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Monitoring

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PIRS can also be used as a starting point when conducting DQAs, which are required for any indicators being reported to Washington. Once the DQA is conducted, the PIRS should be updated with the necessary information from the DQA checklist.

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PAD. Project managers must work with CORs/AORs to ensure that all activity M&E plans include performance indicators that are consistent with and meet the data collection needs of the project M&E plan and the mission's Performance Management Plan (PMP) and Performance Plan and Report (PPR). This is best done during the project design stage. Activity M&E plans submitted to USAID should include only those indicators that the mission needs for project and activity management, rather than the entire set of all indicators an implementer uses for its internal management purposes.

For some missions that currently have projects and activities that do not fit directly within the CDCS, or have initiatives that fall outside of their project Log Frames, there may be a transition period until indicators fully align with mission strategy. During this transition period, missions should continue collecting data for the indicators needed to manage or report on these activities. During the annual work-planning process with implementers, missions should consider which indicators may no longer be needed to save resources and time and use the opportunity to trim unnecessary indicators from the implementer's collection and reporting burden.

4. Are missions supposed to include all M&E costs (including data collection, analysis and reporting) for a project under one line item? What about within implementing mechanisms?

Are missions supposed to include all M&E costs (including data collection, analysis and reporting) for a project under one line item? What about within implementing mechanisms?
The project budget should include a line item for M&E. This helps ensure that adequate resources are allocated for M&E within eventual implementing mechanisms, or for project level evaluations and monitoring that are not part of individual mechanisms (for example, surveys or other primary data collection needed for the project purpose level indicators). At the mechanism or activity level, missions should draft RFPs, RFAs and G2G or other mechanisms to include necessary M&E costs (as well as roles and responsibilities). This will ensure that M&E is an explicitly-funded part of every award. It is better if those costs can be captured under an M&E line item rather than allocated across individual staff salaries, though individual implementing mechanisms will vary in their ability to do this.

5. What the difference is between a PMP and an M&E Plan? How are both utilized?

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A Performance Management Plan (PMP) is a mission-wide document that serves as an internal management tool for USAID missions (see ADS 203.3.3). The PMP provides a systemized approach for tracking and reviewing progress made towards the achievement of the goals stated in the CDCS Results Framework while maintaining a standardized level of quality and verification controls. The creation and implementation of the PMP is managed out of the program office, but all technical units/Development Objective (DO) teams are both contributors and users of the PMP. While there is no standard format for PMPs, all PMPs should include the required components detailed in ADS 203.3.3. USAID missions should use a format that best fits their management and communication needs.

The PMP is a living document and it is expected that it will be regularly updated with relevant indicators and evaluation questions from project M&E plans. Project M&E plans are developed by mission staff on a rolling basis during project design and set out the plan for monitoring and evaluating progress toward results specified in a Project LogFrame. Project indicators (at the Purpose and Output levels from the LogFrame) and evaluation questions from the project M&E plan must be included in the PMP. Project teams should work with the program office to ensure that the mission-wide PMP is regularly updated from new project M&E plans (see 203.3.3).

Activity M&E plans, in contrast, are developed by implementers post-award, before major activity implementation begins, and should align with the broader project M&E plan to which they contribute. Activity M&E plans contain the indicators that the implementer and COR/AOR need for activity management.

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6. How should a mission approach the performance monitoring requirements if it does not yet have a CDCS in place, or will not have a CDCS?

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Missions that do not yet have, or will not have, a CDCS should still have a PMP that aligns to whatever strategic or policy guidance is in place at their respective mission. Even without a CDCS in place, all missions that are in the process of implementing activities must manage the performance of those activities. These missions should still collect performance information based on ADS 203 requirements and track performance data in a central repository.

7. Why is it recommended that missions minimize the use of outside contractors to conduct Data Quality Assessments (DQAs) given that DQAs take so much time?

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USAID staff, particularly COR/AORs with the support of their colleagues in the program office, have an important role to play in understanding the quality of their performance data. This supports staff in making better informed programmatic and resource decisions on the basis of their performance data. Further, the recommendation that DQAs be done by USAID staff is part of a broader trend of moving core program cycle functions in-house when possible. While there may be cases where specific outside technical expertise is needed for DQAs, such expertise should generally only be needed in a limited number of instances. Over time, USAID staff will be increasingly capable of assessing the quality of the data that they receive.

