



Request for Concept Notes

Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) Market Study, Political Economy Analysis & Secondary Data Analysis for Resilience Food Security Activities (RFSA)

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and [LASER PULSE](#)¹ (Long-term Assistance and Services for Research, Partners for University-Led Solutions Engine), hereafter referred to as LASER PULSE, seek Concept Notes (CNs) from multidisciplinary teams of researchers and development professionals (preferable) or individual experts, to undertake a resilience, food and nutrition security Desk Review and Market Study (DRMS); a Political Economy Analysis (PEA) and a secondary data analysis to inform the design strategies and approaches of future multi-year Resilience Food Security Activities (RFSA) in USAID Resilience Focus Countries. Specific requirements on eligibility and team composition can be found in [Section III Part A](#).

This request for (CNs) is administered by the LASER PULSE consortium led by Purdue University and funded by USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA). The research will occur in multiple phases (as per instructions from BHA) between March, 2022 to July 2023. The Concept Notes must use the [CN template](#) provided, written in English, with narrative portions prepared in MS Word or Open Office format, using Times New Roman font, size 11, or similar typeset in single line spacing. For details, please see [Section III](#) (Request for Concept Notes).

I. RESILIENCE FOCUS COUNTRIES

USAID's Resilience Focus Countries for this request for CNs are: Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.

II. RESEARCH STUDIES

USAID's Resilience Focus Countries have significant and ongoing humanitarian caseloads due to recurrent shocks, such as conflict, droughts, and economic crises; and underlying or chronic drivers of food and nutrition insecurity, such as poverty and poor feeding practices. BHA RFSA's seek to reduce the need for ongoing and future food and nutrition security humanitarian assistance and build resilience among households and communities vulnerable to recurrent shocks. BHA intends for some or all of the analytical products to be posted publicly available and complement relevant solicitations so that potential applicants can use the analysis to better inform their understanding of context, and of key demographic profile and sectoral themes relevant to food and nutrition security, poverty, and

¹ LASER (Long-term Assistance and Services for Research) PULSE (Partners for University-Led Solutions Engine) is a five-year, program funded through USAID's Innovation, Technology, and Research Hub, that supports the research-to-translation value chain through a global network of universities, government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector for research-driven, practical solutions to critical development challenges in USAID partner countries (UPC). LASER PULSE supports the discovery and uptake of research-sourced, evidence-based solutions to development challenges spanning all USAID technical sectors and global geographic regions.

resilience in target geographies of the targeted countries. More broadly, the analytical products will contribute to the BHA and USAID goals of improving the quality and impact of food security programming in these RFSA countries, saving lives, and reducing the need for humanitarian assistance.

A. Country/Context Desk Review and Market Study ([Full SOW](#))

BHA proposes a resilience, food and nutrition security desk review and market study (DRMS) and the associated deliverables to inform the BHA multi-year activity design process and serve as a publicly available resource for implementing partners developing concept notes and applications to BHA multi-year RFSA solicitations. The DRMS has two specific objectives:

- To provide BHA and potential implementing partners with a deep contextual understanding regarding the resilience and food and nutrition security context, stakeholders, and key activity design issues for consideration.
- To inform the [Bellmon determination](#) and the selection of food assistance modalities for each of the targeted geographic areas.

B. Political Economy Analysis ([Full SOW](#))

BHA proposes a Political Economy Analysis (PEA) to inform the BHA design of a potential solicitation and to serve as a publicly available resource for implementing partners for applications responding to a potential solicitation to BHA funding opportunity. The purpose of the PEA is to develop context-specific situational awareness. With this broad purpose in mind, BHA seeks a synthesis of existing information regarding:

- The interests and behavior of key actors and institutions.
- The patterns and causes of the conflict.
- How governance, political instability and conflict impact the resilience of local populations.

C. Secondary Data Analysis ([Full SOW](#))

The purpose of this study is to use secondary data to inform the targeting and design strategies of multi-year resilience activities. The study would use currently available survey data to identify the characteristics of vulnerable households and individuals, and associated factors and predictors of poor performance on key food security indicators (poverty, stunting, wasting) in sub-national areas of each country which will be named separately.

D. Work Assignments From BHA

Due to the dynamic nature of humanitarian and resilience contexts and programming, the number, frequency, type, and scope of each of these products will vary over time. As a result, work under this call for CN will be carried out by Work Assignments issued by BHA. A Work Assignment is an activation of a study or set of studies in a particular country. When a Work Assignment is issued by USAID, applications go through another iteration of research design with more specific parameters.

