



USAID
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Monitoring USAID Activities in High-Threat Environments: Iraq

Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance



Monitoring and Evaluation at USAID/OFDA

M&E—an essential component of program improvement and reporting—encompasses a range of data collection, assessment, and evaluation activities, while providing key information for reporting on USAID/OFDA program activities and policies.

USAID/OFDA uses a range of indicators to measure impact and communicate program achievements. USAID/OFDA partners also build upon existing M&E methods and practices to improve disaster response and mitigation programs worldwide.

Background

USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) provides humanitarian support through eight implementing partners in Iraq. In Fiscal Year 2011, USAID/OFDA funded programs across seven sectors, benefitting up to 617,000 vulnerable and conflict-affected individuals in Iraq's 18 provinces.

Monitoring is critical for effective program and grant management and also provides key information for measuring projects against objectives and benchmarks. However, in Iraq, as in many insecure environments, direct monitoring and oversight by USAID/OFDA personnel poses a risk to both partners and beneficiaries.

In response to these security risks, USAID/OFDA monitors its programs in Iraq through a third-party consulting firm specializing in Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), QED. By having QED measure and document project achievements and beneficiaries' satisfaction with the results, USAID/OFDA helps ensure that implementing partners utilize U.S. Government humanitarian funds in effective and appropriate ways.

M&E in Practice

- *Are USAID/OFDA partners conducting activities as specified by the terms of the grant?*
- *Are beneficiaries satisfied with program results?*

To answer these questions, QED:

- ✓ Verifies that the project is working toward achieving the goals and objectives outlined in the program description;
- ✓ Verifies that project activities are consistent with the program description;
- ✓ Identifies constraints or obstacles that may be inhibiting project implementation; and,
- ✓ Verifies the accuracy of the implementing partners' self-reported M&E information.

Third-Party Monitoring Process

Project Selection

- QED, in consultation with OFDA, selects projects for monitoring across a variety of sectors and provinces.
- QED submits a four- to six-month work plan to USAID/OFDA for approval.

Customization of Monitoring

- Based on initial meetings with USAID/OFDA partners, QED customizes data collection tools and monitoring methods for each implementing partner, taking into consideration project sectors and documentation and reporting procedures.

Collection of Information in the Field

- Trained local data collectors are positioned throughout Iraq to provide increased access to project sites and improve the efficiency and security of monitoring activities.
- Data collectors conduct field monitoring in collaboration with the implementing partners to ensure appropriate and authorized access to beneficiaries and local partners, as well as relevant community members and local government officials.

Reporting

- QED drafts a preliminary report with recommendations for the implementing partner.
- QED discusses recommendations with the implementing partner.
- QED submits the final report to USAID/OFDA.

Results

- USAID/OFDA reviews and shares the final report with the implementing partners' headquarters, requesting a written response to issues or concerns within 30 days.
- The implementing partner revises procedures and project activities accordingly.

Lessons Learned

- ✓ Regular, third-party monitoring provides partners with objective feedback and gives organizations the opportunity to continually improve their programs and strengthen their internal M&E practices.
- ✓ Well-spaced monitoring visits allow partners to address issues during implementation and incorporate recommendations in consultation with the third-party monitors.
- ✓ Third-party monitoring gives beneficiaries and other stakeholders an opportunity to provide objective feedback to USAID/OFDA about humanitarian programs that impact them and their communities.