

Supporting Local Partner Prime Readiness:

KEY LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE KIDSS PROJECT IN CAMEROON



Summary Learning Brief

INTRODUCTION

CRS champions local leadership that empowers local communities and the institutions that support their development to be effective and impactful leaders to serve the common good. The agency works to contribute to strong local organizations; influence external systems, processes and environments that enable local leadership; and adapt our ways of working to ensure our systems, structures, staffing, and culture are aligned with local leadership goals (read CRS’ local leadership policy principles [here](#)). CRS’ Central Africa Regional Office (CARO) 2020-2025 Partnership Strategy commits our country programs (CPs) to empowering local institutions as leaders for sustainable change at scale. In Cameroon, CRS pursued this vision by leveraging a USAID/PEPFAR award to help prepare the National Episcopal Conference of Cameroon (NECC) to become a prime recipient of US government (USG) funding. Between 2014 and 2023, CRS, NECC, and 26 subrecipient partners implemented the Key Interventions to Develop Systems and Services (KIDSS) project to improve the capacities of government, community networks, and caregivers to provide high quality care and support services to orphans and vulnerable children (OVC). In 2020, NECC was selected as the award “transition partner” and a second cost extension began, focused both on programmatic expansion *and* NECC’s prime readiness capacity strengthening. By closeout, the \$36M project had extended to all 10 of Cameroon’s regions, cumulatively reaching over 87,000 individuals. Thanks to a robust capacity strengthening process to transition prime leadership to NECC, the local partner applied for and secured a five-year follow-on project (termed a PEPFAR “transition award”) – Consolidating Systems and Services for the Management of OVC in Cameroon (CoSMO) – which launched in January 2023. Based on key informant interviews with CRS and NECC staff, this learning brief describes key milestones in the process CRS/Cameroon undertook to accompany NECC on their journey to becoming a USG prime recipient, including lessons learned and recommendations, as CRS expands its local leadership efforts.

CRS-NECC RELATIONSHIP TIMELINE



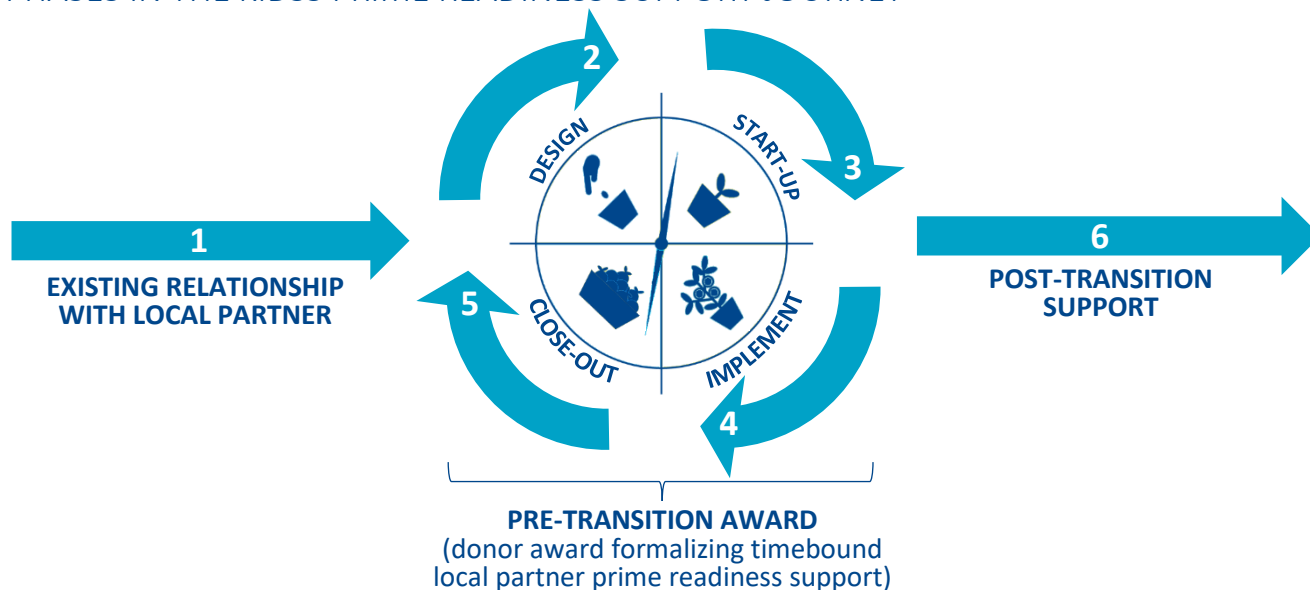
CONTEXT

The CRS tool [Compass](#) supports CRS staff and partners in attaining project management excellence by providing step-by-step guidance and practical resources that support achievement of the 18 CRS [project management standards](#). These standards are organized around four phases in the project management cycle:



design, start-up, implementation, and close-out. As successful partnership and capacity strengthening (PCS) exceeds the bounds of any single award, learning from the transition experience in Cameroon is structured around six phases as pictured below, including the four project management phases of the pre-transition award as well as before and after the award. By the end of the KIDSS award, CRS, NECC and their partners were expected to deliver on three fronts: strengthen the transition partner’s capacity to serve as a USG prime recipient, scale KIDSS coverage from 3 to 10 regions by increasing from 13 to 26 local implementing subrecipients, *and* scale contributions to HIV epidemic control through meeting the [UNAIDS 95-95-95 targets](#). This document highlights practical actions taken to advance the first objective and prepare NECC to become a prime recipient by 2023.

PHASES IN THE KIDSS PRIME READINESS SUPPORT JOURNEY



PHASE 1: Existing Relationship with Local Partner

Since 1960, CRS has partnered with several Diocesan Caritas and Peace and Justice Commissions under the leadership of NECC in Cameroon. Prior to the KIDSS program, CRS and NECC maintained a collaborative relationship without directly partnering to deliver programming, formalized in a non-project specific memorandum of understanding (MOU). Starting in 2014, the two organizations implemented KIDSS programming for five years before receiving USAID’s invitation to identify a transition partner. In 2019, CRS facilitated an inclusive process resulting in the selection of NECC as the transition partner. CRS and NECC’s existing relationship was pivotal to successfully leverage the donor-driven 2020-2023 transition.

Invest in effective partnerships before delivering prime readiness support.

CRS’ [key policy principles](#) to expand locally led humanitarian and development efforts highlight that effective partnerships underpin effective transition to local leadership. The KIDSS experience underscores that the robust accompaniment necessary to strengthen local partner prime readiness (when partners are both open to it and actively seek it out) is not possible without strong, trusting relationships in place. A long-term commitment to local partner prime readiness is possible by strategically leveraging agency private funding before donor-driven transition opportunities. Not only did the NECC capacity building process during the pre-transition award build upon past investments, but the successful transition also depended on CRS providing additional funding and staffing support outside of USAID/PEPFAR funds during the pre-transition award.

Proactively identify and support local partner(s) prime readiness aims independent of transition awards.

CPs can facilitate an inclusive process to collaboratively determine which partner(s) to support on a long-term pathway towards prime readiness, independent of whether a transition award is forecasted. This process may begin with visioning workshops to support partners in defining their future aims and whether they include serving as a prime recipient. This determination will help elevate PCS investments with additional considerations of project design, business development (BD), subrecipient management, reporting, and other donor management capacities generally outside the scope of classic subrecipient roles. Developing an informed plan outside of the pressures of BD processes will enable CPs to prioritize the local partner that actively seeks and is best suited to leverage these investments over time. Donor-funded transition awards can advance prime readiness strategies, but due to the often short nature of these opportunities, earlier investments are critical for success.

“Before the KIDSS cost extension II began, the Bishops and Archbishops of Cameroon contemplated and asked themselves a fundamental question: ‘What type of Conference do we want?’ It was clear that they wanted a different way of doing things. The leadership of NECC positively translated the Bishops’ desire to have a better NECC into a cascade of positive actions. CRS was very committed in the realization of this desire to make NECC better.”

- Dr. Xavier Tchetchya, NECC former KIDSS National Coordinator and CoSMO Chief of Party

PHASE 2: Pre-Transition Award - DESIGN

Following the 2019 transition partner selection workshop, CRS engaged USAID/Cameroon staff to informally validate the selection of NECC. A month later, the cost extension request for applications was released including a proposal submission deadline two weeks later. Included in the technical proposal, an eight-page transition plan served to propose NECC as the local partner for transition, present their baseline capacity including strengths and challenges, and detail plans for both capacity strengthening and the progressive transfer of management responsibilities and resources. The following recommendations for designing pre-transition award projects are based on implementation of this KIDSS transition plan.