E. Estimated Funding and Time

These are estimated numbers and timeline and will depend on the requirements listed in the Work Assignment from BHA.

Study	Estimated Funding Range	Estimated Time
Desk Review & Market Study	\$150,000-\$250,000	6 months from approval
Political Economy Analysis	\$50,000-\$125,000	6 months from approval
Secondary Data Analysis	\$50,000-\$100,000	6 months from approval

III. REQUEST FOR CONCEPT NOTES (CNs)

USAID and LASER PULSE seek concept notes (CNs) from multidisciplinary teams of researchers (preferably) or individual experts, to undertake the three research studies described in the previous sections. Each CN should be designed to focus on one specific RFSA country. PIs may submit separate CNs for separate RFSA countries.

The applicants should meet the qualifications, expertise, and experience in areas and roles identified in the eligibility and qualifications section below. We highly encourage all applicants to register on the LASER PULSE Network at this [link](#) or go to <https://laserpulse.org/register/> to receive timely updates.

A. Eligibility

Every applying team needs to have at least one participant from a Higher Education Institution (HEI). Participation from HEIs in Low and Middle Income Countries (LMICs) is strongly encouraged. The CN will be assessed according to the strength and experience of the team as a whole (see below).

Preference will be given to concept notes from multidisciplinary teams in a country, however individual concept notes may be considered to fill certain expertise on other research team applications. The PI may apply for multiple concept notes. Individuals may participate in more than one team CN.

IMPORTANT NOTE on Non-Disclosure Agreement & Recusal requirement: Individuals that participate in work associated with this research must recuse themselves and their organizations from any work associated with the FY23 and FY24 USAID/BHA RFSA solicitations and awards that will be supported with this work. Individuals that participate must submit a non-disclosure agreement (NDA), and agree to comply with all processes and procedures developed to mitigate organizational and individual conflicts of interest. The selection of final teams is contingent on this requirement. Please see templates for [NDA](#) and [Institutional Recusal](#).

B. Qualifications/Expertise Desired

Desk Review and Market Study:

Desk Review

- Demonstrated experience designing and conducting desk review and market analyses, in international humanitarian or development contexts.
- Demonstrated ability to manage large multi-sectoral and interdisciplinary research or product development teams.
- Demonstrated experience with market structure, conduct and performance analyses.
- Demonstrated experience with rapid rural appraisal approaches, tools, and methodologies.
- Demonstrated experience with other qualitative data collection and analysis methods is highly desired.
- Demonstrated experience in conducting research in international humanitarian or development contexts.
- Masters or Phd level education in nutrition or public health, and food security or related disciplines.
- Demonstrated capacity to develop ArcGIS mapping products and Tableau database and dashboard products.
- Demonstrated strong communication skills related to report writing and providing oral presentations. Demonstrated ability to manage teleconference platforms, such as Zoom, Webex, and Adobe Connect is highly desired.
- Demonstrated knowledge of and ability to manage institutional review boards and ethical compliance processes.

Market Study

- Demonstrated experience designing and conducting market analyses.
- Demonstrated experience with market structure, conduct and performance analyses and the rapid rural appraisal and other qualitative methods highly desired.
- At least five years experience related to food security or agricultural sectors, with a Masters or Phd in economics, business, agriculture, or other relevant disciplines
- Demonstrated experience working with the [Country] food security or agricultural context.
- Demonstrated good communication skills related to report writing and providing oral presentations

Political Economy Analysis:

- A strong background in political economy
- Experience analyzing the impact of socio-political phenomena on local populations and regional food systems
- Familiarity with the REGION ([Country] expertise preferred)
- Experience and competence with the following research methods:
 - Analytical desk reviews
 - Key informant interviews
 - Focus Group Discussions
 - Geographic Information Systems analysis and mapping

Secondary Data Analysis:

- Demonstrated experience in multivariate statistical inference modeling and quantitative data analysis methods.
- Demonstrated knowledge and experience working with resilience, food security, and nutrition variables and contexts.
- Demonstrated knowledge and experience preparing large datasets (Demographic Health Surveys, Living Standards Measurement Surveys, etc.) for modeling and analysis.
- Masters or Phd level education in statistics, nutrition or public health, and food security or related disciplines.
- Demonstrated capacity to develop ArcGIS mapping products and Tableau database and dashboard products.
- Demonstrated strong communication skills related to report writing and providing oral presentations. Demonstrated ability to manage teleconference platforms, such as Zoom, Webex, and Adobe Connect is highly desired.

