ETHIOPIA PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM PROJECT

ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT: FEBRUARY 1, 2012 – JANUARY 31, 2013

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ACRONYMS

AIDTracker	The USAID Global Web-Based Database
CIAFS	Capacity to Improve Agriculture and Food Security Project
COR	Contracting Officer Representative
DQA	Data Quality Assessment
DO	Development Objective
EPMS	Ethiopia Performance Management System
ETWG	Evaluation Technical Working Group
FtF	Feed the Future
FY	Fiscal Year
IP	Implementing Partner
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MSI	Management Systems International, Inc.
OCIO	Office of the Chief Information Officer
PERFAR	President's Emergency Plan For AIDS Relief
PMP	Performance Management Plan
PPR	Performance Plan Report
SOW	Statement of Work
STTA	Short-Term Technical Assistance
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Ethiopia Performance Management System (EPMS) project 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 ingredient for ensuring that decision-making is informed by evidence of what works. The EPMS contract was signed on Jan. 30, 2012, as a two-year project, to provide four core services to the Mission and its implementing partners. EPMS's key objectives appear in the figure below.

The purpose of the annual report is to summarize progress toward achieving project objectives. Notably, the project was initially designed to include the development of a

> "It is critical that we all use data evidence and as much quantitative assessment as possible in making judgments about where we put resources and what we end up funding and financing as an Agency and as a country. If we have an aspiration to elevate development and make this area of work a bigger and more significant part of our foreign policy and national security strategy, we have to do a better job of using data and evidence as broadly as possible to make decisions about where to put our resources and how we get the most results for every dollar we expend on behalf of the American taxpayer."
>
> *—USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah, at the 2012 Evidence Summit*

database system for USAID/Ethiopia. Given that a similar system was under development by USAID's Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO), the Mission shifted the emphasis of Objective 1 from systems development to systems support and implementation. From an operational point of view, this shift is significant. EPMS has proposed a redefined role for year 2 that concentrates on preparing for and effectively implementing the new system when it arrives. This means also that both the Mission and MSI rely on the on-time delivery of the system from the OCIO.

Figure 1: EPMS Objectives

Objective 1. Support the implementation of a Web-based performance management system.

Objective 2. Assist the Mission to implement the new USAID Evaluation Policy.

Objective 3. Provide training and capacity-building support to USAID/Ethiopia and its implementing partners.

Objective 4. Develop Performance Management Plans for each Development Objective.

However, it is also important to highlight that EPMS concentrates first and foremost on setting up effective and efficient M&E processes and systems that produce data in a way that is meaningful to frontline managers. This concept is also fundamental to business process management. Without improvement in underlying systems, information technology serves only to automate inefficiency.

To establish effective M&E systems, the **first phase** in this process was to understand data flow, management and reporting requirements, and how data are used. This was accomplished through the completion of the EPMS's rapid assessment. This assessment identified complex M&E requirements and data flows and also identified a key set of recommendations for improving systems and ensuring adherence with new USAID policies.

The **second phase** was to create or improve on systems and processes, ensuring that they are as streamlined and effective as possible. This is a critical aspect of setting up good M&E systems and requires a broader perspective. EPMS has worked closely with the Program Office and technical Development Objective (DO) teams to identify the best way to organize various processes to meet M&E requirements as efficiently as possible.

In many ways, the Performance Management Plan (PMP) is the foundation for setting up effective monitoring and evaluation systems. PMPs identify key indicators, their relationship to the development hypothesis, how data will be collected, and who will collect the data. EPMS worked with the Economic Growth (DO1), Health (DO2) and Democracy and Governance (DG) Team to complete PMPs in each technical area for a portfolio that exceeded $1 billion dollars in programming.[1] EPMS also played a key role in helping USAID operationalize PMPs. For example, two indicator harmonization workshops were held with implementing partners (IPs) for DO1 and DO2 to review indicators, to ensure that operational issues were identified and addressed, to facilitate the alignment of partner PMPs with the Mission DO PMPs, and to ensure that IP systems produce high-quality data.