Budget for a staffing structure that enables accompaniment.

CRS and NECC carefully structured the KIDSS organigram so the central systems of both organizations’ project teams mirrored one another, yielding a buddy system in which counterparts could continuously exchange ideas and observe one another’s practices. Additionally, a KIDSS PCS unit (originally consisting of a director and manager and expanded to two officers later in the project) was established to support PCS at all levels within the project team. The one CRS KIDSS operations staff coordinated additional support from CRS/Cameroon finance, human resources (HR), and procurement colleagues who delivered timely technical assistance but could not provide regular accompaniment. Teams should carefully consider a buddy system and robust PCS unit when designing a transition award management structure. Including senior operations staff in a similar PCS unit could help structure sustained accompaniment to strengthen the local partner’s operational systems and capacities to independently manage donor funds. While not critical in the early years of a pre-transition award, the KIDSS experience also revealed the importance of a dedicated BD staff person to develop requisite BD capacities and accompany the local partner in preparing their prime recipient proposal.

Incremental Transition Plan

Benchmarks	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	CoSMO
# of Regions Supervised	0	2	4	5	10
# of Subrecipients Supervised	0	3	6	13	26
Responsibility for OVC Targets	0	7,141 (13%)	12,522 (23%)	34,193 (63%)	65,000 (100%)
Direct Service Delivery Funding	0	13%	25%	50%	100%

Jointly design a progressive transfer plan for regular appraisal and adaptation.

In the pre-transition award proposal, CRS included key benchmarks highlighting the plan to progressively transfer prime responsibilities to NECC *before* the anticipated transition award start date (see table). The full transition to NECC was originally planned to take place by April 2023; however, USAID shifted this date earlier to January 2023 – an example of the

importance of early planning and adaptive management. Although there were adaptations to the transition plan, establishing this plan during project design yielded early joint expectations and demonstrated CRS' commitment to technical and capacity strengthening deliverables throughout KIDSS implementation.

Draft early scopes of work (SOW) to ease complex coordination.

As is relevant in all partnerships, developing clear SOW can ease relations and prevent duplication. In the context of prime readiness support and incremental transitions, early reflection on the roles and responsibilities of CRS, the local partner, the donor, *and* potential third parties is critical. Drafting SOW during the design process can strengthen management structure and budget alignment and lead to formal MOUs reviewed and signed during pre-transition award start-up. After launching the KIDSS pre-transition award, USAID introduced the role of IntraHealth to provide additional capacity strengthening support to NECC via USAID's Accelerating Support to Advanced Local Partners ([ASAP](#)) project. Other CRS CPs may anticipate this additional stakeholder when pursuing pre-transition awards and seek early insight from USAID to develop SOW and coordination plans as relevant.

PHASE 3: Pre-Transition Award – START-UP

While CRS, NECC, and the other subrecipients had already been collaborating to implement KIDSS for five years, solid start-up of the pre-transition award was important to establish NECC as the transition partner and drive collective buy-in for the prime readiness capacity strengthening process. As stipulated in the pre-transition award, CRS was responsible for assisting NECC to meet minimum benchmarks outlined in USAID's Non-U.S. Organization Pre-award Survey ([NUPAS](#)), which the donor administered in May 2022 three months prior to releasing the transition award notice of funding opportunity (NOFO). The following good practices were implemented by the KIDSS team during pre-transition award start-up to pave a pathway for NECC to secure the 2023 transition award.

Prepare for and launch a consolidated capacity assessment process.

Partner-led, CRS-facilitated capacity assessments are a critical step in CRS' capacity strengthening model to identify organizational strengths and weaknesses, prioritize needs, and plan appropriate capacity strengthening interventions. CRS draws from its flagship Holistic Organizational Capacity Assessment Instrument ([HOCAI](#)) and the HOCAI Tools Basket to determine the most appropriate capacity assessment tool. In the case of KIDSS, CRS employed the Integrated Holistic Organizational Capacity Assessment Instrument (I-HOCAI) for OVC, a derivative of the HOCAI tailored specifically for OVC partners. During start-up, CRS and NECC prepared the initial capacity assessment by selecting assessment team members (both KIDSS and non-project CRS and NECC staff) and encouraging individuals new to this process to take CRS' [foundational level 1 and 2 PCS courses](#) (which include modules on capacity assessment). The assessment toolkit was translated and provided to the team for early review. Conducted two months following the pre-transition award start date, the two-day I-HOCAI for OVC workshop launched early dialogue and planning. In addition to producing an initial capacity strengthening plan, this early process strengthened the relationship between CRS and the local partner, yielding greater openness to capacity strengthening across the project lifetime.