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Missions are encouraged to post PMPs (or portions thereof) on ProgramNet to share their experience with others as well as to troubleshoot or garner ideas for new approaches. As missions design new projects, they are asked to post their Project Appraisal Documents (PADs), which include their project M&E plans, to ProgramNet, via the project design working group. However, this is not for PAD approval, but for better sharing to support mission staff as they become more adept at project design.

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Every performance indicator at the output level and above should be included in the PMP. This includes every indicator from the CDCS results framework above the project level as well as every indicator within project M&E plans at the output level (i.e. inputs and indicators for LogFrame assumptions do not translate over into the PMP). Depending on where the linkages are between your project M&E plan and the CDCS results framework, some of the output level and above indicators will directly link to DO, IR, and/or Sub-IR results from the CDCS results framework.

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11. What is the difference between a Performance Indicator Reference Sheet (PIRS) and performance indicator tracking table? Are both considered part of the PMP?

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12. What is an evaluation plan?

What is an evaluation plan?

Program Offices must create a mission-wide evaluation plan, included in their mission Performance Management Plan (PMP), to identify and track evaluations across the mission and over the entire CDCS timeframe as described in ADS 203.3.3.1. Evaluation plans should include, at minimum, the DO/project/activity to be evaluated, evaluation type, possible evaluation questions, estimated budget, planned start date and estimated completion date. A recommended multi-year evaluation plan template is available on ProgramNet.

Project M&E plans should also include planning for evaluations at the project level, as described in ADS 203.3.4.4.

13. Are Washington Operating Units (OUs) required to do strategy-level Performance Management Plans, Project-level M&E plans, and portfolio reviews? In general, do Washington OUs have the same performance monitoring requirements as USAID Missions/Offices ov

Are Washington Operating Units (OUs) required to do strategy-level Performance Management Plans, Project-level M&E plans, and portfolio reviews? In general, do Washington OUs have the same performance monitoring requirements as USAID Missions/Offices overseas?

The performance monitoring requirements in ADS 203.2 primarily apply to USAID Missions/Offices overseas. However, as stated in ADS 203.2, both Washington and field OUs are subject to requirements related to: (1) annual reporting on results (Performance Plans and Reports-PPRs); and (2) and data quality assessments (DQAs). Beyond PPRs and DQAs, Washington OUs may apply any aspects of ADS 203 that they find useful for their programs and priorities, also noted in ADS 203.2. In particular, it is highly recommend that Washington OUs develop and maintain a strategy-level PMP and conduct strategy-level portfolio reviews, as this ensures that OUs are implementing projects driven toward achieving results. Also, since most OUs have many different activities and projects, sometimes working in isolation, a PMP will help ensure that the OU is working toward the same end.

For Washington OUs that have a Country/Regional Development Cooperation Strategy (C/RDCS), the associated Results Framework will facilitate having a strategy-level PMP and strategy-level portfolio review. For Washington OUs that do not have a C/RDCS and associated Results Framework, they may find that using alternative strategy-level documents (e.g. strategic framework, Bureau/Office mission statement) may be useful in formulating a strategy-level PMP and the higher-level results therein, as well as structuring a corresponding strategy-level portfolio review.

Also, Washington OUs should note that the term Performance Management Plan (PMP), is now reserved for the strategy-level PMP (ADS 203.3.3) and should not be used at the project or activity/implementing mechanism level. Instead, the terms "project M&E plans" (ADS 203.3.4) and "activity-level M&E plans" (ADS 202.3.5) should be used. This will ensure that both field and Washington OUs are using consistent terminology and be helpful to implementing partners who work with both missions and Washington.

14. What is the link between performance monitoring and evaluation?

What is the link between performance monitoring and evaluation?

Performance monitoring and evaluation are mutually reinforcing, but distinct, practices (see ADS 203.1). Together, monitoring and evaluation contribute to good performance management - the systematic process of collecting and analyzing performance information to track progress toward planned results; and using performance information and evaluations to influence decision-making and resource allocation. In many cases, good performance monitoring can allow for richer evaluations. From establishing baselines to systematically collecting and analyzing indicator data, solid performance monitoring can save resources for more in-depth data collection and analysis during evaluation. Performance monitoring may trigger evaluations by pointing to the need to probe further to understand project performance during implementation.

