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COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM (CAP III) INTERIM MONITORING AND ANALYTICAL REVIEW

Partner Field Monitoring Report: Summary

January 2011

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Partner Field Monitoring (Summary)

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AOR	Area of Responsibility
BOQ	Bill of Quantity
CAG	Community Action Group
CAP III	Community Action Program, Phase III
CM	Community Mobilizer
DC	District Council
ePRT	Embedded Provincial Reconstruction
GoI	Government of Iraq
IR	Intermediate Results
IRD	International Relief and Development
LC	Local Council (same as Neighborhood Council (NC))
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
Marla	Marla Ruzicka Iraq War Victim Fund
NC	Neighborhood Council (Nahia/Sub-district)
PAC	Project Approval Committee
PC	Provincial Council
PERFORM	Performance Evaluation and Reporting for Results Management
PMP	Performance Management Plan
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction
TOT	Train the Trainers
TRG	Tendering Review Group
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) tasked the Performance Evaluation and Reporting for Results Management (PERFORM) project with conducting field monitoring of four partners implementing the third phase of the Community Action Program (CAP III), including International Relief and Development (IRD), CHF International (CHF), ACDI-VOCA, and Mercy Corps (MC). These partners are implementing CAP III throughout Iraq, and have divided up responsibility for different provinces. PERFORM constructed a random sample of 20 projects at various stages of implementation in the five-stage scheme, and conducted focus groups with the Community Action Groups (CAGs) in the project neighborhoods.

PERFORM interviewed key informants with implementing partners, such as Community Mobilizers (CMs) of Local Councils (LCs), District Councils (DCs), Provincial Councils (PCs) and relevant government ministries.

This report presents an overall summary of the monitoring task in addition to four specific reports, one for each partner. Overall, PERFORM found all partners have achieved their targets in terms of overall Government of Iraq (GoI) contributions. They have all conducted a number of successful training sessions of CAG and council members. In general, the development of CAGs is going well. Areas identified for further development include training and increased participation in advocacy for project approvals; more regularized and improved communication between implementing partner CMs, CAGs, and Councils; and increased participation of women.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Community Action Program (CAP III), a USAID-supported program and successor to the first two phases of the Community Action Program (CAP I and CAP II), is designed to empower LCs and citizens to work in partnership to meet the needs of the community, thus strengthening the legitimacy of local governments. The specific goals of CAP III are to:

1. Improve the capacity of communities to better identify their needs, articulate their role, and mobilize resources;
2. Improve capacity of district and sub-district councils to meet the articulated needs of the community and mobilize resources; and
3. Increase assistance to civilian victims of conflict.

Currently, four implementing partners – Mercy Corps, International Relief and Development (IRD), CHF, and ACDI/VOCA – operate CAP III projects nationwide.

CAP III falls under Strategic Objective 9 (SO 9) of the USAID/Iraq Transition Strategy, "Effective local government strengthened," and the program contributes to three Intermediate Results (IRs). They include: IR 9.1 – Establishment of a legal, regulatory and policy framework for decentralized local government is facilitated; IR 9.2 – Capacity of sub-national government to perform its core functions is improved; and IR 9.3 – Outreach mechanisms and capacity for citizen participation in decision-making and local development are institutionalized.

CAP III's goal is "to increase the local government's ability to identify, articulate and better meet the needs of its constituency." The CAP III project is based on the premise that local community needs are best met by ensuring the active partnership of citizens, local government and business and social leaders.

The CAP III Performance Management Plan (PMP) provides indicators to monitor progress during the implementation of the project.

STATEMENT OF WORK

USAID/Iraq tasked the The QED Group, LLC's Performance Evaluation and Reporting for Results Management (PERFORM) project with monitoring CAP III's implementation by its four partners. PERFORM was asked to review partner procedures at the field level and analyze the progress made in the activities under the three CAP III project objectives stated above, with the specific aim to:

1. Determine whether partners' programs are conducted according to the identified timeframe, and if not, identify reasons for delay.

2. Determine what progress is being made toward the annual and program targets. Determine how many projects are currently being implemented (implemented means "contracted" or submitted to USAID for approval after identification of the successful bidder).