Particularly when preparing for transition awards, CRS may anticipate that USAID or other donors will invite additional parties to provide capacity strengthening support to the local partner, including use of other potentially duplicative capacity assessment tools. When CRS is the prime recipient, we can embrace additional PCS support by first detailing the assessment tool(s) each party will employ in their SOW and then producing a comprehensive and intentionally sequenced capacity assessment timeline and master action plan. Convening regular meetings aimed specifically at appraising and updating the partners' capacity strengthening action plan helps to continuously build synergies and ensure the partner is not overwhelmed by different capacity strengthening efforts while implementing the project.

Embed a collective responsibility for accompaniment during on-boarding and performance planning.

While capacity building and institutional strengthening were delivered by technical experts, CRS ensured that accompaniment was the responsibility of all KIDSS staff. First, a one-day retreat facilitated during start-up served to define partnership and clarify expectations for both CRS and NECC staff, creating an openness to accompaniment for the remainder of the project. CRS staff's understanding of accompaniment was further honed after requiring all staff to complete the six modules of [CRS' Level 1 PCS course](#), including relationship and communication basics. To formalize this responsibility at each level, all CRS staff were encouraged to include at least one objective specific to NECC capacity strengthening in their annual performance plans. The buddy system and daily interactions humanized these objectives by mitigating vague contributions to high-level PCS goals and instead supporting detailed plans for coaching one's NECC counterpart. KIDSS leadership continued to model the PCS principles introduced during onboarding in their exchanges, communications, and meetings, creating an accountability from which they expected all staff to emulate these principles in their daily work.

Establish coordination and communication structures to reinforce trusting relationships at each level.

In addition to developing an early appreciation for partnership principles across the project team and establishing project-specific management meetings, coordination spaces were established during start-up to engage CRS and NECC senior leaders in reinforcing their foundational partnership. Quarterly leadership forums – often engaging the CRS Country Representative (CR), Head of Programming, Head of Operations, and KIDSS Chief of Party as well as the Secretary General of the Episcopal Conference, his deputy, NECC finance and operations leaders, and the KIDSS National Coordinator – served to surface and address higher-level challenges with the potential to impact the long-term transition process and solicit local partner feedback on the evolving relationship between the two organizations. The CRS/Cameroon CR also attended the Annual Bishops' Seminars where she actively reinforced the complexity and scale of the prime recipient role and offered insights on successful donor engagement. These regular consultations helped facilitate quick decision-making and conflict resolution.

PHASE 4: Pre-Transition Award - IMPLEMENT

Only two and a half years spanned the period between the pre-transition award start date and NECC's launch of the CoSMO transition award in January 2023. While COVID-19 restrictions contributed to delays in the original incremental transition plan, CRS and NECC nonetheless achieved 87 of the 102 prioritized capacity strengthening actions before pre-transition award close-out (the remaining 15 continue to be addressed through post-transition support detailed below). Based on KIDSS learning, the following recommendations describe key strategies to advance local partner prime readiness throughout pre-transition award implementation.

Sustain investments in all three components of capacity strengthening.

CRS' approach to capacity strengthening is three-pronged:

- i. **Capacity building:** helping individuals and teams function more effectively by developing new knowledge, skills, and attitudes
- ii. **Institutional strengthening:** helping organizations achieve their goals by developing systems, structures, and the environment needed for optimal performance
- iii. **Accompaniment:** ongoing coaching and mentoring following project specific interventions in institutional strengthening or capacity building

“The emphasis on procedures and their use for NECC functioning is a significant change which is resounding now at NECC.”

- Fr. Cletus Ashu-Amah, NECC Projects Unit Program Manager

While each of these components are important when supporting local partner capacity strengthening, their combination proved critical to progressively strengthen NECC's prime readiness capacity throughout KIDSS implementation. Examples of each capacity strengthening component in the context of prime readiness support are highlighted below:

Priority training topics for KIDSS *capacity building*:

- *OVC case management training*: improved NECC staff technical capacity to identify OVC streams, assess their needs and resources, as well as establish realistic objectives and goals.
- *PEPFAR Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting (MER) training*: strengthened NECC's staff understanding of and confidence in complying with PEPFAR MER requirements for OVC programs.
- *Chart of Account training*: prepared NECC staff to understand the importance of charts of accounts for generating financial statements and strengthening the quality of financial management.
- *Procurement training*: introduced NECC operations staff and management to procurement process requirements (including documentation) aligned with donor expectations.
- *Direct versus Shared Direct versus Indirect training*: strengthened NECC staff understanding of difference cost categories to strengthen financial management skills.
- *How to Coordinate a USAID Proposal and How to Work with USAID* ([link](#)): prepared NECC staff to take a leadership role in designing the transition award.