15. Why did the Agency place a moratorium on the creation of new information systems by Missions?

ADS 203 recommends that missions use systems to manage their data. Does this mean that each mission should develop an DIS system?

The Agency issued the February 12, 2013 moratorium (http://notices.usaid.gov/notice/24837) on the development of new information systems to avoid the proliferation of systems as the process to design a common mission information system (known as DIS) goes forward. In the meantime, missions may continue to use their existing systems or even adopt an existing system in use by another mission. In addition, missions may adopt AT+ as an interim information solution, which is an expanded version of AT+ that now includes functionality to manage all performance indicators and is aligned with the Performance Monitoring standardized mission order. Per that same notice and previous guidance, all missions are required to adopt OPSmaster for budget management.

16. Some implementing partners have their own rules and indicators for activity monitoring. How do we work with these indicators? What control do we have over implementers using funds for collecting indicators that we don't need?

Some implementing partners have their own rules and indicators for activity monitoring. How do we work with these indicators? What control do we have over implementers using funds for collecting indicators that we don't need?

Implementing partners have the primary responsibility for activity-level monitoring. In some cases, implementing partners may collect monitoring data for their own internal activity management and implementation purposes beyond that which is needed or required by USAID. That said, due to the time and cost of data collection, it is important that indicators be selected strategically. Per ADS 203, at the activity/implementing mechanism level implementers are expected to submit an activity M&E plan to USAID CORs/AORs within the first 90 days of an award and before major activity implementation actions begin. Project managers must work with CORs/AORs to ensure that all activity M&E plans include performance indicators that are consistent with and meet the data collection needs of the project M&E plan, the mission's Performance Management Plan (PMP), and the mission's Performance Plan and Report (PPR). A litmus test for which indicators implementing partners should report to USAID is those which are relevant for management or mission reporting and decisions.

In the past, implementers have expressed concern that they are engaged in extraneous data collection. It is important for the USAID mission to be able to identify and communicate data expectations and needs early in a project or activity. To the extent that implementing partners have

a clearer understanding of USAID's data needs, they are more likely to focus their monitoring efforts on what is most important for the mission.

17. Which indicators and targets should be reflected in the project LogFrame and project M&E plan? Should inputs be included?

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In order to complete the LogFrame for the PAD, missions will have to include indicators and data sources for the output level and above within their project LogFrame. In terms of targets, defining the End of Project status (essentially the purpose level indicators + targets) is a useful part of the project design exercise. However, we do not recommend including targets from lower levels of the LogFrame in the Logframe itself. These targets should instead be included in the project M&E plan and transferred into whatever system the mission uses to manage its indicator data (e.g. AidTracker, excel spreadsheets or others). Additionally, indicators for inputs should be included in activity-level M&E plans and do not need to be included in the project M&E plan or the mission PMP.

Inputs are generally included in activity-level M&E plans. While inputs are important to manage at the activity level, indicators for them do not need to be included in the project M&E plan or the mission PMP. Inputs typically include things like trainings provided, commodities purchased, infrastructure built, etc. As it is self-evident whether inputs have or have not occurred, inputs do not require performance indicators. A mission might want to consider inputs as a means to estimate the time and costs associated with implementing a project, but there should not be input-related performance indicators in the project LogFrame, project M&E plan, or mission PMP.

PMPs / M&E Planning

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Indicators, Baselines, & Targets

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32. Some implementing partners have their own rules and indicators for activity monitoring. How do we work with these indicators? What control do we have over implementers using funds for collecting indicators that we don't need?

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Implementing partners have the primary responsibility for activity-level monitoring. In some cases, implementing partners may collect monitoring data for their own internal activity management and implementation purposes beyond that which is needed or required by USAID. That said, due to the time and cost of data collection, it is important that indicators be selected strategically. Per ADS 203, at the activity/implementing mechanism level implementers are expected to submit an activity

M&E plan to USAID CORs/AORs within the first 90 days of an award and before major activity implementation actions begin. Project managers must work with CORs/AORs to ensure that all activity M&E plans include performance indicators that are consistent with and meet the data collection needs of the project M&E plan, the mission's Performance Management Plan (PMP), and the mission's Performance Plan and Report (PPR). A litmus test for which indicators implementing partners should report to USAID is those which are relevant for management or mission reporting and decisions.