3. Determine the level of local government commitment and/or other financial contribution including: what is the process to solicit LC contributions by CAG members; what processes are LCs using to secure project funding from provincial councils and relevant ministries, and what involvement do CAGs have in this process; what is the frequency and strength of interactions between LC members and members of District Councils (DCs), provincial councils, ministries, and CAGs.

4. Make recommendations for how partners can more effectively achieve their project targets and push projects to final stages of development, and how local government and CAGs can better obtain commitment and financial resources from provincial councils and relevant ministries.

APPROACH TO FIELD INVESTIGATION

Approach and Methodology

PERFORM's investigation included a review of the processes and procedures CAP III partners follow in dealing with stakeholders, from the perspective of the stakeholders, including the CAGs, Neighborhood Councils (NCs), DCs, PCs, relevant ministries, and Provincial Reconstruction Teams/embedded Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs/ePRTs). PERFORM reviewed a sample of CAP III projects from all provinces in which partners work, randomly selected from among the totality of projects and held focus groups of the CAG members of the neighborhoods in which the projects were or will be implemented. The sample contained projects in all five stages of project development as recognized by USAID. These stages are:

1. **Identified**: CAP III partners go through a planning process with the CAGs and produce a list of priority projects for consideration. Partners then meet with CAG leadership to assess the feasibility of the top projects on the priority list and follow up with a preliminary design and cost estimate. Partners then meet internally (via the Project Identification Committee (PIC)) to discuss and approve the concept of the project. After projects are approved by the PIC they proceed to final Bill of Quantity (BOQ) and approval of the GoI.

2. **Approved**: Approved means the project has been approved by the Project Approval Committee (PAC). PAC meets only after the project has received written approvals by the relevant GoI entity. The written approvals include a letter of project support, a letter documenting the required cost-share (25 percent is the target) and it is required that the GoI entity stamps the final BOQ so they cannot claim they were expecting anything else after the project starts.

3. **Tendered**: After projects are approved by the PAC they are sent to tendering where projects are bid via a website. After bids are submitted, partners convene a Tendering Review Group (TRG) meeting to deliberate on the choice of a winning vendor. The result is a tentative award to what is usually the low bidder. However, there is a five-year database of contractor evaluations; if the low bidder has a reputation for poor quality on past work, IRD will award the bid to the next lowest bidder.

4. **Contracted**: USAID requires approval for projects whose total cost exceeds $100,000, or whose awarded contractor has prior awards greater than $100,000, or if there is an individual item of equipment of greater than $5,000. A contract cannot be signed until such required USAID approval has been received. If USAID approval is not required, the project will proceed directly within several days to signing a contract with the awarded bidder who then has a certain number of days to start the work.
5. **Completed**: The work has been finished and the final payment has been made.

PERFORM also reviewed the CAPIII PMP to determine what progress has been made toward accomplishing targets.

Sampling Techniques

Individual Partner Reports Explain the sampling techniques employed. Projects selected for each Partner are summarized in the tables below:

IRD: The list of 31 projects is summarized below:

Stages	No. of projects (11/09 list)	Random Sample	Additional Sample	Total Sample	No. of projects (1/10 list)
Identified	118	5	1	6	49
Approved	17	0	0	0	1
Tendered	64	5	2	7	51
Contracted	20	6	3	9	127
Completed	23	4	5	9	40
Total	**242**	**20**	**11**	**31**	**268**

Population and Sample CAP III Non-Marla fund projects in Mercy Corps AOR

Province	Total		Approved		Tendered		Contracted[1]		Completed	
	No.	Sample	No.	Sample	No.	Sample	No.	Sample	No.	Sample
Dhi-Qar	40	3	1		0		7	1	32	2
Basra	169	10	7	1	7	1	32	2	123	6
Al Muthana	39	3	1		1		13	1	24	2
Maysan	73	4	1		1		20	1	51	3
Total	**321**	**20**	**10**	**1**	**9**	**1**	**72**	**5**	**230**	**13**

Source: Mercy Corps, March, 2010.

[1] Includes projects under contracted and implemented stages.