Highlights of KIDSS *institutional strengthening* efforts:

- CRS supported NECC to develop a complete set of institutional manuals, including administration, HR, supply chain management, and financial management.
- TomPro accounting software was purchased for NECC and all 26 subrecipients, followed by an introductory training for its immediate use.
- Leveraging CRS' ALLRight Fund, an NECC Projects Unit was established – an important structure that will improve quality assurance of NECC programming and operations, including but not limited to the CoSMO project.
- In light of the proprietary nature of key CRS BD resources, a suite of BD templates and examples were developed to aid NECC in leading CoSMO and future proposal development.
- By project closure, an electronic case management system was developed that both improved data quality and reporting and ensured NECC ownership without sustained access to CRS' CommCare license.
- CRS supported NECC to apply the 10% de minimis rate which covers overhead costs that are not directly charged to the project budget. Developing the necessary policies and procedures to meet the conditions for indirect cost recovery is an institutional asset NECC can leverage across awards in the future.

Key KIDSS *accompaniment* approaches:

- *Progressive donor engagement*: CRS senior managers progressively linked NECC to USAID throughout the transition, carefully maintaining CRS' responsibility as current prime recipient while also accompanying the partner to strengthen donor engagement skills.
- *Joint supervision visits*: A robust system of regular supervisions visits took place between managers and their partner counterpart to enable careful mentoring of critical supervision and stakeholder engagement skills. Visit frequency increased in advance of key responsibility transitions, to intensify NECC's confidence and prepare participants and local actors.
- *Embedded technical assistance*: CRS and NECC jointly determined when embedded technical assistance was necessary to intensify accompaniment by seconding CRS KIDSS or CP staff to work out of the NECC office for a limited period.
- *Project-specific communities of practice (CoP)*: Five different CoPs (Health/HIV, Livelihoods, Gender/Child Protection, Operations, and Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, & Learning <MEAL>) were established where technical knowledge was transferred and colleagues jointly designed and implemented solutions.

Accompany local partner through constant change management.

A key mindset change NECC faced throughout implementation included understanding the nuanced differences between managing Caritas grants and USG grants. Additionally, NECC's I-HOCAI results revealed that the local partner's HR systems (including their salary scale) would need to be significantly shifted to retain CRS KIDSS staff after the transition and attract high-quality development professionals into the future. These changes, and more, spurred moments of resistance – a common challenge in capacity strengthening processes that is heightened during rapid transitions. In addition to the technical trainings that offer the content justifying necessary systems changes, relationship building is a critical skillset for accompanying partners throughout the

process of change management. CRS staff can develop or refresh these skills by taking CRS' [relationship basics course](#). In addition to understanding and progressively easing concerns of change, the capacity to effectively accompany partners enables CRS to best identify important milestones when agency support is no longer needed and the partner is prepared to independently lead.

Carefully plan and execute staff transitions.

A key process in progressively transferring responsibility to NECC entailed shifting field staff employment from CRS to NECC. CRS accompanied NECC staff to develop competitive salary ranges to encourage retention of former CRS staff and supported the recruitment process as NECC took over former CRS zonal offices. Proactive and accurate information sharing at all levels was critical to build an enabling environment for positive transitions. A retention rate of over 90% was achieved with most staff noting minimal change in their daily work. NECC leaders, however, recall some inertia following this process as field staff struggled to adapt to different internal processes, including approval pathways, per diem payment schemes, and staff feedback mechanisms. The former NECC KIDSS National Coordinator acknowledged that despite close accompaniment to execute a seamless transition, "NECC and CRS remain two separate institutions. With communication and continuous onboarding, this [reluctance to adapt] has improved." While upholding confidentiality, CRS can support similar transitions by encouraging supervisors to share individual staff challenges with their local partner counterpart to advance staff coaching overtime.

