

Conflict Sensitive M&E Methods and Tools in Complex Humanitarian Emergencies (CHEs)

A Working Meeting for Practitioners, Program Managers and Experts

September 11, 2006
OFDA Training Facility, Arlington VA

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Session Summaries

Introduction and Greeting

Elisabeth Kvitashvili, Director of USAID's Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation, opened the working meeting by reflecting on how the events of September 11th changed development work and the environments in which donors and NGOs operate.

Local Data Collection in High Risk Environments

Presenters from Mercy Corps, CARE, IRC and USAID provided examples of their M&E work in complex humanitarian environments. The larger group also discussed the meaning of conflict sensitive M&E. A discussion of conflict analysis and security environments was highlighted, and a limited discussion was held about tools that were used in these environments that were applicable based on the CHE. It was noted that many of these approaches had some replicability, but that costs were high and capacity often low for data collection on a local level in these environments.

Changing M&E Systems to Match Conflict Realities

Representatives from American University, World Vision and USAID discussed how they had adapted M&E systems for use in conflict countries. They addressed some lessons-learned and suggestions for future efforts. Specific contexts were addressed and methods that were used to link these monitoring systems to the larger conflict context or ways to incorporate peace process indicators into work in these environments. Highlighted were the various methods used in these places to identify impact and influence on the environment and the limitations of doing this through current program design.

Main Ideas from Morning Sessions

- Complexity and difficulty in defining what M&E means. It is defined differently by each person and been done differently by each person.
- How do we use evaluations?
- Baselines and assessments are not the same thing
- Timing is a major issue
- How do we work with our local partners to do M&E?
- Need to be clear when establishing terms of reference for an evaluation. Terminology needs to be clarified.
- There is a large gap between the macro-level (like the CAF) and how it is translated into the implementation level/the micro-level.
- All members of an organization can be involved in M&E.

M&E is subjective and dependent on the reality of the people involved.

Building Systems across Stakeholder Lines: DRC, Sudan and Uganda

Working Group attendees broke into small groups to discuss how to develop M&E systems in complex humanitarian environments. To provide a country context for the discussions, there was a group formed around each of the following countries: DRC, Sudan and Uganda. After the small group work, each group presented a summary of what it had discussed

Closing

The Working Group ended with a review of the day's sessions and a discussion of potential next steps, including what topics attendees would like to see addressed in future meetings.

Introduction and Greeting

Session Speaker: Elisabeth Kvitashvili (USAID/Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation (USAID/CMM))

Session Purpose: To welcome the participants to the workshop and briefly discuss the significance of conflict-sensitive monitoring and evaluation.

Session Notes:

Let's take a moment to reflect on the anniversary of September 11th. The events of that day necessitated changes in our work as development and humanitarian practitioners.

Conflict sensitive M&E isn't just about conflict as we would traditionally interpret it. It is about conflict as it has expanded into the realm of insurgency and counterterrorism. Much of what we do is less about development for development sake. It is about using our resources to address what makes people use violence to seek changes in their own societies and to address the underlying causes of terrorism and extremism. There is a push to use our collective resources, those of NGOs and USG, to address these issues. Extremism is on the rise throughout the world.

Because of September 11th, we have a new player in the development world: the military. In order to do 'hearts and minds,' they have to do development to win people over. They are in some environments that we are not permitted to work in. The military is also a larger group with a wider reach and more resources than aid organizations.

There is the risk of confusing the population on ground. Are we there to provide assistance or are we there to provide security? One question is how can AID employees be on the ground in the middle of violence. The perception on the ground, by local populations, is that all Americans (aid workers, military, etc...) are the same and that may not be a good thing in some areas.

Someone raised the question about including the military in sessions like this one. The military interprets M&E slightly differently than we do. However, they are also collecting data and are willing to share it.

USAID are working with the military. We are teaching them the conflict assessment framework and trying to press on them the 'do no harm' approach. They understand it, but because there are so many of them, USAID can't keep up with the need to train them. For example, in Darfur, can we go in with the military? That is unclear. Are we there for assistance or war? That is also unclear. So, how to combine assets with military with us on the ground (AID and State) helping the public sector.

