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

FISCAL YEAR 2013 ANNUAL WORK PLAN

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## 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 the data that 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 ability to efficiently and effectively collect the amount and type of data and information needed to locate and identify emerging cases of severe food insecurity, and to monitor existing cases.

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 crises.

### 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 information and 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 team stays current on new information technologies and their potential use in humanitarian applications. The activity researches and answers technology questions related to FIT's requirements. The project team identifies and 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](http://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 1km<sup>2</sup>. Population Explorer ([www.populationexplorer.com](http://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.