"Through NECC's competitive recruitment processes, we have been able to lay hands on well renowned nationals across diverse fields (finance, accounting, operations, supply chain, strategic information, health programming, and OVC programming) with experience from national and international NGOs dealing with foreign donors."

- Dr. Xavier Tchetya, NECC Former KIDSS National Coordinator and CoSMO Chief of Party

Facilitate cross-border exchange to bolster awareness and structure mutual accompaniment.

In 2021, CRS facilitated a one-week exchange visit in Nigeria, including the NECC Secretary General, KIDSS National Coordinator, Head of Finance and Administration, and the CRS KIDSS PCS Director, with the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria and its development arm, the Catholic Caritas Foundation of Nigeria. These Nigerian partners shared their firsthand experiences (including successes and challenges) implementing USG awards as prime recipient and offered NECC foundational insights for thoughtfully committing to their prime readiness journey. By linking these two partners, CRS supported NECC to gain additional accompaniment from an organization of similar structure and mission. NECC heard firsthand the importance of honing and sustaining the skills that continuously demonstrate program quality and grant management capacity to donors, as well as achieving a sufficient level of institutional agility to support donor responsiveness and adaptive management. CPs should facilitate cross-border exchanges and relationships as early in the implementation period as possible to highlight prime experience challenges that the local partner can begin mitigating and establish a wider net of accompaniment for the local partner. Such an exchange demonstrates early that CRS does not possess all the solutions the partner may need while developing prime readiness capacity but is eager to support linkages that secure additional support.

Jointly assess and consistently strengthen the foundational partnership.

CRS teams should approach prime readiness accompaniment from a mutual learning perspective to work together with our partners towards their vision of improved capacity. This approach can be bolstered by actively requesting feedback on CRS' accompaniment. CRS' [Partnership Scorecard](#) tool can facilitate CRS and partner staff in formally rating their satisfaction with different aspects of their partnership according to CRS' partnership principles and capacity strengthening approaches. CRS/Cameroon informally leveraged the



CRS and NECC staff accompany the Regional Coordinator of the National AIDS Control Committee to visit KIDSS programming in the field. Photo: CRS, 2021.

KIDSS PCS Unit and CP leaders' regular coordination efforts with NECC leadership to actively solicit partnership feedback. As the local partner progressively takes on leadership throughout implementation, CRS staff will benefit from taking a supportive versus directive posture while carefully balancing focus on both local leadership and program quality. Regularly investing time to reflect on the quality of the partnership is critical throughout the incremental transition as the relationship evolves and both parties' roles shift.

Leverage local partner's prime recipient proposal submission to strengthen BD capacity.

Ideally, CPs will incorporate BD into the start-up capacity assessment to identify and address BD capacity needs throughout implementation. As the KIDSS experience highlights, however, accompanying NECC to develop their CoSMO proposal before KIDSS close-out provided an important platform for practical learning and experience. Before the transition award NOFO was released, CRS facilitated a virtual BD training, "How to Coordinate a USAID Proposal." This experience initiated collaboration between key members of the proposal development team and reinforced the requisite skills to lead the significant proposal development process. NECC and CRS then co-facilitated the CoSMO proposal pre-design and design workshops and established an online folder accessible to both organizations for continued technical collaboration. A proposal team was established with counterparts in both organizations serving each role, structuring one-on-one accompaniment to bolster NECC's confidence and learning. While the two NECC and CRS BD staff collaborated daily to advance the CoSMO proposal, other NECC staff and senior leaders were also regularly engaged by their CRS counterparts, developing an appreciation for the wide scope of actors contributing to high-quality BD. During the CoSMO proposal process, the CP facilitated frequent meetings between CRS and NECC members of the proposal development team, driving process reflection on BD best practices and challenges. Following submission, CRS modeled the good practice of conducting an after-action review (AAR), engaging NECC staff to pause and reflect on the BD process and capture insights for the future. When supporting local partners to develop prime proposals, clear SOWs can distinguish specific responsibilities such as workshop facilitation, writing, and editing as well as offer clarity on CRS' intention to strengthen holistic BD capacities in support of local leadership.

PHASE 5: Pre-Transition Award – CLOSE-OUT

After the local partner secures the transition award, CRS must approach close-out with a commitment to delivering the pre-transition award technical targets while continuing to accompany the local partner as they prepare for the transition award start-up. According to [USAID's ADS Chapter 303](#), "the transition award recipient may not make any subawards to the initial award recipient", which barred CRS/Cameroon from providing on-going technical assistance using CoSMO funds. In similar scenarios, CRS should leverage the pre-transition award close-out period to carefully plan for sustained, independently funded capacity strengthening support.