The **third phase** was represented by creating or improving existing IT tools to facilitate processes and produce the final product needed (whether in the form of data, information, or a report). These tools and templates are designed to

- *Enhance efficiency.* Tools and templates are designed to provide managers with an already developed (and proven) approach for specific tasks.
- *Ensure quality.* USAID requirements and best practices are reflected in the tools.
- *Facilitate standards and consistency.* A template brings the user through a consistent process, produces consistent documentation, and helps ensure that USAID requirements and standards are addressed.
- *Effectively document and move teams to action.* Documentation is important not only for audit purposes but also for ensuring follow-through on recommended corrections or actions to improve systems. EPMS has played a key role in setting up processes and systems to track and monitor actions from data-quality assessments and evaluations to ensure that those actions are implemented.

At first glance, these tools and templates appear simple. However, supporting their development is a process of rethinking processes for efficiency and meeting critical data needs. For example, given the sheer size of the portfolio, USAID/Ethiopia confronts the complex task of aggregating data from numerous implementing partners. EPMS created a template (the Performance Plan Report template) to provide a common format for all IPs reporting and to assist the Mission in aggregating data received from IPs. EPMS is now working with the Health DO Team to use the tool for all indicators. This type of simple yet effective tool provides a powerful interim solution for Ethiopia. In addition, it was designed so that data in the template can easily be transitioned to AIDTracker when it arrives.

> **Figure 2: 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

The **final phase** of the process concentrated on ensuring that EPMS applied lessons learned (whether related to M&E systems or to IT systems) to make improvements on an ongoing basis. Lessons learned from working with the DO Teams or implementing partners have been integrated into training and guidance. EPMS also has also been positioned to draw on lessons learned within the Agency more broadly. The EPMS Team accessed the expertise of staff members who have functioned as advisers to USAID/Ethiopia on M&E or IT policy, written USAID policy guidance (such as USAID TIPS publications), designed or delivered USAID standard training, or worked with a wide range of Missions on establishing M&E systems.

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[1] Based on the 2011 Congressional Budget Justification and the EPMS statement of work. Notably, the Education DO did its own PMP.

BACKGROUND

USAID/Ethiopia designed the Ethiopia Performance Management System (EMPS) to provide support in developing a comprehensive performance management system including planning, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting. The system was also intended to improve internal management and be useful for meeting annual reporting requirements, such as the Performance Plan Report, as well as other technical reports and ad hoc requests. The Mission entered into agreement with MSI on Jan. 30, 2012, under Contract Number 663–C–12–00003 to implement the two-year EPMS project.

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 2) and include 1) Economic Growth and Transformation (also including Food Aid and Other Humanitarian Assistance), 2) Health (including HIV/AIDS, Population, and Nutrition), 3) Education, and 4) Democracy and Governance (as a crosscutting and supporting objective).

The Ethiopia Country Development Coordination Strategy includes several crosscutting issues that are important to understand and that have implications for Monitoring and Evaluation systems. These include gender, youth, disability, nutrition, social accountability, and environment and water as part of the climate change initiative. It is envisaged that conflict sensitivity and social accountability will be included in the other DOs through the special objective. For the other crosscutting themes, especially gender and disability, the Mission is to ensure that they will be included in development practices across the programs.

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS

Objective 1. Support the Implementation of the AIDTracker (Centrally Designed Web-Based Performance Management System)

The approach to achieving objective 1 has shifted, pending final approval of the contract modification. The original project design was premised on the idea of developing a tailored Web-based Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system for the Mission. However, just as the project was launched, USAID and MSI learned that plans were under way in Washington to develop a similar system for all USAID Missions. At that juncture, USAID made a decision to implement the AIDTracker system under development in Washington. Given the circumstances, it would have been difficult to justify the development of a parallel Mission-based system. As might be expected, this shift had both important benefits and some risks associated with it. The most significant benefit is that it allows USAID/Ethiopia to use an Agency-developed, standardized system at a significant cost savings. The greatest risk associated with this decision is that both USAID and MSI are dependent on the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) to deliver the system on time and to be able to implement the system within the timeframe of our contract.

Recently, USAID issued a notice titled "New Standardization Project: What to Expect and How to Get Involved" that outlined the Agency's approach in moving toward standard processes and information systems for Missions. Among other directives, it formally states that Missions may no longer create new information systems."[2] While this validates the decision to transition to AIDTracker, it also means that the design of AIDTracker may become more complicated because it must now reflect a set of processes

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[2] http://notices.usaid.gov/notice/22422

that are standardized across Missions and vetted within USAID's Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning (earlier it represented one of numerous options). Those underlying standards have also not yet been fully vetted and identified.

