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ETHIOPIA PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM PROJECT

ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT: FEBRUARY 1, 2013 – JANUARY 31, 2014

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USAID Ethiopia Performance Management System Project

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CONTENTS

ACRONYMS..... 1

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 2
 Challenges and Potential Solutions..... 3

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS 4
 Objective 1: Support the Implementation of AIDTracker 4
 Objective 2: Assist the Mission to Implement the New USAID Evaluation Policy 7
 Objective 3: Provide Training and Capacity-Building Support to USAID/Ethiopia and
 Its Implementing Partners 8
 Objective 4: Develop Performance Management Plans for each Development Objective..... 10

MANAGEMENT 13
 Objective 5: Ethiopia Performance Management Project Managed Effectively 13

KEY CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS..... 14
 Key Management Challenges 14
 Plans to Address Challenges/Constraints..... 14

TABLES
 Table 1: Summary of Objective 1 Deliverables Status 5
 Table 2: Summary of Objective 2 Deliverables Status 8
 Table 3: Summary of Objective 3 Deliverables Status 10
 Table 4: Summary of Objective 4 Deliverables Status 12
 Table 5: Short-Term Technical Assistance Provided from MSI-Headquarters in Year 2 13

FIGURES
 Figure 1: USAID Development Objectives 2
 Figure 2: Phases for Improving M&E Systems and Ensuring the Effective Application
 of Technology 3
 Figure 3: Sample SARs Coversheet with Graphic 6
 Figure 4: Members of the METWG..... 7
 Figure 5: Dashboard on Objective 1 Results Performance 11
 Figure 6: EPMS In-Country Team..... 13

ACRONYMS

AAIFP	African Alliance for Improved Food Processing
ADS	Automated Directives System
AOR	Agreement Officer's Representative
ChSOs	Charities and Societies Organizations
CIAFS	Capacity to Improve Agriculture and Food Security
CIO	Chief Information Officer
COR	Contracting Officer's Representative
DEC	Development Experience Clearinghouse
D&G	Democracy and Governance
DQA	Data-Quality Assessment
EPMS	Ethiopia Performance Management System
EMI	Ethiopian Management Institute
FtF	Feed the Future
GOE	Government of Ethiopia
HAPN	Health, AIDS, Population, and Nutrition Office
IFHP	Integrated Family Health Program
LAND	Land Administration to Nurture Development
LIU-ELA	Livelihoods Integration Unit-Enhancing Livelihood Application
METWG	Monitoring and Evaluation Technical Working Group
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MSI	Management Systems International Inc.
OCAT	Organizational Capacity Assessment Tool
OCIO	Office of the Chief Information Officer
PAD	Project Appraisal Document
PEPFAR	President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief
PIRS	Performance Indicator Reference Sheets
PMP	Performance Management Plan
PPL	Policy, Planning, and Learning
PPR	Performance Plan and Report
SOW	Statement of Work
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WV	World Vision

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of the annual report is to summarize progress toward achieving project objectives in the second year of the Ethiopia Performance Management System (EPMS) project. EPMS is designed to support USAID/Ethiopia in strengthening evidence-based systems and improving the mission's ability to convey the results of the Country Development Cooperation Strategy. The establishment of an effective Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system is an essential component for ensuring that evidence of what works drives decision-making. The EPMS contract was signed Jan. 30, 2012, as a two-year project to provide four core services to the mission and its implementing partners. EPMS's key objectives are to:

1. Support the implementation of AIDTracker.
2. Assist the mission in implementing the new USAID evaluation policy.
3. Provide training and capacity-building support to USAID/Ethiopia and its implementing partners.
4. Develop Performance Management Plans (PMPs) for each development objective.

EPMS was designed to work directly with USAID technical teams and their implementing partners. These teams align with the mission's development objectives (see Figure 1) and include: 1) economic growth and transformation; 2) health; 3) education; and 4) democracy and governance (as a crosscutting objective).

In the last annual report, EPMS presented a vision of the project, unfolding in phases as outlined in Figure 2. During Year 2 (the period covered in this report), EPMS focused heavily on ensuring effective use of existing tools for data collection and analysis. EPMS also used lessons learned to improve M&E systems and processes as well as IT tools. We also shifted our focus from internal USAID systems as the starting point for establishing M&E requirements to working more with implementing partners. In this way, implementing partners could produce the information (including data and associated analysis) necessary for USAID to determine whether larger programmatic objectives are being achieved.