Local Data Collection in High Risk Environments

Session Speakers: Rebecca Wolfe (Mercy Corps), Jock Baker (CARE), Liz McBride (International Rescue Committee (IRC) and Sarah Cohen (USAID/CMM)

Session Purpose: To discuss how NGOs and donors gather data in communities and environments that are in conflict and often present high risk to both international and local staff.

Session Notes:

Definition of Conflict Sensitive M&E

Conflict sensitive M&E involves looking at the conflict context and looking at how your work interacts with that. For example, with food distribution, don't just think about the food that is being distributed, but think about how you are distributing the food and the systems you are using.

Conflict Sensitive M&E

The following are questions to consider about conflict sensitive M&E:

- Are there different approaches we can use in areas that are affected by conflict?
- Who do we involve in designing M&E plans for these environments?
- What in the M&E plan puts the population at risk?

Mercy Corps

Mercy Corps has two Sudan projects where they used conflict sensitive M&E. One of the challenges involved in doing M&E in conflict areas is the uneasiness of local populations to give information. Mercy Corps addressed that by using Red Cross standards for interaction. They also took several steps to make people more comfortable by making it clear who Mercy Corps are not and also adapting meeting places and times (not in center of village, perhaps at night). One key way to get people to talk about issues was by asking them about their kids and that opened them up to further discussions. Difficult to get people to consider their own roles. Tendency to view as externally driven. Also high culture of dependency. Used PRA tools to modify CAF. Looking especially at views of women and youth.

Demographics were a bigger and more sensitive issue than originally anticipated, in terms of gender, age and ethnicity. Once Mercy Corps was on the ground, the selection of the evaluation group was inadvertently biased because of the short time to recruit the team and might have meant that more males were spoken to than women, even though the focus of study was to be on women and children. Also need to recognize local staff is experiencing the same as survey participants. Did a lot of contingency and training but could have done more. Need to be more open to substantively change once on the ground. People didn't want to talk about the future b/c it seemed to be political. Asking about future in terms of children got around that.

Mercy Corps went into south Sudan after peace agreement. They wanted to look at how peace agreement would impact programming. People didn't want to talk about peace agreement because they didn't want to be seen as political. Mercy Corps' approach was to start by asking about people's hopes for their children and that was a way to get them to open up and discuss other issues.

Comment (CARE) – A willingness to talk about and plan for the future can actually be used as an indicator because it indicates feelings of security.

DFID is using the number of weddings as an indicator because that means people are willing to plan an event for a large group and don't fear an outbreak of violence on the wedding day.

Comment (speaker unknown) - Running surveys through an ethics committee is important, especially in conflict settings.

Mercy Corps adapted the USAID Conflict Assessment Framework for their work. They combined the CAF, local capacities for peace, livelihoods frameworks, etc...

Participatory Role Assessments (PRAs) do not require a high literacy rate. The drawback is that it is hard to compare across groups. Another problem is that not everyone used the same tools across groups.

Mercy Corps Q&A

Q (State Department) – Is this supposed to be used as baseline? Is the data being feed backed into the product design? How do you build flexibility with the donors to adapt the project based on this info collected?

A (Mercy Corps) – It was more of an assessment. It may be hard to replicate the PRA again, which makes the data less valid. Several different methods were used. It is difficult to get consistency in south Sudan. Relationship mapping may lend itself to a more consistent analysis then a PRA.

Q - Why did the two approaches not work well?

A - They could not get simplified in time. Relationship mapping is very visual may lend itself more consistently towards a more common tool in the future.

Utilization of Data

Just as obtaining the information was sensitive, so was disseminating the information. There was some sensitivity among the local stakeholders and partners.

As a result of the assessment, Mercy Corps was asked to change the scope of work and they also had to adjust to changes in the implementation of the CPA. It is hard to shift the programming in those areas.

Implementers need to balance the need for a quick response with the need for adequate planning time on the ground and more time to adapt tools locally.