EPMS has always viewed this objective as being as much about instituting effective and efficient M&E systems as information technology. This is consistent with OCIO's emphasis on business process management, and the approach identified in the notice mentioned above. Without improvement in underlying systems and processes, technology serves only to automate inefficiency.

As a result, EPMS has envisioned the project unfolding in four related and overlapping phases (see Figure 2.1). The **first phase** centered on simply understanding management and reporting requirements and associated data flows. From this, EPMS was able to formulate specific recommendations for the Mission. This was completed in the form of the Rapid Assessment.

FIGURE 3. PHASES FOR IMPROVING M&E SYSTEMS AND ENSURING THE EFFECTIVE APPLICATION OF TECHNOLOGY
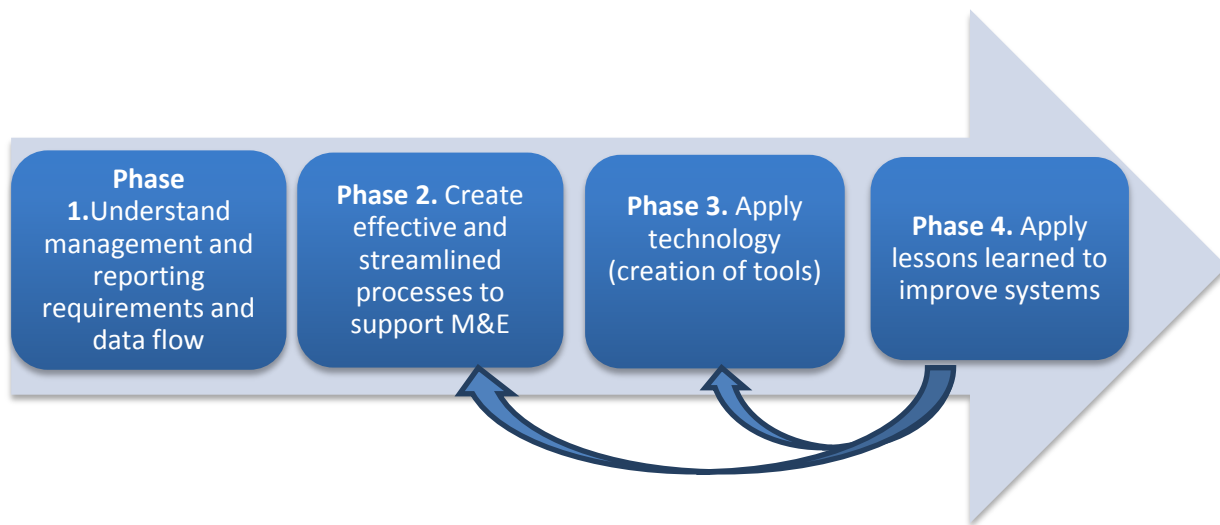
The Mission's performance management system depended heavily on information collected through quarterly reports from implementing partners (IPs). A review of a sample of quarterly reports revealed numerous inconsistencies with regard to data, content, and depth. There was a lack of standardized procedures and templates available to partners for use in reporting to USAID. In some cases, reports were not explicitly linked to the results the projects are trying to achieve. USAID/Ethiopia had also experienced a heavy reporting burden. As EPMS began, there were some 120 projects being run by more than 80 implementing partners.[3] These issues—combined with the lack of a Missionwide database or repository system to store, retrieve, and use the IPs quarterly reports—created a challenging environment for the Mission to gather accurate and timely information.

Once management and reporting requirements were clearly understood, the **second phase** concentrated on creating effective and streamlined processes to support M&E. The cornerstone of this step was to view the M&E system from a broader point of view, asking the following questions:

- Considering staff workload, is the process as streamlined and simplified as possible?
- Is the level of effort expended consummate with what is produced from the process?

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[3]EPMS Award contract, page 6.

- Does the process produce information that is required, and most importantly, **used** for management purposes?