Looking Ahead

While this report focuses specifically on year two, it is important to note that as we look forward to the final phase of the project, we have identified the following priorities:

- **Implementation of AIDTracker.** AIDTracker will be delivered and installed by Washington's AIDTracker team in May. EPMS will stand ready to support the mission in the implementation of AIDTracker, including training for implementing partners.
- **Sustainability and Capacity-Building.** EPMS will ensure that the exit plan is fully implemented and will focus on the details of how we can best transition systems, tools and processes created by EPMS to USAID for continued use.
- **Reflecting the Latest Guidance.** PMPs were finalized just as the latest Automated Directives Service (ADS) guidance was updated, so slight updates and adjustments will be required. For example, both PMP and data-quality assessment (DQA) guidance evolved during this time and should be updated.

FIGURE 1: USAID DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

DO1: Increased Economic Growth with Resiliency in Rural Ethiopia

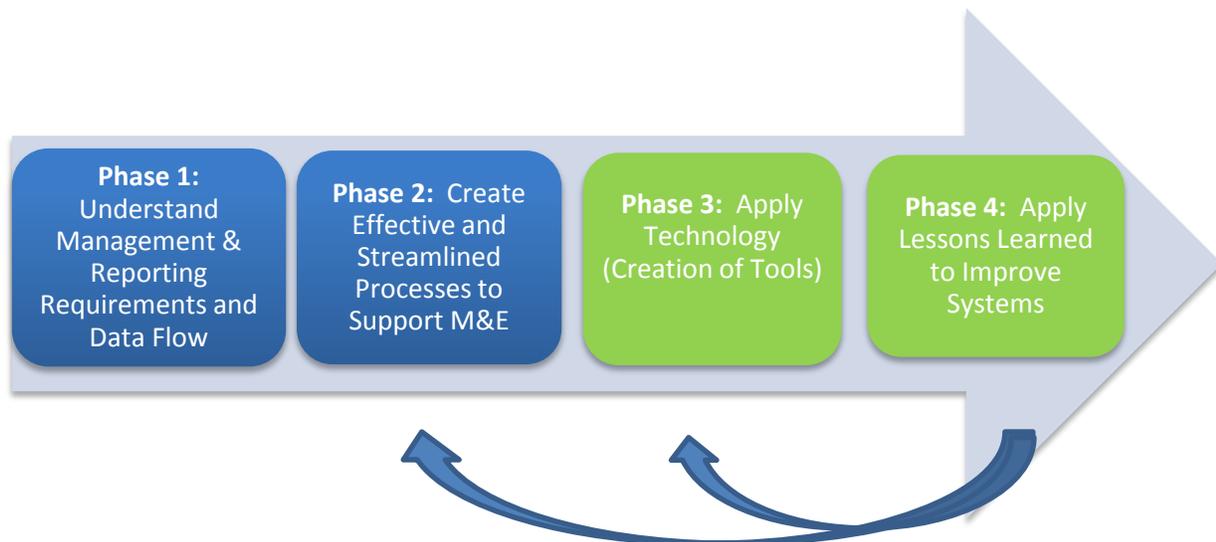
DO2: Increased Utilization of Quality Health Services

DO3: Improved Learning Outcomes

Support Objective: Improved Governance Environment for Sustainable Development

- **Effective Data Utilization.** EPMS recognizes the importance of effectively using data. We will examine how to improve this within mission processes. For example, to prepare for the portfolio reviews, EPMS created dashboards to examine the mission’s strategy against the status of indicators.
- **Refocus on USAID Needs.** During year 1, EPMS established fundamental M&E systems. During year 2, EPMS focused more heavily on capacity-building for implementing partners, ensuring that they could produce the information needed for USAID systems. In this final phase of the project, EPMS will shift back to a focus on USAID, particularly as AIDTracker comes online.