The baseline never got off ground, because they focused on assessment on the ground rather than assessment for baseline (since the SOW changes so many times, it was hard to come up with a standard).

CARE

[See CARE's slides for information about overall approach/programming principles.]

There are a lot of commonalities between working in conflict sensitive environments and other unstable environments, like natural disasters. Qualitative methods are receiving more attention, given the difficulty of getting good quantitative data.

CARE has been in several of these environments for awhile.

Partner-based monitoring systems are something to consider. CARE has used the approach in Somalia. These work as long as CARE staff can visit every few months.

Since the 2004 tsunami, CARE has been experimenting with joint evaluations with other NGOs. Some of the advantages include increased accountability. Joint evaluations also help you gain a wider perspective on issues.

There are many common elements in all of the approaches. We have humanitarian benchmarks, since we have this element of unpredictability. These benchmarks can give us a direction for what we need. We try to plan for the best-case scenario, it doesn't happen, and we come back

Quantitative methods: difficult to get to them, but there is much more emphasis with the qualitative methodology. Darfur was an example. When you contacted the locals, you were also exposing them to risk.

CARE Q&A

Q - Is it possible to conduct real time evaluation? For example, After Action Reviews.

Q - Have you considered using the partner-based remote monitoring for Darfur?

A - We are not sure yet. We are focusing more on monitoring and evaluation.

Q. - Is there a way to use qualitative methods so that the findings can add up to something?

A (CARE) - Qualitative data can be used to build up a reasonable case. With stakeholder mapping, you figure out who the stakeholders are. What tends to happen with survey results is that they are biased towards one or two stakeholder groups. Reports often highlight that which is unusual and routine stuff is not discussed.

Comment - With qualitative studies, you can not generalize beyond the group you interviewed. It only represents the people you spoke to. You can randomize qualitative data, but it is still biased because the people interviewed were just the ones willing to speak to you and may not reflect the whole community or target population.

Q - What did you use for capacity?

A (CARE) - We seem to be in areas that have had conflict for years. We look at the budget changing from 3 to 5 yr grants, staffing considerations (number, types, and levels). We also consider what was done before and how it is being done now. Logistics (vehicles, warehouse space) are a major consideration.

International Rescue Committee

[See IRC's slides for information about approach and framework].

IRC has been measuring program impact using randomized study. In the DRC, IRC is conducting a mortality survey to draw the attention of donors and to develop programming.

IRC Q&A

Q - Have you seen a change regarding the survey? Has it become easier to use?

A (IRC) - Yes, institutionally people are learning how to use the survey. IRC staff are now trained in it. In terms of buy in and surveying, the process is getting easier.

Q - Could USAID fund surveys that are shared with all implementers?

A - Yes, some are funded, but some partners don't want to do the surveys because it might mean they can not bid on further work.

Comment – In some ways, it is easier for implementers to not use donor funds for surveys. That removes the risk of conflict of interest for implementation. Also, the survey can be used for advocacy.

IRC has identified and developed best practices for Community-Driven Reconstruction (CDR). The goal is to be able to see if programs had impact because of IRC interventions, instead of because of elections or another non-program related event. The process includes a variation in treatments (30% quota for women participation in committees versus 50% quota). The end goal is to be able to tell if CDR actually works in post conflict environments to achieve stated aims.

Q – Despite the difference in the conflict contexts between countries, do you think you will be able to have the same standard for evaluation?

A – That is the aim. The surveys are adapted for each country. The aspect that is standardized is the question of “is this programming effective in conflict environments to do this type of activity?”

OFDA

In 2006, OFDA responded to 63 different complex emergencies. A new mandate for OFDA was established in April 2004. It expanded protection activities. It also encouraged looking at more appropriate ways to move money to the field and how it is used in the field. As of October 2005, OFDA accepts standalone protection.