This approach requires managers to carefully consider both process and structure to create efficiencies. It also begins with an analysis of *how information will be used* and requires us to draw a distinction between information that is "nice to have" and information that is "essential." EPMS has applied this approach in setting up and/or improving several key processes over the last year, including the semiannual reports (SARs), the performance plan reporting (PPR), indicator management, and Data Quality Assessments (DQAs).

Once the process is created (or improved), the **third phase** centered on applying the most appropriate technology. To do so, EPMS asks two key questions:

- What technology is best suited to meet the defined need?
- Will the technology enable the Mission to transition to AIDTracker when it arrives?

The second question is critical because it is important to avoid the creation of duplicate systems. In fact, creating multiple systems would ultimately create a greater burden on end users. In the case of the processes noted above, EPMS developed a series of tools and templates (as is summarized in Table 1). The most important principle of employing technology is that the solutions we provide must be operational on the desktops of Mission staff without installation of any new application software. Therefore, EPMS has identified Excel as a platform for supporting data aggregation and analysis capabilities in as robust a fashion as possible using the native capabilities. From the average user's perspective, this also represents a minimal, non-disruptive change, which is important given the impending change that will again take place with the installation of AIDTracker.

TABLE 1: KEY TOOLS AND TEMPLATES CREATED IN YEAR 1

Tool/Template	Purpose	Application
PPR	To facilitate data collection across implementing mechanisms (IM)	Excel
SARs	To organize portfolio review information	Excel
Indicatory Summary Reports	For each DO, summarize which IM is reporting on which of the DO's indicators	Excel
DQAs	To provide a common format, based on ADS criteria and tailored for the Mission, for assessing outcome and output indicators	Word/PDF
PMP	To develop a common format, based on ADS requirements, that facilitates high-quality PMP development	Excel/Word

These tools and templates have several important functions. First, from a systems point of view, they help the Mission create systematic and organized processes, which is important for internal management but also for potential audits. Second (and related), these tools and templates help ensure that ADS and/or Mission requirements are applied because they reflect those requirements. Third, they help managers ensure quality, not only because policy requirements are met but also because they facilitate consistency and reflect best practice in each area. Finally, where tools facilitate data collection or aggregation, they will help set the foundation for the transition to AIDTracker and provide an interim platform until AIDTracker is fully deployed.

At first glance, these templates appear quite simple. Yet underlying their development is the need to make sense of significantly complex requirements. The portfolio in Ethiopia is one of the largest and most complex in Africa, blending together programming from multiple funding sources, including the President's Emergency Plan For AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), Feed the Future, and Food for Peace (Title II). These programs each have their own unique management and reporting requirements that are often defined from the point of view of the "center" (or Washington) rather than from the point of view of Mission management. In addition, given the sheer size of the program, there are numerous IPs that report into the system. These templates are designed to address these complexities and to address specific challenges identified by Mission managers (such as data aggregation).

> **Figure 4: The Role of the Evaluation Technical Working Group—A Driving Force for Implementation of USAID's Evaluation Policy**
>
> 1. Implement evaluation policy and provide guidance.
> 2. Assist the Mission in planning evaluations.
> 3. Develop relationships with **local evaluation specialists** and seek opportunities to build M&E entities.
> 4. Assist in the development of and review evaluation **SOWs.**
> 5. Participate in the **evaluation of technical proposals** for evaluations.
> 6. Review **draft evaluation reports** and recommendations for quality improvement.
> 7. Support respective office team with evaluation **planning** in the project design process.
> 8. Share **lessons learned** and **best practices**.
> 9. Suggest and advocate for training opportunities.

Finally, **phase 4** concentrated on instituting a feedback loop where best practices, new knowledge, and lessons learned are used to improve systems on an ongoing basis. In a fast-paced and rapidly changing information environment, it is even more important to build a process for continual improvement.

The following provides some highlights of performance over the last year.

A Summary of Performance Highlights

- Assisted the Mission in improving key M&E processes and systems by developing AIDTracker compatible tools and templates as summarized in Table 1.

- Developed a model Performance Management Plan for USAID.

- Developed a model project-level Monitoring and Evaluation plan for IPs.

- Mapped 67 PPR indicators to 38 implementing mechanisms (IMs).

- Populated templates with Mission data for 131 projects in AIDTracker Lite.

- Developed M&E calendars for DO1, DO2, and the Program Office to better plan key M&E events and activities each quarter.