Conduct final capacity strengthening plan appraisal and plan CRS' sustained support.

Following the results of NUPAS or other capacity assessments conducted late in the pre-transition award lifetime, a final workshop to review progress of the master capacity strengthening plan is critical to identify remaining needs and helps CRS to plan on-going assistance after the prime recipient transition as we strive to support long-term, sustainable capacity strengthening. While the timeline of a specific award may be sufficient to strengthen the priority capacities of a local partner to meet prime readiness requirements, on-going accompaniment is likely beneficial. Long-term capacity strengthening support timelines should be carefully mapped by CRS and the partner, tailored to their needs and context.



The symbolic handover from CRS (represented by the Country Representative, Caroline Agalheir) to NECC (represented by the Secretary General, Mgr. Jervis Kebej).
Photo: CRS, 2023.

Set joint expectations for staff transitions that simultaneously support quality close-out and start-up.

A final round of staff transitions from CRS to the local partner can be anticipated during the close-out period, which is ideal to optimally retain knowledge and experience as the partner formally steps into the prime recipient role. CRS, however, remains responsible for quality pre-transition award close-out while the number of staff formally dedicated to this project continues to decrease. CRS and partner senior leaders should carefully discuss the importance of quality pre-transition award close-out and transition award start-up and establish joint expectations to retain flexibility amongst the collective team to support both processes. The CoSMO transition award started only three months prior to the formal KIDSS close-out date, providing a short window for the robust final handover stage. CRS should advocate for a longer overlap period so CRS can properly close-out the pre-transition award while sustaining critical accompaniment to the partner during their start-up period, especially when CRS will not have a formal role in the transition award being led by the partner.

Key Successes Enabling a Smooth Transition to NECC:

- Continued service to the 63,000 KIDSS participants under CoSMO, requiring minimal enrollments for NECC to meet their Semi Annual Performance Report 2023 target
- Successful transition of staff from CRS to NECC including almost all zonal and key central office staff
- Retention of all KIDSS partners as CoSMO subrecipients under NECC's consortium management
- Handover of key KIDSS project documents, manuals, and standard operating procedures as well as technical platforms, such as COLMIS II (KIDSS/CoSMO electronic case management system)
- Transfer of all KIDSS vehicles, equipment, and offices to NECC, reducing initial procurement burdens
- Ongoing capacity strengthening support to NECC using CRS private funds

PHASE 6: Post-Transition Support

CRS is committed to sustainable local leadership, which requires supporting our local partners before, during, and after prime recipient transitions. CRS advocates for revision of [USAID's ADS Chapter 303](#) to permit the initial awardee to serve as a subrecipient of the transition award, enabling critical accompaniment and sustained capacity strengthening to support the local partner's success as a prime recipient. Whether provided as a subrecipient of the transition award or independently using CRS private funds, CPs should plan to offer strategic technical assistance during the post-transition period.

Support the local partner to succeed as prime recipient.

CRS should transition key prime responsibilities to the local partner in advance of the transition award. Nonetheless, following brief pre-transition awards, outstanding capacity strengthening needs that threaten the partner's ability to thrive in their new prime recipient role may remain. Following the January 2023 launch of the CoSMO award, CRS/Cameroon will invest private resources to continue addressing priorities in NECC's capacity strengthening plan through September 2024. During KIDSS close-out, a revised capacity strengthening action plan was developed and identified 70 priority actions during the post-transition period.

Strengthening the capacity of the newly established NECC Projects Unit staff (Head, Finance/Operations Coordinator, MEAL Officer, BD Officer, HR Officer, Procurement Officer, and IT Officer) is a significant priority which has already proven critical for the quality start-up of the CoSMO project. In addition to MEAL, financial management, and project management skills and competencies, CRS will also continue to address NECC's BD capacity. In FY23, CRS will host a [ProPack I](#) training for NECC staff and support the partner to design a resource mobilization plan, develop additional BD processes and tools, as well as update their past performance references and capacity statements. While the CoSMO proposal development process offered NECC quality practice in developing a prime application, these additional efforts strengthen the partner's long-term capacity to independently pursue additional opportunities.