Population and Sample CAP III Non-Marla fund projects in CHF's AOR

Province	Total		Approved		Tendered		Underway		Completed	
	No.	Sample	No.	Sample	No.	Sample	No.	Sample	No.	Sample
Babil	55	5			1		3		51	5
Najaf	34	3							34	3
Karbala	26	2							26	2
Al Anbar	67	6	4		3		3		57	6
Wasit	31	2							31	2
Al Qadisiyah	29	2					2		27	2
Total	**242**	**20**	**4**		**4**		**8**		**226**	**20**

Note: There are no projects under 'Identified' or 'Contracted' stages.
Source: CHF, March 13, 2010.

Population and Sample CAP III Non-Marla fund projects in ACDCI/VOCA AOR

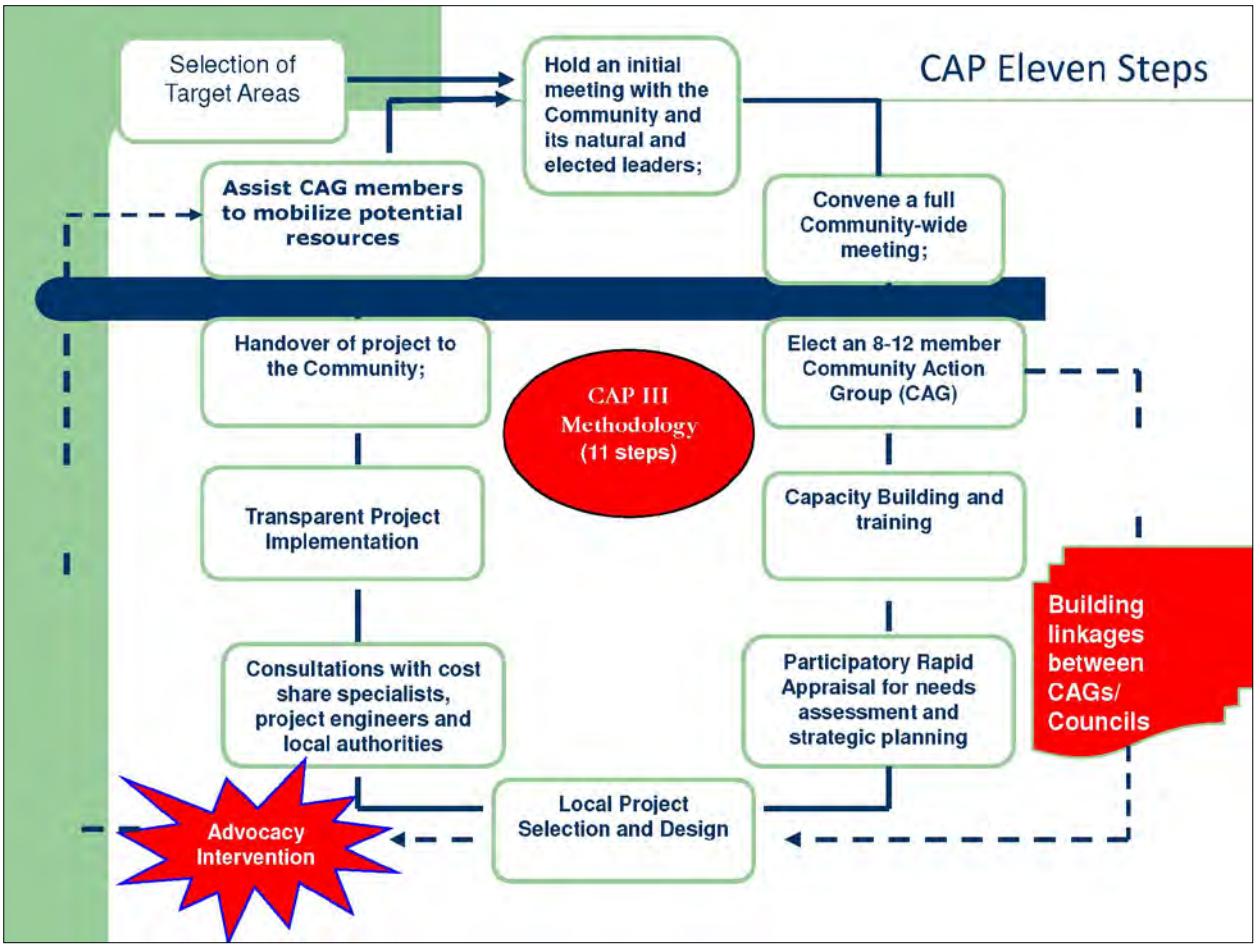
Province	Total		Identified		Approved		Tendered		Contracted		Completed	
	No.	Sample	No.	Sample	No.	Sample	No.	Sample	No.	Sample	No.	Sample
Kirkuk	56	3	7		2		1		16	1	30	2
Diyala	68	6	14	1	5	1	6	1	16	1	27	2
Ninewa	70	6	12	1	4	1	4	1	30	2	20	1
Salah ad Din	77	5	14	1	3		4		22	2	34	2
Total	**271**	**20**	**47**	**3**	**14**	**2**	**15**	**2**	**84**	**6**	**111**	**7**

