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FAMINE EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS NETWORK TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT CONTRACT (FEWS NET TSC)

FISCAL YEAR 2012 ANNUAL WORK PLAN

November 2011

This publication was produced for review by the U.S. Agency for International Development. It was prepared by Kimetrica LLC under contract number AID-OAA-C-11-00171

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CONTENTS

SECTION I: INTRODUCTION TO FEWS NET TSC	2
I.1. BACKGROUND	2
I.2. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION AND APPROACH	2
SECTION 2: DETAILED WORK PLAN	4

SECTION I: INTRODUCTION TO FEWS NET TSC

I.1. BACKGROUND

The USAID-funded FEWS NET (Famine Early Warning Systems Network) activity has traditionally relied upon its own personnel based in food insecure countries, and their official partners in-country, to collect and assess the information and data needed to identify and monitor levels of food security in vulnerable populations, reporting on conditions in 36 countries from 22 field offices around the world. This data collection method depends on a proximity to, or direct contact with, the hungry populations from which the information and data will be collected. The scope and the amount of data FEWS NET can theoretically collect is therefore constrained by the resources available from its FEWS NET Implementation Team (FIT) members (USAID, NASA, NOAA, USDA, USGS, and a private-sector contractor) and other official and unofficial partners.

Given the nature of changing global food security issues and stresses (e.g., global food price crisis, global financial crisis), for which the incidence, geographic spread, and severity is expanding, food insecurity needs to be monitored and assessed in many more potential locations, and even within areas that have traditionally been considered as food secure. As the ever changing and expanding food security threats emerge, FEWS NET's ability to efficiently and effectively collect the amount and type of data needed to locate and identify emerging cases of severe food insecurity, and to monitor existing cases is as critical as ever.

The FEWS NET Technology Support Contract (FEWS NET TSC) was designed to address the changing needs of food security monitoring. The project, working closely with FIT members, has expanded the US Government's ability to understand and respond to food security crisis.

I.2. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION AND APPROACH

The aim of FEWS NET TSC is to assist USAID's FEWS NET activity to identify and implement new technologies to enhance team collaboration, and broaden data collection, analysis and dissemination methods. Further, the project supports the FEWS NET implementation team in enhancing intra-team early warning collaboration, analysis, and dissemination capabilities, and in expanding a FEWS NET activity-wide ability to gather new and greater quantities of food security data, through the application and use of new information technologies for early warning.

The FEWS NET TSC has three main deliverables: (1) Technology consultation; (2) Tool development; and (3) Piloting and rollout of technology and tools for improved data collection, analysis and early warning.

Technology consultation: The TSC project's team stays current on new information technologies and their potential use in humanitarian applications. The team researches and answers technology questions related to FIT's requirements. The project team identifies new technologies that present opportunities to provide USAID and FIT members with new information use capabilities.

Tool development: Generally, the identification of the initiatives undertaken by the project are based upon: a) the TSC Contractor's understanding of the work processes and products of individual FIT members, and of the team as a whole, and b) USAID's and the FIT's understanding of the opportunities that new technologies may offer to increase the effectiveness of their work, and/or the relevance and amount of data they may help to collect. TSC Contractor efforts are expected to provide pivotal inputs in both cases.

The TSC activity remains informed about a wide-range of new technologies and derived tools and methods that represent technological opportunities to enhance the FIT's abilities.

Technologies researched by the project include the use of mobile phones for rapid surveys and monitoring, the use of web-based tools for population estimation (www.populationexplorer.com) and the development of a data warehouse, allowing FEWS NET country and home office staff to upload, maintain, and analyze data on a close to real time basis.

Tool development, testing and evaluation: Tools identified as potential technologies for the FEWS NET project are developed, tested and evaluated. These include a population estimation tool, using the US Government's Landsat dataset, to estimate populations anywhere on earth down to the 1km². Population Explorer (www.populationexplorer.com) was rolled out the first year of the TSC project and has helped both FIT and non-FIT actors better understand population demographics in vulnerable locations across the world. For example, the tool was used extensively to help plan the humanitarian response to Haiti's earthquake in 2010. The TSC is developing FEWS NET's data warehouse, which will be used by FEWS NET country offices to better organize, store and analyze early warning data.

SECTION 2: DETAILED WORK PLAN

Short Name	Description	Never Actioned	On Hold	On-going	Complete	Comments
On Original Work Plan						
WP: Collaboration Tools	White paper on developing a FEWS Team workspace/collaboration tools. An on-line team meeting place, using BaseCamp or better				X	
WP: SMS Mobile data collection	White paper on existing SMS data collection/distribution efforts, and discussion of implementation issues. Initial focus will be on price data				X	
WP: Webinar/Training Tools	White Paper on possible technologies that allows conferencing events to be shared with remote locations				X	
WP: Email Marketing Tools	White paper on more efficient ways to maintaining email distribution lists. Investigate options for personalizing these email lists to expand uptake				X	
WP: FEWS NET longer-term data strategy	Tool Development Implementation on how to manage FEWS NET data in the medium to long-term				X	
PRJ: Remittance Data Analysis	Lead effort to get access to remittance data from Western Union, or others, for use as an early warning tool		X			Initial fruitful conversations with Western Union ended as other projects took priority. TSC plans to revisit this project in 2013
PRJ: Population Explorer Enhancements	Implementation of Population Explorer Enhancements			X		
PRJ: Ki-Projects for TSC M&E	Setup a FEWS NET TSC ki-projects instance to demonstrate how Ki-projects can be used as a collaborative tool for tracking project goals	X				This project was deprioritized as other projects rose to the forefront