A few questions to consider in future sessions:

- *Tools vs. Techniques - Do our programs and organizations see M&E as a tool or an organizational approach to program operation? Are we monitoring the right processes? Do we monitor the context? Who gets identified to do M&E? Who is included?
Tool: something that can be replicated, very particular way
Technique: adaptive for an area*
- *Indicators and M&E - Are there conflict sensitive indicators? How do we design our indicators? Do we monitor indicators or programs? Are we measuring only program impact?*
- *Indications vs. Indicators - Do we look for indications of improvement in addition to established indicators? Do we rely on M&E systems established in partnership with other organizations? Do we have internal monitoring methods that we use to adapt programs as we operate?*

Changing M&E Systems to Match Conflict Realities

Session Speakers: Dr. Mohammed Abu Nimer (American University), Adrienne Paul Elwell (World Vision), Stacia George (USAID/Office of Transition Initiatives (USAID/OTI)), and Elizabeth Martin (USAID/CMM)

Session Purpose: To discuss how M&E systems are adapted to meet the challenges of field conditions in conflict zones and identify some of the gaps in current M&E systems for complex humanitarian emergency environments.

Session Notes:

USAID/CMM

CMM is implementing conflict programming in south Sudan. CMM staff has worked with USAID implementing partners to increase conflict sensitive programming.

The following are a few lessons-learned from the experience of working in southern Sudan. We, as donors often try to force guidance, like requiring conflict sensitive indicators, on organizations, but that does not go over well with field staff who are often already working long hours. A better approach is to sit down and work with the staff to discuss the process. Often facilitate small workshops with them to try and get at the desired information. Another thing is that it is easy for implementers to try and insert simple conflict indicators to get USAID off their back, but those indicators may not be accurate. We need to make sure indicators measure program impact in terms of conflict. Need to start with a baseline, which can be one of the most difficult things to do.

USAID/OTI

In the beginning, OTI did not do traditional monitoring and evaluation. The environment was constantly changing and data from earlier surveys was no longer relevant. OTI took a different approach to M&E. Political analysis is key to everything they do.

The challenge for OTI is to quantify or qualify what they are doing. They need to get local staff to understand where OTI is coming from. OTI decided to rename M&E and call it implementation and impact. One of the central components is that it is flexible and gives real time data. Another factor is that it is on a continual basis, not just at the beginning, middle and end of a program. We should look at the activities at three levels: 1) traditional activity implementation; 2) at the program level – what we are trying to achieve; and 3) strategy level – what it is that needs to happen to help country move through transition process.

One problem identified in eastern Congo was that there had not been real assessment of the conflict dynamics. OTI found that, in one case, people were being hired from only one ethnic group.

If you can show how you are either helping the peace or reducing the conflict, which is important.

OTI uses small grants to implement activities. They look at the grant proposals and the way the proposed activities have changed focus. The team discusses why the focus was shifting from A to B. They use this shift to indicate changes in the country.

Every three months, the OTI/DRC had team strategy sessions to go over the key questions of the program. They also talked about what was happening in each region of the country. Everyone contributed their analysis and view point. It is not just the M&E expert that does M&E; it is everyone involved in program and living in the country.

OTI teams conducted focus group surveys. The downside is that it took awhile to get survey data back because of logistical issues. They took the results from training evaluations and would redesign future training sessions.

Implementers are out in the field where Mission or Embassy staff are not. There is a value for the USG in receiving information from the field. Information can be fed from the Embassy through USAID to the implementers and vice versa. Being involved in the information sharing can also increase the visibility of the implementer.

OTI Q&A

Q. - How do you address the issue of people adjusting the information they give you because they know it will get passed to the Embassy?

A (USAID/OTI) - In the DRC, we use almost entirely local staff. At first, people were uneasy with the fact that USAID wanted to talk about politics. However, one of the characteristics of Congolese is that they are pretty outspoken and will let you know what they are thinking. It is a matter of the relationship between the partner and USAID.

Q - What is OTI's definition of impact?

A (USAID/OTI) - Since OTI is such a decentralized office, it is up to the country director to decide how to measure impact. In the case of DRC, OTI considered what the State Department would ask about the program. For a reintegration program, they looked at how many people stayed through the end of the project. Most of the indicators were kept very basic. Another way to look at is that the impact is the "so what." We need to look at what doing that program is doing and what that really means in terms of the overall goals for the country and area. We are looking at the bigger picture.