FIGURE 2: PHASES FOR IMPROVING M&E SYSTEMS AND ENSURING THE EFFECTIVE APPLICATION OF TECHNOLOGY



Implementation of the above activities will be largely dependent on EPMS’s no-cost extension request, submitted to USAID Dec. 16, 2013, with revised requests submitted Jan. 8, Feb. 7 and March 12, 2014. EPMS has requested an extension through Sept. 30, 2014.

Challenges and Potential Solutions

In preparing the annual report, the EPMS team identified some of the challenges that have emerged from our experience. One challenge to consider for capacity-building is that there is a high staff turnover rate among implementing partners in Ethiopia. To address this, we suggest ensuring that at least two individuals from each implementing partner attend training and placing an emphasis on making M&E resources easily accessible so new staff has access to the latest information. As EPMS moves into the last phase of the project, it may be important to re-examine whether these resources could be available in a format that will be accessible consistently over the long term, such as uploaded to USAID’s website.

In terms of USAID, capacity-building can be challenging due to high workload within the mission. Of 122 individuals trained this year, 20 (16 percent) were USAID staff. Because USAID plays a critical role in establishing M&E expectations and requirements, it will remain important to ensure good M&E skills among USAID staff. One solution is to design smaller, more focused M&E sessions addressing specific topics. For example, EPMS developed a four-hour session about understanding data-quality criteria. It

may be easier for USAID staff to attend these highly focused sessions, which last between two and four hours, than a more general session lasting three days.

Finally, M&E support contracts are quite different from other implementation contracts, in that they are designed to support a core management function of USAID. Success of the M&E contract rests on the ability to design systems and processes around USAID management priorities. To this end, we propose monthly meetings to regularize our interaction with the Program Office. This would help us to better serve USAID's needs and to translate some of those priorities to implementing partners through our trainings. We look forward to discussing these challenges and finding practical solutions with USAID.

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS

Objective 1: Support the Implementation of AIDTracker

Early in year 2 of the project, USAID modified the contract to change objective 1 to support the implementation of the AIDTracker system, as opposed to building a unique mission-based system. AIDTracker offered significant benefits for USAID, reducing the cost of system development (building one system for multiple missions) and aligning AIDTracker development with an initiative to standardize core mission processes (in the form of standard mission orders). However, this decision came with risks, such as our EPMS contract deliverable submissions depending on receipt of a complete and operational system from USAID/Washington. Based on initial plans, the system was scheduled for delivery in March 2013. Anticipated delivery moved to August, then the fall of 2013. Unfortunately, a number of factors prevented the system from being delivered in any of these timeframes. As of this writing, a Washington-based training team is scheduled to arrive in May 2014.

Most deliverables under this objective were on hold pending the delivery of AIDTracker, as indicated below. However, the templates developed and implemented by EPMS were designed to facilitate a smooth transition to AIDTracker. We recently learned that USAID/Ethiopia's data is already in a format that can be transitioned to AIDTracker easily, meaning that the mission will be able to skip to the next step in the process.

Summary of Performance Highlights

EPMS provided support mainly to the mission regarding its data collection tools for the annual performance plan report (PPR), the semiannual review (SARS) and the portfolio review processes. The tools developed and improved include:

- President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) data collection and aggregation tools;
- SARS cover sheets, automating data entered by implementing partners to be reflected graphically (see Figure 3);
- New templates for the mission portfolio review; and
- Evaluation report quality-assessment tool and standardized agenda for the Monitoring and Evaluation Technical Working Group (METWG) quarterly meeting.

Additionally, EPMS continued to use the Excel-based system developed in year 1 for partner data entry. The system generated summary reports to inform the fiscal year 2013 reporting on selected indicators from development objective 1 and development objective 2 PMPs, including PEPFAR.

TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF OBJECTIVE 1 DELIVERABLES STATUS

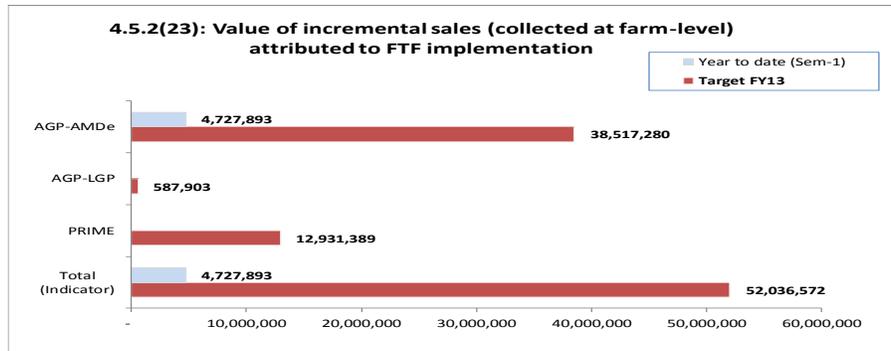
S.N.	Year 2 Work Plan Deliverable	Status	
1	Update and maintain the AIDTracker implementation plan	Completed as part of the request for a no-cost extension.	
2	Complete training on AIDTracker from the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO)	Pending delivery of AIDTracker Plus	
3	Provide assistance to OCIO and USAID/Ethiopia in testing and operationalizing the system		
4	Indicator information (including baselines and targets) uploaded into the system		
5	DQA information is integrated into AIDTracker		
6	Guidelines for the new system provided for end users		
7	Support implementing partners (IPs) in entering performance data and narratives into AIDTracker	Completed; SARS templates and coversheets refined to reflect graphs automatically.	
8	Refine SARS templates		
9	Update indicator data collection worksheets for each IP/implementing mechanism (IM)		Completed; Data collection worksheets updated for each IM.
10	Support the PPR process		Completed; FY 2013 PPR process was fully supported.

FIGURE 3: SAMPLE SARS COVERSHEET WITH GRAPHIC

PPR Indicators

Development Objective: INCREASED ECONOMIC GROWTH WITH RESILIENCY IN RURAL ETHIOPIA (EG&T and ALT)			
Indicator	Target FY13	Year to date (Sem-1)	Performance (%) (Result/Target)
4.5.2(23): Value of incremental sales (collected at farm-level) attributed to FTF implementation	52,036,572	4,727,893	9%
PRIME	12,931,389		0%
AGP-LGP	587,903		0%
AGP-AMDe	38,517,280	4,727,893	12%
4.5.2(30): Number of MSMEs, including farmers, receiving USG assistance to access loans	20,170	-	0%
AGP-LGP	120		0%
AGP-AMDe	44		0%
GRAD	20,000		0%
CFSP	6		0%

Any comments



Objective 2: Assist the Mission to Implement the New USAID Evaluation Policy

EPMS plays a key role in helping USAID/Ethiopia implement the evaluation policy at the mission level. The first critical step in this process was to establish the Monitoring and Evaluation Technical Working Group (METWG). EPMS supported the mission in launching the METWG in year 2 on Aug. 24, 2013. EPMS also drafted the Statement of Work (SOW) for the METWG, reflecting its purpose as well as best practices within the evaluation community.

The METWG assists the mission in planning for evaluations, then conducting and using them as tools for effective program and project management. Key tasks include: harmonization of evaluation plans, review of evaluation scopes of work, review and comment on evaluation reports and follow-up of evaluation findings for the learning agenda and the implementation of evaluation recommendations. The METWG includes representatives from all the technical offices, program office staff, mission gender and environment specialists, EPMS staff and the two chiefs of party (COPs) from MSI /EPMS and Feed the Future (FtF) / Fintrac – Capacity to Improve Agriculture and Food Security (CIAFS). For a list of member names and titles, see Figure 4.

Summary of Performance Highlights

- Completed the evaluation inventory, with three completed evaluations out of eight planned for FY 2013. Two out of the three have been submitted to the Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC).
- Provided support in reviewing two evaluation SOWs. These included an evaluation of the partnership for capacity-building in disaster management. A second SOW was designed to assess contributions toward poverty reduction and national development by the Charities and Societies Organizations (ChSOs).
- Improved the roster of local consultants to include only those consulting firms and individuals who have provided certificates¹ from the Ethiopian Management Institute (EMI). This is a requirement of the Government of Ethiopia (GOE).
- Developed several tools, templates and guides for use by the members of the METWG in