Techniques of Data Collection

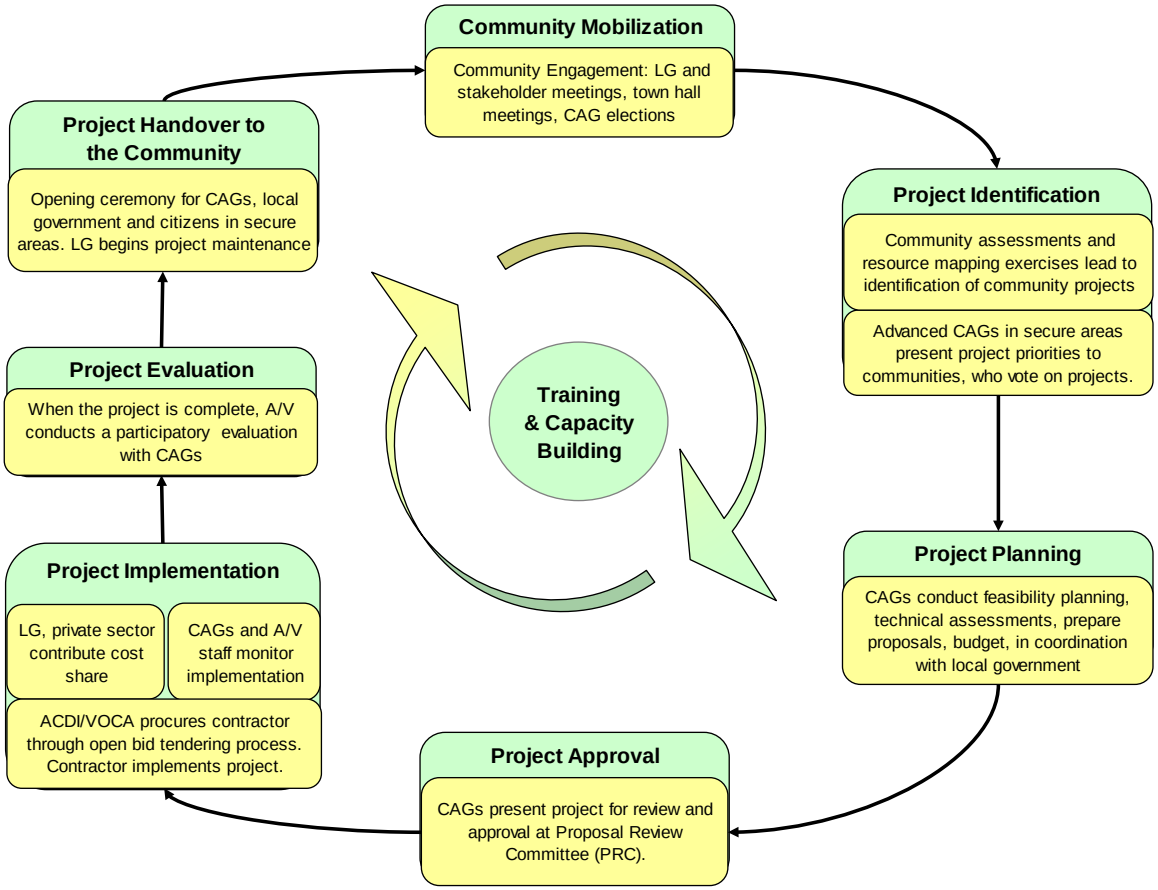
PERFORM held focus groups with CAGs associated with the sample of projects listed above, in addition to focus groups with CMs for each of the four CAP III partners. Key informant interviews were held with partner staff and members of LCs, DCs, PCs and PRTs/ePRTs.