C. Required Documents for Submission

- 1. Concept Note:** Use the [CN Template](#) provided. It should be written in English, with narrative portions prepared in MS Word or Open Office format, using Times New Roman font, size 11, or similar typeset in single line spacing, and must include the following sections:
 - a. RFSA Country Name:** Please identify the RFSA country for this concept note.
 - b. Contact details:** Full name, position, affiliation, and contact information. If applying as a team, include information of all collaborators on the research team and their roles and responsibilities (For example, Principal Investigator, Market Economist etc).
 - c. Overview of RFSA Country/ Study Expertise:** Please identify each individual's experience related to the three studies (DRMS, PEA and Secondary Data Analysis) across the [14 USAID Resilience countries](#).
 - d. Individual Capacity Statement:** A brief description of each individual's relevant prior work. (1 page limit per individual).
 - e. Individual Availability Agreement:** Acknowledgement that by submitting this CN, the applicant's availability as a candidate for this research is active for 60 days from the date of submission.
- 2. Curriculum Vitae (CV):** Limited to 4 pages, including academic record and most recent list of publications (2000 and later) of each individual.
- 3. Individual Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA):** Each individual listed in the CN will be required to review and sign the [NDA](#) for eligibility. Separate, signed NDAs should be attached as part of the submission. Institutional recusal will be required if selected.

Items 1, 2, and 3 should be combined into one (1) PDF using naming format [RFSACountryName_PILastName_LASERBHA_FEB 2022] and emailed to Dr. Priyanka Brunese (pshah@purdue.edu) with Subject Line: “LASER BHA RFSA FEB 2022 Application” by **5:00 pm EST, February 18, 2022.**

NOTE: Prospective applicants can submit any questions concerning the statement of work. Questions should be sent to Dr. Priyanka Brunese (pshah@purdue.edu) with Subject Line: “QUESTION FOR LASER BHA RFSA FEB 2022 Application”. Questions should be received no later than **5:00 pm EST, February 4, 2022.**

D. Concept Note Review

LASER PULSE and BHA team will review all concept notes. The submitted CNs will be evaluated by a committee of peer reviewers, jointly selected by USAID and LASER PULSE, based on the following criteria:

- **Capacity:** i.e. capacity to co-design and implement the proposed work, lead and coordinate different research workstreams, and ability to develop deliverables that are well synced across the different research studies. Qualifications, skills, experience, and availability of all individuals applying will all be considered.
- **Experience In-Country,** based on demonstrated work conducted in the RFSA countries, an understanding of country context, and connections to in-country organizations/ stakeholders for primary data collection purposes.
- **Research Study Expertise,** based on demonstrated past experiences in designing and implementing the different research studies (Desk Review and Market Study, Political Economy Analysis, and Secondary Data Analysis).

Those applications that demonstrate experience and evidence across all three studies and in multiple USAID Resilience countries are preferred. We recommend that PIs take this into consideration when forming their research teams.

LASER PULSE Rating Definition for Concept Notes (CN) Evaluation Criteria.

Adjectival Rating	Descriptive Statement
Excellent (5)	CN fully addresses all aspects of the evaluation criterion and convincingly demonstrates that it will meet the study objectives. Weaknesses, if any, can be easily addressed.

Very Good (4)	CN fully addresses all aspects of the evaluation criterion, and strongly demonstrates likelihood to meet the study objectives. Weaknesses, if any, can be easily addressed.
Good (3)	CN meets all aspects of the evaluation criterion and demonstrates the ability to meet study objectives but shows some weaknesses, yet the positives of the CN outweigh the negatives.
Fair (2)	CN does not address all aspects of the evaluation criterion nor is evidence presented to indicate the likelihood of meeting the study objectives. Significant weaknesses are demonstrated and clearly outweigh strengths presented.
Poor (1)	CN does not address all aspects of the evaluation criterion and the information presented indicates a strong likelihood of failure to meet study objectives.

Based on the [Work Assignment](#) and RFSA countries selected by BHA, and using the abovementioned criteria, the highly ranked CNs will move to the next round of co-creation. The best ranked CNs from individual applicants may be matched with other applications to form a qualified team. USAID will provide a final review. We plan to announce the finalist teams **on or around February 28, 2022**.

IV. NEXT STEPS

Once a CN is selected, the finalist team will be invited to an orientation session hosted by LASER PULSE. The co-creation among the research team, LASER PULSE, and USAID commences after the orientation meeting to develop an in-depth program description for this activity based on the [Work Assignment](#) in a specific country/countries provided by BHA. As part of co-creation of a full program description, the finalist team will be required the following:

1. All members of the finalist team must sign institutional and individual recusal agreements. Co-creation will not start until this agreement is signed.
2. The Principal Investigator (PI) and Co-PI must (a) register on laserpulse.org and (b) complete both LASER PULSE's online [gender certification](#) and [Embedded Research Translation training](#).

