**Jordan Public Accountability and Justice Strengthening (PAJ) Activity Learning Approach**

Introduction

Learning is the use of data and insights from a variety of information-gathering approaches—including monitoring and evaluation—to inform strategy and decision-making.

LEARNING FROM M&E TO IMPROVE PERFORMANCE

USAID views learning as an important driver throughout the Program Cycle, with designs for new program and projects building on evidence from evaluations of earlier work, and aid effectiveness being enhanced over the life of a program or project based on feedback from performance and assumption monitoring as well as by evaluations undertaken during implementation.

what did we learn?

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Learning
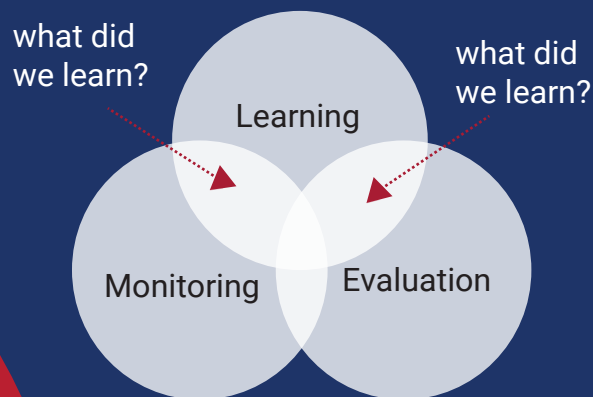
Monitoring

Evaluation

Integrating Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning occurs primarily at three key points in these processes: (a) during project design when lessons from prior evaluations are assembled to guide program and project development, (b) when utilization-focused plans for performance monitoring and evaluation are developed, and (c) when performance data and evaluation reports become available and their findings and lessons can be absorbed and applied.

Maximizing the value from monitoring data and evaluation reports as they are received starts with asking "what did we learn?" Often what M&E data and reports have to teach us is mixed in with facts with which some, but not necessarily all potential users, are already be familiar. Extracting or highlighting new information and key finding and recommendations is often an important first step towards ensuring that what M&E products have to tell busy managers in USAID, in country partner organizations and on Implementing Partner teams is absorbed and used.

LEARNING PATHWAYS

Learning is integrally linked with monitoring and evaluation in the USAID Program Cycle, 3 main learning pathways can lead you to integrate learning with monitoring and evaluation.
One pathway will help project design teams organize information from previous evaluations to inform their strategy and development hypothesis formulation. Another learning pathway focuses on incorporating active learning into program and project management approaches. The third learning pathway introduces you to M&E processes that can be used to foster learning, while the final pathway provides you with tools to foster action based on learning from M&E results.

Integrating evaluation lessons into design

Embedded in every program and project USAID funds is a causal theory of change that describes the hypotheses through which activities will be transformed into results. How well grounded our logic models are depends greatly on USAID's ability to learn from and apply experience when formulating causal paths along which to invest, act, monitor progress and evaluate success.

Planning for active learning in programs and projects

Learning processes are an essential element of USAID's strategy for restructuring its portfolio to be more adaptive and relevant and to more effectively empower country partner efforts to achieve their development goals.

Applying knowledge gains from M&E

To realize the vision set forth in USAID's Program Cycle for continuous improvement across the development policy and programming horizon, gathering and reporting performance information will not be sufficient. Structural opportunities and incentives are needed to facilitate the assimilation of monitoring and evaluation findings, and to absorb the implications of conclusions and recommendations that may accompany these findings.

GUIDING LEARNING PRINCIPLES

PRINCIPLE #1: CONTINUOUSLY LEARN AND ADAPT Making progress on tough issues requires continuous feedback, learning and timely use of insights to inform and adapt our strategies. We generally take on dynamic problems that have many moving parts, complex interdependencies and require a long time to see meaningful progress.

Our emphasis on continuous improvement recognizes that once our strategies hit the ground, they are likely to require adaptation as we learn about what works and the context changes. By keeping our monitoring and evaluation efforts in close dialogue with strategy, we are able to bring timely data to the table for reflection and use. When developing our strategies, we develop clear and measurable goals and build in feedback loops for tracking progress on those goals.

When implementing (and adapting) our strategies, we gather information about what works and how the context is shifting, and then use our insights to navigate a path forward. As our strategies wind down, we owe it to ourselves, to our partners in the field and to our Trustees to reflect upon, capture, and share what we learned and how we did. In our commitment to using our evaluative insight, we are, in effect, holding ourselves accountable.

PRINCIPLE #2: LEARN IN PARTNERSHIP We listen closely and learn in partnership with our grantees, funders, constituents and other stakeholders.

We engage our partners, in particular grantees, in monitoring, evaluation, and learning design and implementation.

