needs that could be filled by LIFT in Tanzania.

6. **Malawi**

During this quarter, LIFT was pleased to begin engaging with the USAID mission in Malawi to solidify plans for a LIFT scoping visit in late July. USAID Malawi confirmed their interest in meeting with LIFT to engage mission staff in various sectors and relevant program implementers in country, and to begin discussing a more comprehensive scope for LIFT support with NACS acceleration funds. LIFT held two calls with the mission and several email exchanges to outline the objectives and scope of the visit as well as finalize the dates for the visit (July 23-Aug 3). LIFT also initiated a call with FANTA and HCI to discuss opportunities for coordination during the trip. LIFT staff started a desk review of existing reports and resources to inform their meetings and discussions in Malawi. Plans are in place for a second USAID/FANTA/HCI/LIFT call early the next quarter before the TDY takes place. In the next quarter, LIFT will distribute the results of the TDY and desk review, and will work with the mission to finalize LIFT's future SOW in Malawi.

7. **South Africa**

LIFT participated in an initial in-country meeting with USAID South Africa to discuss their interest in LIFT technical assistance to integrate ES/L/FS into the planned roll-out of NACS in all nine provinces. Additional areas of interest for LIFT support include TA to OVC programs working on HES activities, and research to understand why some HES approaches are more or less effective than others in the South African context. In July, LIFT will participate in the NACS orientation for Department of Health to present ideas and brainstorm possible approaches to integrate ES/L/FS into NACS with workshop participants. In the next quarter, LIFT plans to continue its support USAID South Africa which may include an assessment to understand what ES/L/FS activities are taking place that could be strengthened or scaled up.

3. **Operational**

1. **Partners**

a. **Save the Children**

In addition to the activities captured above, Save has been working to finalize their draft global and country level work plans and budget for the remainder of LIFT 1. During this period, Save has continued to be a critical LIFT partner and Save actively participated in weekly project meetings, development of LIFT tools and materials and project deliverables. Save has also played an active role in LIFT recruitment, including the Technical Director and the M&E Specialist.

b. CARE

In April and May, the LIFT team reached out to Late Lawson, Director of CARE's Economic Development Unit to discuss engaging CARE in LIFT's future program activities. While it was anticipated that CARE would begin participating in weekly LIFT team meetings via phone, this was not feasible due to Late's travel schedule. However, LIFT and CARE did have a productive conversation in June where CARE shared some ideas on where they could add value to the LIFT program. During this discussion, CARE proposed hiring a part-time LIFT staff member, which CARE would prefer be based in Atlanta but LIFT would like to see located in DC to facilitate face-to-face participation in LIFT activities and meetings.

2. Communications and Outreach

a. Mission Outreach

As noted earlier, LIFT completed the first draft of technical outreach materials for USAID missions and other USG agencies to highlight LIFT's range of available technical assistance services. These materials will be field tested and finalized in the next reporting period.

3. Project Administration and Support

a. Staffing

Meaghan Murphy joined the LIFT project as a Food Security and Livelihoods Specialist in April, filling the position vacated by Ben Rinehart in January. Since starting with the project, Meaghan has provided critical support to LIFT's global activities including spearheading the development of the LIFT website, providing oversight in the development of project outreach materials, making linkages between Life in the Village and LIFT and providing technical input in the development of the literature review and causal pathways model.

LIFT continued recruitment for a Technical Director to provide leadership and direction to the program. At the end of the quarter, LIFT identified a highly qualified individual to fill this important position. She has more than 20 years of experience in economic strengthening and specializes in extending the reach of financial and value chain programs to micro, small and medium enterprises. LIFT plans to extend an offer of employment early in the next reporting period and anticipates that the candidate will accept the position and will commence work in late July.

During the last reporting period, in consultation with USAID, LIFT added an M&E Specialist position to the LIFT technical team. This position will contribute expertise and leadership in monitoring, evaluation and research. During this period, LIFT developed and finalized the M&E Specialist position description with input from USAID, MEASURE Evaluation and Save the Children. LIFT began recruitment in June, posting the position widely and has interviewed several candidates and anticipates continuing interviews and filling the position in the next quarter.

b. Work Plan and Budget

LIFT submitted a revised budget and implementation plan to USAID in May. These documents were submitted to USAID/OAA to request a full obligation of LIFT's award to continue activities through the end of the fiscal year when it is anticipated that a second FIELD-Support associate award will be issued to continue LIFT activities with a higher ceiling and new period of performance. LIFT received verbal feedback from the OAA in June and revised the budget and implementation plan again to extend the period of performance until December 2012 and to include the expanded geographic coverage of LIFT. At the end of the reporting period, LIFT was awaiting feedback on the June submission to the OAA.

4. **Deliverables**

LIFT prepared and submitted the following deliverables to USAID during the quarter:

- Quarterly Report #10 (FY2012, Quarter 2)
- Quarterly Accruals Report
- Quarterly Financial Report

4. **Successes**

1. In collaboration with MEASURE Evaluation, LIFT finalized a literature review to understand the existing evidence of associations between economic strengthening, food security, nutrition and HIV outcomes. LIFT also developed a logic model and causal pathways model which will help to define LIFT's research agenda.
2. LIFT filled a key technical position on the project with the addition of Meaghan Murphy as the Food Security and Livelihoods Specialist and hopes to hire LIFT's Technical Director early in the next quarter.
3. LIFT began fruitful discussions with several missions and in-country partners including in Malawi, South Africa, Tanzania and DRC to start planning in-country support for NACS/ES integration in the next quarter. LIFT will engage missions in Tanzania, Kenya, Haiti and others in the next reporting period.