In the past, implementers have expressed concern that they are engaged in extraneous data collection. It is important for the USAID mission to be able to identify and communicate data expectations and needs early in a project or activity. To the extent that implementing partners have a clearer understanding of USAID's data needs, they are more likely to focus their monitoring efforts on what is most important for the mission.

33. What is the function and timing of the Performance Indicator Reference Sheets (PIRS)?

What is the function and timing of the Performance Indicator Reference Sheets (PIRS)?
A PIRS includes all the relevant reference information about a performance indicator. It helps ensure that USAID staff and implementing partners are on the same page regarding what an indicator means, how it is collected, and who is responsible for it. It also helps ensure consistent indicator data collection and use, and documents decisions about the indicator by current staff for future staff. The recommended PIRS template is located on ProgramNet.

The mission-wide Performance Management Plan (PMP) should contain Performance Indicator Reference Sheets for all performance indicators. PIRS should be completed as soon as you are certain of what an indicator will be (i.e. definition, data source, etc). During PMP development, some PIRS will be completed right after CDCS approval as Goal and DO level indicators are determined; others will be completed as projects are designed and indicators are further developed and refined. Consequently, PIRSs should be completed on a rolling basis as indicators become finalized.

PIRS can also be used as a starting point when conducting DQAs, which are required for any indicators being reported to Washington. Once the DQA is conducted, the PIRS should be updated with the necessary information from the DQA checklist.

Data Quality

34. Why is it recommended that missions minimize the use of outside contractors to conduct Data Quality Assessments (DQAs) given that DQAs take so much time?

Why is it recommended that missions minimize the use of outside contractors to conduct Data Quality Assessments (DQAs) given that DQAs take so much time?
USAID staff, particularly COR/AORs with the support of their colleagues in the program office, have an important role to play in understanding the quality of their performance data. This supports staff in making better informed programmatic and resource decisions on the basis of their performance data. Further, the recommendation that DQAs be done by USAID staff is part of a broader trend of moving core program cycle functions in-house when possible. While there may be cases where specific outside technical expertise is needed for DQAs, such expertise should generally only be needed in a limited number of instances. Over time, USAID staff will be increasingly capable of assessing the quality of the data that they receive.

Data Analysis, Use, & Reporting

35. How do we share evaluation findings and submit final evaluation reports?

How do we share evaluation findings and submit final evaluation reports?
Per the standard mission order on Evaluation, findings from evaluations will be shared as widely as possible, with a commitment to full and active disclosure. Following the completion of the

evaluation report, the Program Office must ensure that the final evaluation report is posted on the Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC) no later than three months after completion. Exceptions to this requirement are granted in only very rare circumstances. See the FAQ on this topic for further information on seeking exceptions.

The highly preferred method to submit documents to the DEC is through the on-line submission process. To submit documents to the DEC:

1) Go to https://dec.usaid.gov/dec/home/Default.aspx
2) Click the "SUBMIT" tab in the upper-left-hand corner.
3) Log-in using the log-in screen. If you do not have a log-in and password, click the "Register" tab to create a log-in and password. You will be able to immediately submit documents after registering.
5) Once you have logged in, click "Submit Documents."
6) Read the brief list of guidelines.
7) Fill out the form with the information from the document, including Title, Publication Date and Language. If you have other information about the document, such as a contract number, please fill in the appropriate field on the form. This helps the DEC staff with the review and processing.
8) UPLOAD the document! (People frequently forget this step).
9) Don't forget to click SAVE when you are finished. (People also frequently forget this step). Once you've clicked SAVE, you will be taken to a newly-created record for your document which you will be able to send to yourself or others via e-mail, add tags and comments, share on Facebook and Twitter, etc. Note that if you are unable to submit a document via the online form, you can do so by email at docsubmit@usaid.gov or mail (for paper, CD-ROMs, or other materials in hard-copy). Note that documents submitted to the DEC through the online submission process are available immediately, while those sent to the DEC via e-mail or hard copy can take weeks or even months to be available through the DEC interface.
In addition to posting evaluation reports to the DEC, OUs should also consider other methods of dissemination, such as hosting briefings with local stakeholders, partners and other donors to discuss evaluation findings; featuring evaluation findings on the OU's website, such as through an article or blog post; and holding press conferences and issuing press releases.