FIGURE 4: MEMBERS OF THE METWG

1. Carlos Lamadrid, Deputy Supervisory Officer/PRM, Chairperson/Deputy Supervisory Officer/PRM, Chairperson
2. Awoke Tilahun, Mission M&E Specialist / PRM Secretary
3. Makonnen Ketema, Program Information Manager / PRM Member
4. Yitayew Abebe, Mission Environmental Officer / PRM Member
5. Meseret Kassa, Mission Gender Specialist / PRM Member
6. Getahun Dendir, Senior Project Management Specialist / DG, Member
7. Semachew Kassahun, Feed the Future Coordinator / EG&T Member
8. Adam Stephan, Development Leadership Initiative / EG&T Member
9. Endale Lemma, Program Management Specialist / ALT Member
10. Tesfaye Kelemework, Deputy Chief / BES, Member
11. Nicholas Welch, M&E Advisor / HAPN, Member
12. Josephine, HAPN Member
13. Dr. Rosern Rwampororo, COP / MSI, Member
14. Dr. Teshome Lemma, COP / CIAFS, Member

¹ The Government of Ethiopia requires certification by the Ethiopia Management Institute to be an eligible consultant.

executing the various tasks as stipulated in their SOW. In this regard, the tools and guides developed include the following:

- Key M&E areas that need to be addressed/identified at the project design stage;
- PMP tracker template;
- Outline for performance M&E updates;
- DQA tools;
- Updated criteria for reviewing quality SOWs;
- Planning for evaluations, process checklist;
- Evaluation report quality-assessment tool;
- Collaboration, learning and adaptation overview; and
- Standardized agenda for the METWG quarterly meetings.

TABLE 2: SUMMARY OF OBJECTIVE 2 DELIVERABLES STATUS

S.N.	Year 2 Work Plan Deliverables	Status
1	Update the mission evaluation inventory and associated action tracker	Completed in coordination with the COR. The evaluation inventory has been updated every quarter.
2	Support the METWG	Ongoing, as needed. During year 2, EPMS developed tools and templates for use by the METWG.
3	Review and assist in drafting SOWs	Completed (based on demand). Reviewed and contributed to drafting two SOWs.
4	Review evaluation reports	Based on demand. EPMS did not receive requests from USAID/Ethiopia to provide this review during the reporting period.
5	Maintain and update the roster of consultants	Completed. The roster was improved by including EMI-certified consultants to comply with GOE requirements.

Objective 3: Provide Training and Capacity-Building Support to USAID/Ethiopia and Its Implementing Partners

EPMS has been centered on capacity-building at a number of levels, with both USAID and implementing partners. EPMS’s strategy includes:

- **Participation and Ownership:** EPMS uses participatory approaches to improve ownership and engage managers in defining M&E solutions and methods.
- **Guidance and Tools:** EPMS has developed practical, easy-to-use guidance and references to complement its trainings.
- **Use of Training/Doing Model:** A training/doing model ensures that training occurs just prior to the need to do a task (e.g., DQA training just prior to conducting DQAs).

- **Tailored Technical Assistance.** EPMS provides one-on-one technical assistance to implementing partners using the tools and guidance developed, such as the M&E guide, coupled with M&E plan templates to assist in developing activity-level plans.
- **Information Dissemination:** During the first year, EPMS produced a high volume of guidance and tools. During year two, EPMS focused heavily on information dissemination in order to ensure that the tools developed by EPMS are used.

Capacity-building also represents a key challenge for EPMS. While EPMS has trained 102 implementing partner staff to date, a high degree of staff turnover in projects leaves substantial gaps. EPMS plans to make it a priority to address this challenge for the remainder of the project. We have submitted a draft exit strategy; however, we plan to coordinate with the mission on strengthening capacity-building efforts. One option is to train more than one person per project to build more of a critical mass within each.