5. **Challenges**

1. LIFT continues to experience setbacks in Namibia due to delays within the MOHSS in identifying the relevant unit and a point of contact to oversee LIFT activities. LIFT hopes to continue working with USAID in Namibia and Washington to address this issue and commence the in-country consultation process with the MOHSS and other government counterparts, identify pilot sites for NACS/ES integration and begin community engagement and mapping of services.

6. **Key Learning**

1. During the past quarter LIFT has found great value in coordination with a range of USAID partners including FANTA-3, HCI, and preliminary discussions about work with the Tanzania-based IMARISHA project. LIFT's increasing emphasis on coordination with these projects and partners has come with both challenges and opportunities in terms of LIFT's planning processes and progress on activities. Coordination of meetings, calls and TDYs require greater effort to ensure each project is available, and that discussions encompass the activities and priorities of all projects rather than focusing on one technical area. However, early experiences with activities in Malawi, DRC and South Africa have showed the importance of close coordination, planning and communication across the multiple projects and organizations for effective joint activities that leverage each other's strengths and avoid duplication. Efforts to make sure the right partners/people are included, information and materials are circulated in a timely way, and that action items and follow on plans are clear is critical to ensuring success.

2. LIFT's work with Ben Fowler to harmonize and identify best practices in prior LIFT assessment work marked an important area of internal learning for the project and will strengthen the project's work in this area moving forward.
3. LIFT's work with MEASURE Evaluation to finalize a literature review greatly enhanced the project's understanding of the evidence that exists linking household economic status, food security, nutrition and HIV outcomes.

7. Plans for Next Quarter

1. **Global**

a. **LIFT Literature Review and Research Agenda**

As noted earlier, LIFT will finalize and disseminate LIFT's literature review and will convene a consultative meeting to define a research agenda that will build the existing evidence base for economic strengthening and food security impacts on health and nutrition.

b. **Outreach Strategy**

LIFT will finalize and field test LIFT outreach materials with USAID Malawi and other missions. In addition to continuing work on the LIFT website, the project will work closely with the FIELD-Support Leader team to update project knowledge management and communications strategies accordingly.

c. **Technical Global Leadership**

LIFT will inventory materials developed to date and prioritize work on new technical tools, guidance documents, as well as finalize those underway. LIFT will identify opportunities to demonstrate leadership in the areas of food security, livelihoods, economic strengthening and linkages to NACS and the continuum of care, including hosting a consultative meeting to develop LIFT's research and learning agenda, and participation in the NACS integration meeting in South Africa planned for September. The team will also identify strategic conferences and workshops, such as the SEEP Conference in November 2012, where LIFT can contribute technical learning and experience through presentations, networking and participation. The project will also maintain its presence and engagement in key working groups such as HAMED and STEP UP.

d. **Partnership and coordination**

LIFT will continue to coordinate closely with strategic NACS partners FANTA-3, HCI and SPRING by participating in quarterly meetings with USAID and through country-specific activities and work planning.

e. **Staffing**

LIFT anticipates hiring the Technical Director and will continue recruitment of the M&E Specialist in the next quarter. LIFT has hired a part-time Program Associate to support the expanding administrative and logistical needs of the team. Cheryl Tam, Program Associate, will join the LIFT team in early August.

f. **New LIFT Associate Award**

LIFT will be prepared to respond to a new LIFT associate award, once the proposal is released from the OAA.

2. **Country-specific**

a. **DRC**

- LIFT will provide in-country technical assistance to PEPFAR partner PATH/ProVIC to strengthen the HES activities of their grantees.

- LIFT will also participate in a joint FANTA/LIFT TDY to finalize SOWs and budgets for NACS acceleration fund activities.

b. Nigeria

- LIFT anticipates finalizing the Nigeria work plan with USAID Nigeria early in the next quarter.
- Technical assistance in the next quarter will include providing the Nigeria umbrella grant mechanism awardees with an introductory training in economic strengthening and an in-depth VSLA training.
- LIFT will develop a template for the Nigeria Economic Strengthening for OVC toolkit, and begin development of the content in the most critical areas identified by the mission and implementing partners.

c. Malawi

- LIFT will conduct its first trip to Malawi as part of a joint FANTA/LIFT/HCI TDY. LIFT will focus on developing an understanding of the HIV, nutrition, food security and livelihoods programs and landscape, as well as developing and strengthening relationships with USAID Malawi, Government of Malawi, donors, and implementing partners.
- LIFT will produce a report summarizing opportunities for LIFT's support in Malawi based on the TDY and a comprehensive desk review.
- LIFT will work with USAID Malawi to develop a work plan for LIFT's NACS acceleration funds. This work plan will be developed in coordination with FANTA-3 and HCI to ensure collaboration on several key joint activities.

d. Namibia

- LIFT will continue discussions with USAID Namibia to plan for upcoming TA to build the continuum of care for NACS patients to include ES/L/FS in two pilot sites. Next steps include engaging the MOHSS at the national level and conducting community mapping of ES/L/FS services.

e. South Africa

- In July, LIFT will support FANTA-3 to plan for and facilitate a two-day NACS orientation workshop for Department of Health staff from nine provinces in preparation for the introduction of NACS in South Africa.
- LIFT will continue discussions with the mission on how to support their NACS/ES integration and other key needs. This may include as assessment of ES/L/FS opportunities in the next quarter.

f. Tanzania

- LIFT looks forward to engaging the Tanzania mission and IMARISHA in the next quarter and defining LIFT's specific TA role in country.