Added in 2012					
WP: Conference Polling	White paper on 3rd-party technologies for conference polling				X
WP: RM - East Africa	Wrote a tool development implementation deliverable to establish a remote monitoring data collection effort in East Africa			X	
PRJ: Basecamp For Contract Administration	Implemented the 3rd-party software Basecamp to be used by FEWS NET Contract Administration team		X		While the TSC implemented the software and provided training to the contracting officers, the uptake has been slow
PRJ: Conference Polling	Used Pollevery software at the FEWS NET global meeting in Cape Town and at the FEWS NET Science meeting in Santa Barbara				X
PRJ: Open Data Initiative	Working with USAID Open Data Initiative to identify FEWS NET data sets to be used in a 'crowd-sourcing' competition			X	Plan to develop the APIs needed to share FEWS NET data with the ODI
PRJ: SERVIR/Farm Radio	Collaborating with SERVIR and Farm Radio on a pilot project in Uganda that will integrate Farm Radio data into an Early Warning system			X	
PRJ: Data Warehouse	Merged price data management project into a larger project looking at the consolidation and codification of multiple streams of FEWS NET data into a centralized location			X	
On Original Idea List					
WP: Internet perception monitoring	White paper on monitoring Internet content to harvest changing public perceptions/awareness of food security issues, especially about markets and crises	X			More under the purview of Chemonics/OSC as part of new website

WP: FactChecker	White paper defining how to harvest all public/Internet statements/predictions about specific food security outcomes. Becomes the basis for a new (internal) FEWS NET product called "Food Fact Checker" where the TSC analyzes statement or prediction made by NGO, IRIN, WFP, somebody else for accuracy	X				More under the purview of Chemonics/OSC as part of new website
WP: Volunteer Analysts	White paper on how to solicit FS data, opinions, analyses from volunteer analysts and data contributors through a web-site. Potential benefits? What security issues? How do others do this? How to implement?	X				More under the purview of Chemonics/OSC as part of new website -- overlap with Open Data initiative
WP: Rapid Survey Assessment:	White paper to define a FEWS capability for Survey Assessment Services. How to organize and manage a pool of local survey capabilities to ask and answer specific food security issues in selected hi-priority cases. How to organize and manage a pool of local survey capabilities to ask and answer specific food security issues in selected hi-priority cases			X		While the TSC didn't write the white paper, it has implemented this type of analysis in its Remote Monitoring projects
WP: Big Data	White paper on "Big data" What exists that the TSC might learn how to use for FS monitoring/assessment/early warning uses?		X			Engaged in several brainstorming sessions with McKinsey but this effort was tabled due to other priorities
WP: Internet Bandwidth	Conduct a survey of field office internet bandwidth and operability. So as to help proscribe future technology solutions	X				Lost sense of priority given other tasks. Could potentially revisit in 2013 as part of an effort to engage FEWS NET regional offices
Mini Aps: Converters	Min-App: Converters. On-line converters: 1) to define equivalence of idiosyncratic food quantity ("tins", "coke bottle", "pan", etc.) weights and measures, for most FEWS NET countries.; 2) exchange rates, converter			X		Merged into the FEWS NET Data Warehouse project

Mini Aps: Assessment aids	MiniApp: Field assessment guidance. Mini-references for visual assessment of crop condition and yield (this is what a 2 MT/ha crop looks like); for Livestock diseases, symptoms, etc.	X				These ideas were tabled due to other priorities, but are emerging again under the data warehouse umbrella and will be revisited in 2013
Mini Aps: IPC tools	IPC Assessment and Classification Toolkit. Standardized tools for IPC data collection, analysis and documentation – including online and offline versions	X				These ideas were tabled due to other priorities, but are emerging again under the data warehouse umbrella and will be revisited in 2013
Mini Aps: Price X-change tool	Price Data Exchange Mini-App. Capture and sharing of price data in a common format with standardized c-codes and m-codes with online, SMS and off/on data capture – online price data series			X		Merged into the FEWS NET Data Warehouse project
PRJ: Drought database	Work with Chemonics to investigate the collection, storage, dissemination of spatial and temporal data on drought	X				This project is now under purview of USGS but will likely intersect with the Data Warehouse project at some stage
PRJ: Nutrition database	Work with Chemonics to investigate the collection, storage, dissemination of spatial and temporal data on nutrition as an EW process indicator rather than outcome indicator	X				This will likely fall into the data warehouse project as a second or third data stream. Need to work with their EW tools
PRJ: Price data management	Market Price Data Management Solution			X		Merged into the FEWS NET Data Warehouse project
PRJ: File Sharing Standards	Standardize way files are labeled	X				Could be folded into the data warehouse project
PRJ: Regional Trade	Database for regional trade data	X				Lost sense of priority given other tasks. However, the TSC would like to revisit in 2013 as it begins to rationalize and organize data flows
PRJ: email management	Email management system	X				More under the purview of Chemonics/OSC as part of new website -- overlap with Open Data initiative