OTI did try traditional M&E formats before, but they took too long. The framework would be 80 pages long and take four months to be completed. That was too slow for OTI's framework. However, we need to keep in mind that OTI operates with very small, quick grants.

Quick surveys are a way to "take the temperature" in a village. They are used at the beginning, middle and end of the program.

World Vision

World Vision has a draft paper that looks at tsunami response work in Sri Lanka, India and Indonesia. That work marked a shift in how World Vision did work in humanitarian emergencies. In Sri Lanka, established "do no harm" as a guiding principle in year one. All sites have had conflict assessments and include M&E.

Why did conflict sensitivity have less of an impact in year one than in year two? One reason is the incomplete implementation of conflict assessments. There were also competing initiatives and limited sharing of conflict assessment findings. Staffing and recruiting problems were an issue.

It is impossible to have a conflict sensitive programming and M&E without a complete understanding of the context of the conflict. Emphasizes importance of conflict assessments.

Rapid Social Impact Evaluations – They look at community's feelings about a relief item and are conducted within one month of implementation. They include questions about the distribution of aid.

WV Q&A

Q. - Were local staff trained in conflict sensitive techniques?

A. (World Vision) - Yes, they received 'do no harm' training, but it was difficult to conduct so soon after the tsunami. Also, World Vision did not necessary have that much experience in doing that kind of training.

American University – Mohammed Abu Nimer

Why is it important to consider the conflict dynamic? Because every dollar counts and conflict impacts everyone's security.

Every evaluation is a political event. Any evaluation impacts the environment you are working in.

Often people answer the way they think donor's want them to reply. They do not want to say anything that will reduce the funding in the area or will risk them losing their jobs.

The issue of payment for participation in surveys is important. Are you paying them to take the survey, just paying transportation or not paying them anything? How does that impact your results?

Rolling Up Our Sleeves: Introduction to Afternoon Sessions

Session Speaker(s): Amber Brooks (USAID/CMM)

Session Purpose: To review the ideas from the morning's sessions and introduce the afternoon's country working group activity.

Session Notes:

Main Ideas from Morning Sessions

- Complexity and difficulty in defining what M&E means. It is defined differently by each person and been done differently by each person.
- How do we use evaluations?
- Baselines and assessments are not the same thing
- Timing is a major issue
- How do we work with our local partners to do M&E?
- Need to be clear when establishing terms of reference for an evaluation. Terminology needs to be clarified.
- There is a large gap between the macro-level (like the CAF) and how it is translated into the implementation level/the micro-level.
- All members of an organization can be involved in M&E.
- M&E is subjective and dependent on the reality of the people involved.

Building Systems across Stakeholder Lines: DRC, Sudan and Uganda

Session Speaker: N/A

Session Purpose: To discuss how collaborative M&E methods are used and adapted in complex humanitarian emergency environments. In order to provide a country context for the discussions, a group formed around each of the following countries: DRC, Sudan and Uganda.

Session Notes:

Sudan – Group Discussion

Collaboration can take place on baselines and assessments, etc... If offices or agencies do collaborate, how can it be separated out when it comes time to report? That is difficult because of the different funding sources. There is the need to be able to identify where each office's funding goes because of the need to report on the use of the program funds.

However, collaboration is not just within USAID. We need to think about it in terms of working with other organizations and with local stakeholders. We want to get away from attribution and think beyond the individual project.

Collaboration happens differently at each stage of the process. It isn't an either-or issue. Groups can collaborate on different components. It should be considered a spectrum, with different levels of collaboration along the way.

Perhaps a tool can be designed that incorporates multiple indicators, as a way to reduce the number of evaluations. Communities are overrun with organizations doing surveys and other M&E work. It is great to coordinate efforts, but better to collaborate.

Protection people don't see a value in using M&E. They see themselves as more aligned with advocacy than with programming.

Ownership and participation are important for evaluations.

Just the process of doing an evaluation has an impact on the local community.