We work to design processes and products that grantees and others will value. It is also critical that our grantees have the capacity to engage meaningfully and gain benefit from the work. Therefore, we seek out opportunities to build monitoring, evaluation and learning capacity for our grantees and stakeholders, and in our geographies.

PRINCIPLE #3: INFORM OUR DECISIONS WITH MULTIPLE INPUTS

External evaluations on their own don't drive decisions for the organization. We analyze multiple sources of information and combine our learning with that of external evaluation results to inform our decision making. We rely on our program staff to act as trusted and intelligent filters of many sources of information. Program staff listen closely to grantees and our partners in our fields and tap into a variety of inputs, qualitative and quantitative, in order to make well-reasoned decisions to help drive our impact.

PRINCIPLE #4: CULTIVATE CURIOSITY

Cultivating a culture of curiosity is essential to surfacing insight into our successes, our failures and emerging possibilities.
By listening closely and learning about what is coming out of our work, how our fields are changing, and what others are doing and thinking, we can identify opportunities to improve our strategies and increase program impact.
We prioritize learning and experimentation within and across our programs, with Stakeholders and with our partners in our fields. In practice this means creating intentional spaces for individual and group learning, with our grantees and other leaders in our fields, and within the organization.

PRINCIPLE #5: SHARE LEARNING TO AMPLIFY IMPACT

Believe that openly sharing what we're learning can generate value for our constituencies and drive impact in our fields. We seek out strategic opportunities to share what we are learning, to co-create openly insights with our partners, and to use these insights to inform and galvanize change in our fields. In doing so, we seek to steer a sensible course between total transparency and respecting grantee privacy and trust, sharing findings whenever possible without compromising grantee or program goals.

We care about delivering timely insights for well-defined audiences. To this end, our MEL activities are designed with the following in mind: Be clear about purpose and audience, when designing our MEL efforts, we start by clarifying who the audience is, what they want to learn how they might use the findings.

While program staff are often primary users (and lead architects) of our monitoring, evaluation, and learning activities, many of our efforts are directed toward different audiences with different needs, such as grantees, other funders and Trustees.

The design of these processes and products should reflect the intended audiences and their capacity for using the evaluative insight so the data and knowledge we are generating can have the highest possible impact.

PRINCIPLE #5: SHARE LEARNING TO AMPLIFY IMPACT

Monitor extensively, evaluate selectively, and learn intentionally When implementing our strategies and exploring potential new directions, we are continuously monitoring progress and scanning trends in the field. In doing so, we take in many different 4 types of information, including research data, our qualitative insights from site visits, and grantee stories. We believe that it's important to invest in systematically collecting and analyzing data and engaging rigorous third party evaluation at select moments in time. The timing for these evaluations is driven by a particular decision-making need. At all points in the strategy lifecycle, we create the space for reflective practice and learning from our monitoring and evaluation data, so we can use it to inform actions, by sharing results and lessons learnd.

PAJ ACTIVITY LEARNING APPROCH

PAJ values learning and recognizes that collaborating, learning and adapting (CLA) is a continuous process that must be participatory, systematically planned, adequately resourced and well-integrated into all phases of the project life cycle.

To ensure that learning, collaboration, and adaptive management are prioritized over the life of the Activity, PAJ plans to establish a Learning Team. The Learning Team will include key staff and key stakeholders who will work together over the life of the Activity to provide strategic guidance and programming oversight and ensure that PAJ includes planned learning objectives that are embedded into all project planning, implementation, and M&E efforts.

PAJ Learning approach consists of three folds:

* **Collaboration** is based on the continuous exchange of information with and close involvement of the USAID/COR in the planning and implementation of program activities. Furthermore, PAJ actively seeks opportunities to collaborate with other USAID-funded projects to avoid duplication of effort and achieve greater impact through the implementation of joint activities and knowledge sharing.

* **Learning Study,** PAJ will conduct a learning study midway through activity implementation, with the aim to:

- Contribute to identifying effective interventions.
- Adapt and improve current activity interventions.
- Develop conclusions and recommendations to inform future activity design in related sectors.

* Pause and Reflect Sessions

PAJ's learning methodology will work as a feedback and collaboration mechanism to help the program monitor activities, challenges and issues, and manage feedback from counterparts. This will help the program to resolve, learn, improve, and adapt, as well as ensure PAJ is making informed decisions and improving activities and communications across the team.

The PAJ Learning Team will conduct random field visits to observe different interventions, arrange CLA discussion meetings with technical staff and counterparts to capture lessons learned, and work to improve activities. Results and recommendations will be passed on to relevant technical staff for feedback and action to improve and adapt activities.

Data Collection — Data Management — Insights & Reflection — Adapt, Iterate & Implement