- Completed, tested, and operationalized AIDTracker interim tools and templates.

- Created data summary tables that reflect the contribution of various partners to any single indicator have been developed and used as a basis for the annual PPR.

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

USAID has embarked on an ambitious reform agenda embodied in USAID Forward. One of the key objectives is to test what works and what does not through more rigorous evaluations and making those evaluations publicly available, so development actors learn and improve together as a community. New evaluation policy was issued in February 2011 to support this important goal. The Agency has a goal to complete and publish 250 high-quality evaluations worldwide by the end of 2013.

EPMS plays a key role in supporting USAID/Ethiopia in the implementation of this policy at the Mission level. The first critical step in this process is to establish the Evaluation Technical Working Group (ETWG). The ETWG is designed to assist the Mission in planning for, conducting, and using evaluations as tools for effective program and project management. The ETWG consists of representatives from all the technical offices as well as from the Program Office. Key tasks include harmonization of evaluation plans, review of evaluation statements of work (SOWs), review and comment on evaluation reports and follow-up on evaluation findings for the learning agenda, as well as the implementation of evaluation recommendations. EPMS developed an SOW for the ETWG reflecting its purpose as well as best practices within the evaluation community.

Figure 5: The Evaluation Dissemination Plan Addresses the Following Questions

1. Why develop a dissemination plan for USAID/Ethiopia?
2. Who is responsible?
3. When should you plan for how evaluation results will be disseminated?
4. How do you develop an evaluation dissemination plan?
5. How do you obtain feedback on the quality and use of evaluations?

The Obama Administration and USAID have emphasized the importance of making evaluations publicly available. To support this objective, EPMS developed an Evaluation Dissemination Plan. This plan answers key questions and provides guidance on how dissemination can be improved at each stage of the evaluation process from planning to use. In the future, EPMS plans to provide support to the Mission on incorporating effective dissemination strategies into evaluation.

A Summary of Performance Highlights

- Completed the Evaluation Inventory for 25 evaluations already conducted during 2010–12.
- Designed a tool to manage and track accepted evaluation recommendations.
- Created evaluation follow-up reports. So far, the reports for each of the six evaluations (conducted in FY 2012) that have been followed up are to be submitted to the Program Office and the respective CORs. These reports are intended to enhance accountability and the use of evaluations in the Missions.
- Developed an SOW for the ETWG, which will be used to guide the peer-review process for initiating, managing, approving, and following on evaluations.
- Provided a technical review of evaluation SOW for specific projects on the request of Technical Teams (such as the Food Security program on behalf of the ALT Team)
- Developed a registration template for locally available consultants (Ethiopian). EPMS is exploring ways to expand the roster and make it a living tool that can serve the Mission over the longer term. EPMS will work with the Mission to define requirements for year 2;

EPMS proposes to expand the roster through an online access both for registration and sourcing of consultants.
- A draft evaluation dissemination plan was developed and submitted to the Mission.
- EPMS supported the Program Office in updating the M&E Mission Order.

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

The EPMS project is centered on building capacity at numerous levels, including USAID capacity, IP capacity, and in-country, local capacity. EPMS's strategy for building capacity represents a multipronged approach, including

- *Ownership.* EPMS uses participatory approaches designed to improve ownership and to engage managers in the definition of M&E solutions and approaches.
- *Guidance and Tools.* EPMS has developed practical, easy-to-use guidance and reference to complement training.
- *Use of a Training/ Doing Model.* The employment of a training/ doing model so that training occurs just before the need to do a task (e.g., DQA training just before conducting DQAs)
- *Information Dissemination.* During the first year, EPMS produced a high volume of guidance and tools. During year 2, we plan to concentrate heavily on information dissemination to ensure that the tools developed by EPMS are implemented and used.

Identifying and building the capacity of local M&E firms and consultants is also a key component of this objective. EPMS completed a preliminary review of the qualifications of several leading Ethiopian organizations, from think tanks to academic institutes and small, private firms such as Mela Research, B&M Development, Institute of Development Research, Miz–Hasab Research Center, Central Statistical Agency, Ethiopian Development Research Institute, and SuDCA Development Consultants. However, we have found a more limited number of firms and consultants working on M&E. To address this, EPMS will consult with USAID to determine an appropriate outreach strategy to expand the pool of local companies where possible.