Summary of Performance Highlights

- EPMS has trained 122 participants (102 implementing partner staff and 20 USAID staff) on performance monitoring and evaluation in year 2.
- EPMS retained a trainer to deliver a highly tailored M&E workshop for USAID/Ethiopia staff. This workshop incorporated new changes in USAID policy, including new project design and M&E requirements, and identified mission M&E priorities and next steps.
- EPMS developed a highly tailored DQA workshop for USAID/Ethiopia staff, incorporating real-life examples from the mission and hands-on exercises.
- EPMS provided technical support on not only the development of implementing partner M&E plans, but also on other key M&E components, such as DQAs and establishment of baselines. The M&E guide and activity plan templates are shared with each partner as resources to use not only for M&E plan development but also to guide them in developing their entire M&E plans. EPMS assisted the following implementing partners:
 - Capacity to Improve Agriculture and Food Security (CIAFS) on developing the Organizational Capacity Assessment Tool (OCAT);
 - Livelihoods Integration Unit-Enhancing Livelihood Application (LIU-ELA) project on its activity M&E plan development and alignment;
 - Haramaya University, with technical input to design baseline survey method and tools;
 - World Vision on activity M&E plan development, alignment and orientation on DQA; and
 - African Alliance for Improved Food Processing (AAIFP) on the orientation to USAID M&E requirements, alignment, and M&E Plan development.

TABLE 3: SUMMARY OF OBJECTIVE 3 DELIVERABLES STATUS

S.N.	Year 2 Work Plan Deliverables	Status
1	M&E training materials and training workshops delivered	Completed: All M&E training materials were delivered to USAID, both electronically and in hard copy. Two workshop reports were also submitted to USAID.
2	Training to USAID/Ethiopia and implementing partners personnel on DQAs	Completed: A workshop report on implementing partner training was submitted to USAID.
3	Prepare and deliver training on AIDTracker	Pending delivery of AIDTracker Plus
4	Provide targeted technical support	Completed. Technical assistance was provided to implementing partners as outlined above.

Objective 4: Develop Performance Management Plans for each Development Objective

During year 1, EPMS assisted mission development objective teams in developing performance management plans (PMPs) for three objectives: economic growth (objective 1); health (objective 2) and the democracy and governance support objective (special objective). While education staff completed its own PMP, they did use the standard template developed by EPMS. During year 2, EPMS efforts focused heavily on:

- Ensuring current documents and processes were consistent with new ADS guidance (particularly in relation to the development of one mission-wide PMP, including goal-level indicators, and supporting realignment toward activity-level M&E plans). In particular, EPMS worked with implementing partners to understand the logframe, how they fit into the logframe and the development of activity-level M&E plans.
- Updating PMPs or M&E plans, when necessary.
- Understanding issues related to data collection and reporting and solving associated problems.

Summary of Performance Highlights

EPMS has provided assistance in the following areas:

- Provided support for the development of the project assistance document (PAD) for resiliency under economic growth. EPMS was instrumental in providing the necessary project performance components to ensure alignment with development objective 1 and that the project-level M&E plan was in alignment with USAID/Ethiopia’s PMP.
- Developed performance indicator tracking tables in electronic format to both the mission and implementing partners to reflect the key indicator information required such as its definition, unit of analysis, levels of disaggregation and provision for baseline and annual targets.
- During the annual review, USAID’s development objective teams needed more practical guidance on target-setting. In response, EPMS produced a guide titled “M&E Insights: Setting Targets,” which drew on experiences of M&E experts as well as the analysis of setting targets for the economic growth team. EPMS used the opportunity to explore more rigorous approaches for target-setting.

- In year 1, EPMS developed a strategy for reporting on crosscutting issues, which we have used in year 2 to define how different development objectives and implementing partners report and contribute to the specific crosscutting issues. One example has been establishing capacity-building measurement methods with an organizational capacity assessment tool.

In addition, EPMS worked in the following areas throughout the reporting period:

Customizing Mission Orders. Based on USAID’s standardization project, USAID/Washington developed a template for mission orders. EPMS supported the mission in customizing four of six standard mission orders (including monitoring, evaluation, project design and portfolio reviews) to ensure that M&E systems, processes and products meet (or are transitioned toward) current ADS requirements. The two mission orders that were not customized include budget and strategy, which the mission customized internally.

