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# FACT SHEET

## Transforming Food Assistance

USAID is undertaking a series of initiatives to improve the timeliness and appropriateness of food assistance. Changes include advanced and ever improving early warning systems, new and more nutritious food aid products, state of the art prepositioning of commodities for timeliness of delivery, significant cash programming, and new programming approaches.

### From Early Warning to Early Action

- USAID's Famine Early Warning System (FEWS), which relies on a unique combination of advanced technologies and field-based data collection, is increasingly accurate in its ability to predict weather related anomalies. In the Horn of Africa in 2011, FEWS not only predicted the likelihood of severe drought many months in advance but also analyzed information on markets, crop and livestock production and local livelihoods patterns to forecast how this drought was likely to severely impact household food consumption, malnutrition, and mortality. USAID's Office of Food for Peace relies on a new FEWS resource – the Food Assistance Outlook Briefing – to understand food assistance needs six months into the future for programming decisions.
- To react to crises quickly, USAID now has seven sites around the world with prepositioned food stocks. Relying on a modern supply chain management approach, USAID has up to 100,000 tons on the floor in warehouses, on the water, or in the procurement process, ready to respond to crises around the world. In 2010, when epic flooding first began in Pakistan, USAID was able to source commodities from prepositioned stocks and divert ships on the water to deliver food to flood survivors within days.

### New tools to get the right food to the right people at the right time

- *Supporting Markets:* Complementing USAID's in-kind food aid program, USAID is now among the largest cash providers of food assistance in the world. It initiated a \$300 million Emergency Food Security Program in 2010 to support local and regional procurement of food as well as cash transfers and vouchers to address food security needs in emergency contexts. Using International Disaster Assistance funds, this program is used when USAID's in-kind food aid cannot arrive in time or other forms of assistance are more appropriate due to market conditions. The program reinforces market linkages in recipient and neighboring countries and supports private sector capacity to meet the needs of beneficiaries.

- To help internally displaced persons and refugees affected by the post-election crisis in Côte D'Ivoire, USAID supported an innovative World Food Program pilot program that uses cell phones to facilitate cash transfers to 54,000 people living in poor districts of Abidjan. Families use these funds to purchase food and non-food items for their households, and as a result have been able to improve the quality of their family's diet.
- *Focusing on Nutrition:* USAID is applying the best of nutrition science to better target the special nutritional needs of vulnerable groups, particularly women and children under two.
  - In the next 12-36 months, nine new or reformulated products will be on line or coming on line. This includes new ready to use therapeutic and supplementary foods designed to treat and prevent malnutrition, better fortification of blended foods, and an improved micronutrient reformulation for milled grains and vegetable oil. New emergency food bars and paste will also be available. These are designed for general populations who are on the move and unable to cook or prepare other foods for short periods of time.
- *Improving Program Approaches: Building Resilience and Tackling Undernutrition:* The devastating drought in the Horn of Africa in 2011 fueled a sense of urgency among stakeholders to expand approaches that build resilience so communities can better resist, recover from, and adapt to shocks. Even in emergency contexts food assistance approaches are increasingly focused on building the assets of vulnerable groups. In addition, food programs are shifting away from recuperative approaches focused on treating malnutrition to emphasize preventive approaches, given increased understanding of the importance of preventing malnutrition.
  - In Kenya, Food for Asset programs provide food transfers to drought affected communities in exchange for labor on activities that build community resilience and self-reliance. For example, communities work to improve access to water and increase crop production through irrigation.
  - In Ethiopia, the USAID-supported Productive Safety Net program kept 7.5 million chronically food insecure people off the emergency food aid rolls through provision of seasonal food transfers in exchange for public works that advance the livelihoods of the community (e.g., reversing soil degradation to improve farming). It both improved community assets and prevented people from migrating or selling off their belongings to survive the drought.
  - USAID promotes a preventive programming approach focused on preventing child malnutrition during the critical first 1,000 days of life - from the start of pregnancy to the child's second birthday. This approach aims to help children fulfill their potential for a healthy, productive, and dignified life by preventing malnutrition before it starts.

Over the last several years, USAID has provided approximately \$2 billion in emergency food assistance each year through PVOs and the United Nations World Food Program, feeding tens of millions of people. These changes are improving will help ensure the continued effectiveness of the food assistance program.