OVERALL FINDINGS

Both CHF and ACDI-VOCA have developed conceptual frameworks for the CAP III process which have helped track their progress and explain the process to all stakeholders. These frameworks are presented below:



Source: CHF International



All partners are meeting or exceeding their goal of GoI contribution. The largest GoI contribution is in land value. In all cases, a relatively small number of their projects with land are accounting for the predominate portion of GoI cost share. This is in line with USAID's indicator, which requires a 25 percent GoI contribution at the program level only.

Partners are not meeting their targeted community cost share. This is largely due to the poor economic conditions at the community level and the lack of budget for the LCs and DCs.

Partners are contributing to projects which have already been planned by ministries for their communities. As long as CAG members select their contribution to these projects, there is nothing in the PMP or cooperative agreements which prohibits this. Partners may differ in their approach to valuing the overall GOI contribution for these projects.

Some partners are having some trouble identifying Marla Ruzicka Iraq War Victim Fund projects due to the lack of potential beneficiaries. Some existing Marla beneficiaries complained that the amount of funds they received for income-generating projects was inadequate to establish a business which produces a living income. Others complained about a sluggish project implementation process. However, most Marla beneficiaries are happy with their projects.

CAG members for ACDI-VOCA, CHF, and MC projects all stated that they are involved in project identification and selection and are aware of projects selected. Although some CAG members for IRD projects indicated that they were not informed about projects, leaders of IRD CAGs were aware of them.

CAG members for ACDI-VOCA, CHF, and Mercy Corps stated CMs kept them informed about projects selected and, to some extent, on the progress of project implementation. Some IRD CAG members said CMs did not communicate adequately with CAGs.

CAG members for all partners stated that they are not involved in advocacy for either community or GoI contribution.

Some CAG members for IRD, ACDI-VOCA, CHF, and Mercy Corps stated that they were not aware of the requirement for a community contribution, but others stated that they are.

CAG leaders for all CAP III partners know about project selection. One IRD leader stated that he did not know about a project selected, but one IRD CM said he was afraid to admit he knew about the project because he did not know how the data collectors were going to use the information.

CAG members for all partners are willing to and would like to participate more during the project implementation phase to assure projects are implemented according to contractual agreements.

All CAG members said there are delays in project implementation because of USAID's requirement to send project plans back to Washington when their total value is over $100,000 or when any piece of equipment costs more than $5,000.

CAGs report their relationship with Council members is positive, and they request more meetings.

The majority of Council members for all partners report that they know about the CAG projects. There were some key informant interviews that did not know about the projects, but knew about the CAGs.

Councils are not involved in raising either community contribution or GoI cost share. They are involved only in the formal project approval process through sending letters.

CAG members and councils all greatly appreciate the training they have received from partners.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Detailed conceptual frameworks of the CAP III process help organize and track project activities and also serve as good teaching tools; CHF's framework is the most comprehensive. ACDI-VOCA also has a framework. Other partners should meet to discuss the use and design of these frameworks as a management and training resource.

Project planning and implementation software could be useful for partners to keep better track of projects moving through the five stages.

Advocacy is still not a well developed skill or activity of either CAGs or councils. Partners need to focus more on developing and applying these skills in the future.

Communication between CAGs and their leaders can be improved. Leaders need to be encouraged to communicate more frequently with CAG members about project selection and implementation.

CMs could improve their communication with CAGs and councils and keep them more informed regarding project selection and implementation. Implementing partners must ensure their CMs are meeting with CAGs and councils to keep them informed throughout the entire implementation.

CAGs could be more involved in monitoring project implementation.

Women's participation in CAGs needs to be established via partner policies and targets, and women's points of view regarding community needs could be more systematically included in the CAP projects.

More training is needed, according to CAGs and councils. Training in project management, computer skills, strategic planning, and English were all mentioned a number of times. Courses in maintenance of community projects are also important.

CAGs can be more involved in seeking both community and GoI contribution for projects.

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