It is also noteworthy that EPMS employs short-term technical assistance strategically and with capacity building in mind. We believe that one of the most effective means to build capacity is to pair local staff with short-term technical assistance (STTA) specialists who are leaders in their respective fields. This allows us to bring together expertise on the local context with expertise in a particular technical area. EPMS also requires STTA specialists to work in coordination with local staff and to share tools, best practices, and approaches that can be used and institutionalized.

A Summary of Performance Highlights

- Developed a draft Capacity Building Plan.
- Prepared training modules on Performance Monitoring, Evaluation for Managers, and DQAs.
- Developed M&E Guidance Tools such as the M&E Guide for Implementing Partners.
- Delivered nine different types of training designed with capacity building in mind to DO Teams (DO1, DO2, and DG) using a training/doing model. A total of 256 participants have been trained in year 1.
- Provided technical support on the development of IP M&E plans to follow up on training. The assisted IPs include the Ethiopia sustainably agribusiness incubator (ESAI);

Pastoralists Resiliency Improvement and Market Expansion (PRIME); and the Commercial Farm Service Program—Ethiopia (CFSP–E).

Objective 4. Develop Performance Management Plans (PMPs) for Each Development Objective

The Performance Management Plan (PMP) is a critical tool designed to assist in setting up and managing the process of monitoring, analyzing, evaluating, and reporting progress toward achieving the DO. PMPs enable operating units to collect comparable data over time. The PMP is intended to be a living document that is developed, used, and updated by the DO Team.

During the past year, EPMS has developed a PMP template for USAID/Ethiopia (as mentioned under DO1 in the context of systemic improvement as well). This template is important because it establishes a consistent approach for PMP development that reflects current ADS guidance. Second, EPMS has completed three PMPs (in Health, EG, and DG) including 400 pages of documentation and covering 221 indicators. EPMS also developed an M&E guide specifically designed for IPs that will be incorporated as a reference and in IP training.

In line with the support required for the Data Quality Assessment, tools were developed and a half-day training was given to the Mission staff and IPs on conducting DQAs. For Feed the Future (FtF), the DQAs for their eight indicators were conducted through the USAID FtF M&E Contractor, the Capacity to Improve Agriculture and Food Security Project (CIAFS). EPMS collaborated with and trained CIAFS, another M&E contractor to conduct DQAs for DO1.

A Summary of Performance Highlights

PMP Development

- Provided technical assistance in developing PMPs for DO1, DO2, and Supporting Objective 4 (SO). Drafted the PMP documents and provided technical expertise to support the process of selecting indicators.

- MSI/EPMS has since developed an *M&E Guide for Implementing Partners,* which has been used to orient new partners in USAID/Ethiopia M&E requirements and to assist them in developing their PMPs Conducted Indicator Harmonization workshops for DO1and DO2, which brought together partners to reach consensus on the definitions and methods data collection, among other things.

- Prepared summary reports as an outcome of DO1, DO2, and DG workshops.

- Developed a strategy (and identified) crosscutting issues and reporting

Data Quality Assessments

- Provided DQA tools for outcome and output-level indicators to the Mission in support of the DQA process.

- EPMS trained CIAFS, another M&E contractor for Feed the Future activities, so it could be equipped to conduct the DQA exercise for FtF partners' on their own.

- Before the DQA exercise, a special DQA training was also conducted for the point-of-contact persons under each Technical Team within the Mission.

IP Monitoring and Evaluation Plans

- A model M&E plan for IPs has been developed and shared with the Mission.

- Onsite technical support and support for new IPs on new M&E plan development was provided on as-needed basis.

- The *M&E Guide* was shared with each partner as a resource to use for not only PMP development but also to guide them in developing their entire M&E plans.

Performance Data for FY 2012 Annual Reporting

- An "Excel-Automated System" was developed for partner data entry and summary reports generated to inform the FY 2012 reporting on selected indicators from DO1 and DO2 PMPs.

- The complete PMP indicators have also been entered in the system create a complete data set of indicators to be drawn on for different purposes of reporting in FY 2013.