Data-Quality Assessments (DQAs). EPMS supported improvement of the previously developed data-quality assessment (DQA) tools, to include documentation as required in the new guidance. The required documentation adds a section about actions needed to address data-quality issues uncovered by the DQA, identifying the responsible person or office and indicating a timeline to complete the actions. In addition, EPMS has been developing a combined DQA tool for both outcome and output-level indicators, as requested during the training for mission AORs/CORs

Portfolio Review Support. The mission asked for EPMS support in developing a portfolio review to focus on strategy performance, incorporating data and evidence-based approaches. Having a complete set of PMP indicators in the system from year 1 facilitated the EPMS analysis of the portfolio review in year 2. Specifically, EPMS analyzed data gaps and generated dashboards for each indicator and result to assess performance at each level to inform development objective teams about the state of their portfolio (Figure 5). The information generated also informed the mission’s contribution to the Government of Ethiopia’s specific growth transformation plan (GTP) pillars required for the joint portfolio review (to be conducted with the GOE).

FIGURE 5: DASHBOARD ON OBJECTIVE I RESULTS PERFORMANCE

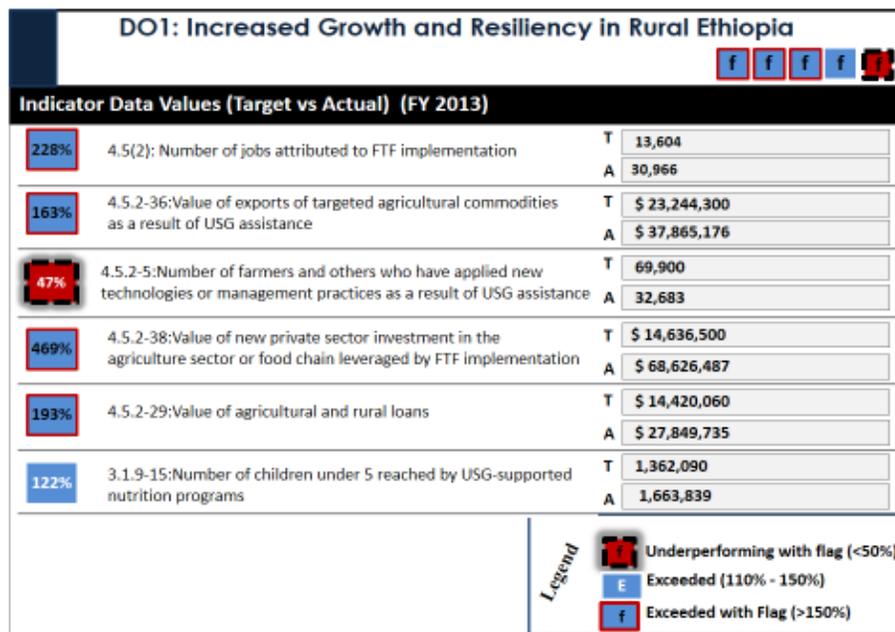


TABLE 4: SUMMARY OF OBJECTIVE 4 DELIVERABLES STATUS

S.N.	Year 2 Work Plan Deliverables	Status
1	Provide input to the program office on ensuring that M&E systems, processes and products meet (or are transitioned toward) current USAID requirements	Completed: The PMPs reflected ADS changes as well as development of project- and activity-level M&E plans.
2	Support the customization of six standard mission orders	Completed: Four of six MOs were customized.
3	Ensure that M&E products, guides, and tools are accessible	Completed: Guides and tools were made available to implementing partners in trainings and one-on-one meetings.
4	Provide PAD support	Completed: EPMS provided support for development of the resiliency PAD, including development of the M&E plan.
5	Provide support for the joint portfolio review	In progress. EPMS provided support; however, this is ongoing due to a delayed portfolio review date with the government. During year 2, EPMS focused on providing analysis of data gaps, contributed to structuring the portfolio review and templates, and assisted in designing the review to incorporate a strategic review of higher-level, programmatic results.
6	Provide Support to the Program Office on the PPR Process	Completed: All PPR analysis was undertaken with the support of EPMS.
7	Provide Support to the Mission in Reviewing and /or Preparing DQAs	Completed: The DQA tool was updated and improved to conform to the new guidance.
8	DQA Templates and Schedule	Completed: The same templates developed in year 1 were used by the mission to conduct their own DQA with IPs.
9	Provide Targeted Technical Assistance to IPs on M&E plans	Completed: Provided assistance to 10 IPs in developing their activity level M&E plans.
10	Develop Target Setting Guidance for End users	Completed: During the annual review, DO teams noted that it would be helpful to have more practical, how-to guidance for target setting. EPMS developed a publication style document to provide this, drawing on the real-life experiences of M&E experts.
11	Provide Assistance on Monitoring & Analyzing Cross –Cutting Issues	Completed: EPMS created a Crosscutting Strategy in Year 1, which was used in Year 2 to assist the different DOs and IPs on how to report and/or demonstrate their contribution to the specific crosscutting issues, especially capacity building.