NOTE:

- Studies may not be conducted in all RFSA countries listed in this call.
- The Work Assignments from USAID may be staggered and could lead to different start dates for each study.
- LASER PULSE may reach out to applicants for follow-up questions on the CN submission if clarification is needed.
- LASER PULSE authority allows for the option to select applicants from different CNs to form qualified research teams based on country experience and study expertise, as per BHA's work assignment.
- LASER PULSE reserves the right to have another call for concept notes if the quality of applications received are not satisfactory.
- CNs from this round that do not match BHA's Work Assignment for this round will be saved for future rounds.

Concept Note Template

1. RFSA Country Name: [Enter RFSA Country]

Please identify the RFSA country for this concept note.

2. Contact Details

Please enter the details of all individuals applying. Please include full name, current title/position, affiliated organization, and role and responsibilities on the research team (if applicable).

Full Name	Position	Organization	Team Role	Email
<i>E.g. Mirabel Diaz</i>	<i>Professor</i>	<i>University Z</i>	<i>Principal Investigator</i>	<i>xxx@xxx.xxx</i>
<i>E.g. Sue Zhang</i>	<i>Market Economist</i>	<i>Consulting Firm X</i>	<i>Market Economist</i>	<i>yyy@yyy.yyy</i>

3. Overview of RFSA Country/ Study Expertise

Each individual should identify their experience in each RFSA country and their research expertise across the three studies in the table below.

In the *comments column, please provide links to previous studies you have conducted, as well as any relevant information. If you do not have a link, please attach exemplary reports as part of this application.

RFSA Country of experience	Individual Experience	DRMS (Yes/No)	PEA (Yes/No)	Secondary Data Analysis (Yes/No)	*Comments
Burkina Faso	<i>E.g. Mirabel Diaz</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>N/A</i>
	<i>E.g. Sue Zhang</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>N/A</i>
Democratic Republic of	<i>E.g. Mirabel Diaz</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>N/A</i>

the Congo	<i>E.g. Sue Zhang</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Past Report Links</i>
Haiti	<i>E.g. Mirabel Diaz</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Research funded by DFID. (Added pdf to submission package)</i>
	<i>E.g. Sue Zhang</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>N/A</i>
Ethiopia					
Kenya					
Malawi					
Mali					
Mozambique					
Niger					
Nigeria					
Somalia					
South Sudan					
Uganda					
Zimbabwe					

4. Individual Capacity Statement(s)

A brief description of each individual's related/ relevant prior research and expertise in areas of relevance to this project scope in [RFSa countries](#) (1 page limit per individual).

Paragraph 1: Based on the Country/Study Expertise table above, please describe and provide evidence on:

- relevant expertise in conducting one or all three different studies,
- knowledge about the country's context,
- type of connections you have with stakeholders/ universities or other organizations in that country.

Paragraph 2: Please describe how your relevant expertise will be utilized in your specific role on the research team. What will your responsibilities be?

E.g. Mirabel Diaz
Paragraph 1:

Paragraph 2:

E.g. Sue Zhang
Paragraph 1:

Paragraph 2:

5. Individual Availability Agreement

All individuals applying for the CN must sign this affirmation.

<i>I understand and acknowledge that by submitting this CN, my availability as a candidate for this research is active for 60 days from the date of submission.</i>		
Full Name	Date	Signature
<i>E.g. Mirabel Diaz</i>		
<i>E.g. Sue Zhang</i>		

Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA)

I, _____, understand and acknowledge the following:

1. Access to External Party Confidential/Proprietary Information is a privilege. Unauthorized access, use for an unpermitted purpose, and or mismanagement of such information risk economic and strategic injury to the information owner and reputational harm and legal complications for Purdue University and me.
2. I understand that I am bound by the restrictions in confidentiality agreements shared as part of Data Security Plan and am personally accountable for a breach caused by my negligence.
3. I will diligently preserve, safeguard and prevent unauthorized access, unpermitted use, and unauthorized disclosure, dissemination or publication of External Party Confidential/Proprietary Information, whether physically and electronically. If specific measures of care are required in an applicable confidentiality agreement, I will also follow those measures.
4. I will only access External Party Confidential/Proprietary Information when I have a legitimate need and am authorized to do so.
5. I will limit my use of External Party Confidential/Proprietary Information to only the setting and purpose authorized by the owner of the information.
6. Prior to sharing External Party Confidential/Proprietary Information with any person, I will confirm that:
 - a. The confidentiality agreement permits sharing the information through me.
 - b. The recipient is an eligible recipient under the confidentiality agreement and has signed a Personal Acknowledgement form and the form is on file with the Information Owner, and,
 - c. The recipient understands the required measures of care and the permitted uses of the External Party Confidential/Proprietary Information.
7. In the event of discovery of any unauthorized access or use, use for an unpermitted purpose, theft, loss or unauthorized disclosure of External Party Confidential/Proprietary Information in my care, I will report the details to the Information Systems Owner immediately
8. I will ensure all External Party Confidential/Proprietary Information is returned or disposed of according to the instructions of the information owner.
9. I understand that continued access to External Party Confidential/Proprietary Information will require continued training and certification.
10. Defend Trade Secrets Act notices:
 - a. An individual may not be held criminally or civilly liable under any federal or state trade secret law for the disclosure of a trade secret that is referenced in a report or complaint of a suspected violation of law that is made (i) pursuant to the University's Protection Against Reprisal for Good Faith Disclosures (Whistleblower Protection) Policy III.A.4, (ii) in confidence to a federal, state or local government official, directly or indirectly, or to an

attorney, if such disclosures are made solely for the purpose of reporting or investigating a suspected violation of law.

- b. An individual may not be held criminally or civilly liable under any federal or state trade secret law for the disclosure of a trade secret in a complaint or other document that is filed under seal in a lawsuit or other proceeding.
- c. Further, an individual who files a lawsuit for retaliation by an employer for reporting a suspected violation of law may disclose the employer's trade secrets to his or her attorney and use the trade secret information in the court proceeding if the individual: (a) files any document containing the trade secret under seal; and (b) does not disclose the trade secret, except pursuant to a court order.

I have read and understood the provisions listed on the previous page:

Signature:	
Name: Click here to enter text.	Date: Click here to enter a date.
Affiliated Organization and Title:	

Institutional/ Individual Recusal Agreement

Date: XXX

To: XXX

From: XXX

Subject: Institutional/Individual Recusal Agreement – USAID/BHA RFSA Solicitations, FY 2023 and 2024

This is to notify you that because [Institution](#), its Affiliates¹ and its employees may be seen to have a conflict of interest in matters affecting the [Institution](#) through participation in a sub-award under the “USAID/BHA/TPQ RFSA Activity Design Studies Buy-In”, it is expected that [Institution](#) and its Affiliates and its employees may not participate in any way as a prime or subawardee/subcontractor or otherwise in any matters regarding USAID/BHA’s “Solicitations for Resilience Food Security Activities (RFSA) for FY 2023 and FY 2024” if it accepts a subaward under the USAID/BHA/TPQ RFSA Activity Design Studies Buy-In program.

[Institution](#), its Affiliates and its employees understand that the studies it will engage in producing, under the ‘USAID/BHA/TPQ RFSA Activity Design Studies Buy-In’, will inform the design of the FY 23 and FY 24 RFSA solicitations. It is further understood that in accordance with the principles of FAR Subpart 9.5 and USAID policy in [ADS 302.3.5.10](#), ‘the Awardee/Contractor shall be ineligible to furnish, as a prime or subawardee/subcontractor or otherwise, the implementation services for any activity that the Awardee/Contractor designed, unless the Head of the Awarding/Contracting Activity, in consultation with USAID's Competition Advocate, authorizes a waiver (in accordance with FAR 9.503 and AIDAR 709.503), determining that preclusion of the Awardee or Contractor from the implementation contract would not be in the Government's interest’.

By institutional and personal acknowledgement below, [Institution](#) on behalf of itself, its Affiliates and employees is recusing itself from engagement in the FY 2023 and FY 2024 RFSA solicitations if it is selected and accepts a subaward under USAID/BHA/TPQ RFSA Activity Design Studies Buy-In program.

Institutional Acknowledgement:

Full Name and Title and Inst. Name:

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Individual Acknowledgement and Inst. Name:

Full Name and Title:

Signed: _____

Date: _____

1 “Affiliate”: means any entity which controls, is controlled by, or is under common control with another person or entity. For purposes of this definition only, “control” means (a) to possess, directly or indirectly (through one or more intermediaries), the power to direct the management or policies of an entity, whether through ownership of voting securities or by contract relating to voting rights or corporate governance, or (b) to own, directly or indirectly, more than fifty percent (50%) of the outstanding voting securities or other ownership interest of such entity.