- A strategy for reporting on the crosscutting indicators was developed and submitted to the Mission.
- The crosscutting indicators developed mainly by the Mission in this regard entail the following areas: capacity building, gender, science and technology, disability, policies and regulations, conflict and governance.

TABLE 2: SUMMARY OF DO PMP INDICATORS AND IMPLEMENTING MECHANISMS

Type of Count	DO 1	DO 2	DG	Total
Number of Indicators	85	96	40	221
Number of IMs for PMP indicators	27	40	Not yet on board	67
Total number of IMs (Mission Level)	45	59	5	109

MANAGEMENT

EPMS established the necessary management and administrative support structures during year 1 to ensure effective and efficient program operations. The project was implemented through two key teams:

- 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 Technical Director Michelle Adams–Matson and Senior Information Technology Specialist Chip Temm. This also included a Project Management Support Team, with Senior Project Manager Matt Witting and Project Manager Maria Paz Zapata.

> **Figure 6: EPMS In-Country Team**
>
> Dr. Rosern Rwampororo, Chief of Party
> Hika Dinssa, Junior Evaluation Specialist
> Tesfayesus Yirdaw, Junior Evaluation Specialist
> Yohannes Tekleyohannes, IT Specialist
> Michael Tedla, Junior Data Manager
> Frehiwot Woldemariam, Administrative/ Finance Manager
> Melat Abebe, Administration and Logistics

In January and February 2013, EPMS conducted an internal midterm project review and met with teams to develop the workplan for year 2. This review was kicked off by meeting with USAID DO teams to identify priorities for the upcoming year and to obtain feedback on the project. Building on this, EPMS also conducted an internal session to review priorities, challenges, and successes. All EPMS staff provided input and the insights provided by all staff are reflected in the annual report and will be incorporated into the workplan for year 2. This provided an important opportunity for EPMS to step back, consider larger (and long term) management objectives to provide the best possible services, incorporate lessons learned, and allow EPMS to build a consensus on priorities and approaches among the EPMS Team.

Short-term technical assistance played a critical role in supporting the project. As noted earlier, STTA is used strategically with capacity building in mind. EPMS attempts to use a small circle of STTA staff, to ensure that they continue to build an understanding of USAID/Ethiopia's environment. STTA staff are usually leading experts in the field of M&E who supplement the skills of local staff. STTA staff are also paired with in-country staff who are closely engaged in assignments. In addition, STTA experts are expected to share best practices and lessons learned in their respective field. Table 3 summarizes STTA employed during year 1.

During the first year, MSI was able to secure office space in Addis Ababa, on the Sixth Floor of the WARYT Building, located at Gabrielle Haile Selassie Avenue, including a facility to conduct training on the premises. Most of the team was operational by June 2012. EPMS did experience the departure of the senior M&E specialist, and it is a priority to fill that position with a strong candidate.

A Summary of Performance Highlights

- MSI–EPMS has ensured good communication, coordination and relationships between and among EPMS, Program Office, the Technical Teams, and partners by using participatory approaches.

- There has been a close working relationship with the Program Office, the COR, and DO teams, and partners in various processes such as the PMP development.

- EPMS has produced the following reports:

    – The Rapid Assessment Report

    – The Year 1 Annual Workplan

    – Financial and Quarterly Reports for Quarters 1, 2, 3, and 4

    – Revised Mission Order on M&E

    – The Capacity Building Plan

    – The Evaluation Inventory

    – DO 1 Workshop Report

    – Evaluation Implementation Guide

    – Improved Mission Monitoring Tool

    – DQA Toolkit and Training Materials

    – DO 2 Workshop Report

- DO2 and D&G Indicator Master Lists and Performance Indicator Reference Sheets

- Complete PMPs for DO1, DO2, and DG

- Completed Monitoring Templates by Implementing Mechanisms

- Evaluation Dissemination Plan

- Strategy for Reporting on the Crosscutting Indicators

- Scope of Work for the ETWG (Evaluation Technical Working Group)