MANAGEMENT

Objective 5: Ethiopia Performance Management Project Managed Effectively

In year 2, the EPMS continued to implement its work through a two-tier management system, including:

- The in-country EPMS project staff, headed by Dr. Rosern Rwampororo as the chief of party. (See Figure 6 for a complete list of in-country staff.)
- The home office support team, including the technical director, Michelle Adams-Matson, and the senior information technology adviser, Chip Temm. This also included a change in the project management support team from Matthew Witting and Maria Zapata to Suzanne Abdallah and Evan Caplan, as senior project manager and project manager, respectively.

FIGURE 6: EPMS IN-COUNTRY TEAM

Dr. Rosern Rwampororo, Chief of Party
 Senior M&E Specialist (Vacant)
 Hika Dinssa, Junior Evaluation Specialist
 Tesfayesus Yirdaw, Junior Evaluation Specialist
 Tseggai Gebremedhin, IT Specialist
 Hilina Alemu, Junior Data Manager
 Melat Abebe, Administrative and Finance Manager
 Lioul Asfaw, Administration Assistant

Short-Term Technical Assistance (STTA) played a critical role in supporting the project. EPMS continued to draw on its few STTA staff to ensure continuity in providing required support. The STTA staff members who supplement the skills of local staff usually have an understanding of USAID/Ethiopia’s environment and are leading experts in their field. Table 5 below summarizes STTA staff who came from MSI headquarters to support various year 2 tasks.

TABLE 5: SHORT-TERM TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROVIDED FROM MSI-HEADQUARTERS IN YEAR 2

Trips	Personnel Names	Task	Dates
1	Michelle Adams-Matson	Conduct M&E training for IPs	April 20 – 26, 2013
2	Keith Brown	Conduct M&E training for IPs	April 20 – 26, 2013
3	Michelle Adams-Matson	Conduct M&E training for IPs and DQA training for USAID staff	May 20 – 25, 2013
4	Max Linden	Provide support for EPMS office finance and administration	August 5 – 17, 2013
5	Raymond Balestino	Conduct M&E training of USAID CORs/AORs	Sep. 28 – Oct. 3, 2013

KEY CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS

Key Management Challenges

One of the most important issues facing EPMS is approval of the no-cost extension (NCE), which will have a significant effect on planning and implementation. MSI submitted the request for the NCE to the contracting officer on Dec. 16, 2013, to extend the time EPMS would have to support the implementation of AIDTracker and provide continued M&E support. Following USAID feedback, revised requests were submitted Jan. 8, Feb. 7 and March 12, 2014. At the time of this report, the NCE has not been approved. Without the NCE, EPMS is required to plan for closeout April 30. This includes development of the final report, notifying staff of termination (based on Ethiopian labor law) and planning for the disposition of USAID property, among other tasks.

A second, related challenge is the impact of the NCE on staffing. Approximately one to three months from a contract's end date, many staff members begin to seek longer-term employment opportunities. Three staff members have left EPMS during this period, including Dr. Rufael Fassil, senior M&E specialist; Michael Kebede, junior IT/database specialist; and Yohannes Fikre, IT specialist. It is difficult to fill positions with high-quality candidates, given that we can offer the work only through April 30, 2014.

Plans to Address Challenges/Constraints

Until we receive approval of the NCE, EPMS is required to plan for closeout on April 30. We will delay associated closeout activities as long as possible so we do not unnecessarily expend resources on closeout if the project is extended. Unfortunately, MSI did have to notify staff of termination on Friday, Feb. 28, to comply with Ethiopian labor law.

The NCE request included a plan for EPMS to provide support through Sept. 30. In the meantime, we have identified and received approval to hire two new IT staff. In addition, we will use STTA to compliment local staffing and to ensure continued high-quality support to the mission.