36. What is the link between performance monitoring and evaluation?

What is the link between performance monitoring and evaluation?
Performance monitoring and evaluation are mutually reinforcing, but distinct, practices (see ADS 203.1). Together, monitoring and evaluation contribute to good performance management - the systematic process of collecting and analyzing performance information to track progress toward planned results; and using performance information and evaluations to influence decision-making and resource allocation. In many cases, good performance monitoring can allow for richer evaluations. From establishing baselines to systematically collecting and analyzing indicator data, solid performance monitoring can save resources for more in-depth data collection and analysis during evaluation. Performance monitoring may trigger evaluations by pointing to the need to probe further to understand project performance during implementation.

37. How should we manage the findings and recommendations coming out of evaluation reports to inform learning and decision-making?

How should we manage the findings and recommendations coming out of evaluation reports to inform learning and decision-making?
High-quality evaluation findings should inform USAID decisions. The Program Office should ensure that evaluations are timed so that evaluation findings are available when decisions need to be made, and that findings are integrated into decision-making and learning about priorities, resource allocations and project design. The standard mission order on Evaluation calls for the Program Office to lead relevant mission staff through the process of responding to evaluation findings, as

described in ADS 203.3.1.9. This process will lead to the development of an action plan for addressing the evaluation findings, conclusions, and recommendations the mission has accepted or any other actions it deems necessary as a result of evaluation findings, conclusions, and recommendations. During Portfolio Reviews, the status of action plans for evaluation findings and their use in respective decisions will be discussed and documented.

38. Are there exceptions to the requirement to share evaluation findings within three months of finalizing an evaluation?

Are there exceptions to the requirement to share evaluation findings within three months of finalizing an evaluation?
The Evaluation Policy requires that all evaluation reports be submitted publicly to the Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC) (dec.usaid.gov) within three months of their completion. There are very rare exceptions to this publicly-available requirement which are granted after a formal request is submitted to and approved by the Director of PPL's Office of Learning, Evaluation and Research (PPL/LER). Without this approval, all evaluation reports must be submitted to the DEC and available for the public to view. If there are sensitive issues, Operating Units should have both a public version of the report and an SBU version of the report. In some situations, PPL/LER recommends that approval be sought for an SBU version only for a specific, limited time frame to allow time for sensitivities to decrease.

Exceptions to the public disclosure requirement are expected to be rare, must be requested and justified in writing, and should be based on one or more of the following criteria:

1. Disclosure would impair foreign assistance objectives.
2. Disclosure would involve releasing otherwise proprietary information owned by third parties.
3. Information disclosed could put individual safety at risk or release private personal information.
The few exceptions to public disclosure approved thus far have been on the basis of the safety and security of our partners. Even if an exception is granted by PPL/LER, the evaluation should be posted on the DEC as SBU so that it is at least available to USAID staff. Any mission seeking an exception should submit an action memo to PPL/LER from the mission director requesting the exception. An action memo template and further details about the criteria and process for seeking an exception can be found on ProgramNet here.

39. How does the annual Performance Plan and Report (PPR) relate to the Mission Performance Management Plan (PMP)?

How does the annual Performance Plan and Report (PPR) relate to the Mission Performance Management Plan (PMP)?
The PMP is an internal Mission management tool used to assess progress towards the "results" detailed in the CDCS Results Framework and Project LogFrames.   In contrast, the PPR serves mainly as a reporting tool on USAID performance to stakeholders outside of the Mission, helping the Agency comply with legislative or other requirements (e.g. GPRAMA and initiative reporting). F leads the PPR process, issuing guidance annually.

Since the PMP is designed to help the mission monitor the performance of its portfolio, it generally has many more indicators than end up being reported in the PPR. The PMP will include both a set of F standard indicators that are applicable to the mission's portfolio as well as a larger number of custom indicators that provide more granularity on mission performance to facilitate decision-making and learning at the appropriate levels.