TABLE 3: SUMMARY OF STTA PROVIDED DURING YEAR 1

Trips	Personnel Names	Task	Dates
1	Michelle Adams-Matson	Prepared (with the COP) the Rapid Assessment and contributed to the Development of the workplan for year 1.	EPMS Start-Up March 1–30
2	Chip Temm	Prepared (with the COP) the Rapid Assessment and contributed to the Development of the workplan for year 1.	EPMS Start-Up March 1–30
3	Matthew Witting	Prepared (with the COP) the Rapid Assessment and contributed to the Development of the workplan for year 1.	EPMS Start-Up March 1–30
4	Michelle Adams-Matson	Developed the module for PMP training and delivered the training for DO 2.	June
5	Matthew Witting	Conducted EPMS staff orientation on USAID policies and procedures.	July
6	Patricia Vondal	Prepared the DG PMP.	September
7	Chip Temm	Designed PPR data collection templates and data aggregation templates.	September
8	Patricia Vondal	Prepared an assessment of DO 1 targets working with IPs and also conducting a macro analysis. Provided recommended targets for key indicators. This work is expected to produce lessons learned for other sectors.	Jan. 22 to Feb 8, 2013
9	Michelle Adams–Matson	Prepared second year workplan, led the midterm EPMS review, and is providing critical input on the development of IP-based training (incorporating the latest Agency Guidance).	Jan. 29 to Feb. 7, 2013
10	Chip Temm	Contributed to the second year	Jan. 29 to Feb. 7, 2013

		workplan and midterm review with a focus on IT. Worked with the Health Team to understand requirements and determine whether existing tools would be able to address those requirements (particularly in relation to data aggregation).	
11	Matthew Witting	Trained the Financial Manager on procurement policies and regulations to ensure that EPMS is compliant with USAID regulations. Led the midterm review on operations and is contributing to the Year 2 workplan on operational issues.	Feb. 3–13, 2013

KEY CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS

EPMS also believes that it is important to be frank and transparent about key challenges and constraints. As a project, we have attempted to identify and understand problems to address them as we move into the future. Key challenges include the following:

Operational Challenges

- Delays in getting the office registered resulted in other delays in getting basic logistics set up and organizing other services such as opening the project bank account, Internet, and postal services.
- Delays in staffing—for example, getting the technical staff on board.
- Delay in getting Finance and Administration Manager, which meant that procurements took longer because they were conducted through the home office.

Technical Challenges

- The sheer size and complexity of USAID/Ethiopia's portfolio creates challenges for streamlining processes and systems. For example, Feed the Future and PEPFAR have an entire set of rigorous requirements that are driven by USAID/Washington so that the Mission (and EPMS) is limited in what requirements can be reduced or dropped for streamlining purposes.
- There is a challenge related to ensuring consistency and accuracy in numbers, particularly when there are multiple systems. EPMS has highlighted for USAID when those inconsistencies occur.
- Balancing interim solutions versus long-term ones. EPMS has been very careful to institute short-term solutions that make sense. That is, they meet a specific need at low cost and can be transitioned to the longer-term solution (AIDTracker).
- The Ad hoc nature and lack of advance planning in terms of the requests from technical teams. EPMS has attempted to address this by holding sessions with DO teams to better identify their priorities in advance.
- Process of harmonization of indicators, which required working with different partners that had different definitions, required a great level of effort and consumed a big part of staff time in year 1. As we outlined in our midterm review, we anticipate that harmonization is also an ongoing task. As we work with IPs, EPMS will need to ensure that IP indicators reflect the standards in USAID's PMPs on an ongoing basis.
- Capacity building is a core need and was rightly emphasized in the design of EPMS. We have taken this issue very seriously. However, it is also quite challenging and requires a multipronged

approach (training, technical assistance, relationship building, building a critical mass within organizations). At the same time, we have a very short timeframe within which to work (two years). M&E is often viewed as a simple skill, when in practice it is a discipline akin to organizational development or democracy and governance. Moving from the simple tracking of numbers to incorporating good M&E into management decision-making requires strong management skills. EPMS will continue to work with USAID to set realistic expectations for what can be accomplished and to ensure that ultimately we are an important contributor to capacity building.

- The best approach for building the capacity of IPs is to clearly identify their needs and then tailoring technical assistance to meet those needs.
- Currently, there is no comprehensive list of indicators on the IP side to facilitate the complete mapping of indicators to IPs.
- There are a limited number of consultants and firms on the roster of consultants simply because there has been a limited pool of such expertise within Ethiopia. EPMS will coordinate with USAID to determine an appropriate strategy to address this.