Q - If your organization has a program in a CHW, was M&E thought of in the design phase?

A - There is a big difference between what is proposed and what is actually implemented. In one case, there was a nice M&E framework developed, but because of staff turnover, it was hard to implement the framework.

With relief programs, there is less room for creativity with M&E. It is more common that USAID selects the indicators implementers respond to. For Development oriented programs, it is possible to be more creative. Managing by indicators is prevalent in the donor world.

M&E doesn't get focused on until mid-program evaluations. Often the M&E component is divorced from operations.

A program doesn't need a specific M&E person in order to do M&E. Local staff are often best to do evaluations because they understand the context in which they are operating.

From the USG perspective, Sudan is effectively split in two: the Embassy runs programs in the north and USAID runs the programs in the south. Most funding in Darfur is OFDA and OTI.

The USG recently went through the effort to coordinate efforts. NGOs had to go through a similar exercise of coordinating strategies. USAID also looked at certain areas in Sudan and tried to identify programs and drivers in each area.

Implementers often see things that the USG doesn't, but there is no way for the implementers to report the events. Given the recent deaths of aid workers in Darfur, NGOs are less willing to share information because of the threat to the safety of the staff. That concern impacts the credibility of information received. There is an increased level of discomfort by local implementers with sharing information and having it enter the USG information system.

DRC – Group Discussion

The group began by discussing different examples of how M&E had been adapted and used in these complex humanitarian environments.

By adjusting the type of M&E tools used, OTI was able to get information sooner than if traditional methods had been used. Originally, data was not coming back in time or in a digestible format. The logistics aspect of fast M&E in the DRC was difficult. The team spent three weeks in the field, a week traveling to get back, and then three weeks for data entry and synthesization and finalizing the report. A minimum of two months was required. We realized that the approach need to be simplified and that the team should collect only information that was really needed.

CMM found that it was better to hire others to do the surveys. The project staff focused on getting the office started and programs underway. A combination of both external (scientific) and local (sensitive) staff was the best approach.

In OTI's case, an expert came and trained university folks who could then be called upon to do future work. "M&E lite."

There is the issue of the politicization of M&E. The formal approach is transformed to a more informal structure. That may help weaken barriers to the truth and get more valid information from the field.

USAID has a mining program in DRC, but no benchmark survey was completed because the implementer wanted to avoid extra attention being focused on a sensitive sector.

Trust building is a tricky part of the process. By talking with high level officials, you may alienate common participants. We need to get creative with questions. For example, "How would you react to this scenario" to get at perceptions. There is also the question of who is asking the questions. Officials want an expat, but others more comfortable with local staffers.

There are so many biases to deal with. We need to recognize what they may be and adjust our results accordingly.

USAID's DDR program is aware of ex-combatants attitudes and we are always on the defensive. Troubles are magnified by a power of X. We need to check with non-combatants as well. For example, teams of local Congolese men and women who lived with communities three to four weeks.

Humanitarian Information Centers (HICs) try to get everyone to submit data. Recent presentation on post-conflict health program in Liberia. The HICs have the baseline data and the groups that were involved in it are available for follow up.

Organizations are very protective of their information and approaches. It is rare to see a joint or peer review. Things are perceived very differently by USAID and NGO staffers. However, there should be better attempts at collaboration.

USAID tried to get groups to collaborate for early warning. However, one of the biggest obstacles was that each representative didn't want to share the info in front of their counterparts.

Some PVOs are working on joint evaluations. There are examples from post tsunami emergency capacity grants. Since there was more funding available for this kind of work, the RFA process could push for a consortium. Collaboration is beneficial since some PVOs have country capacities and others have the techniques needed.

Some donors are providing incentives for groups to cooperate. The Gates Foundation has done so. USAID/OFDA has forced cooperation around assessment.

With the RFA process, the period before an award and implementation does not allow time to develop adequate M&E frameworks. Part of the issue is that there are time limits in funding cycles and congressional mandates. Also, limited funds are dedicated to developing and implementing M&E components of programs.

In terms of assessments, partners was to implement them, but are restricted by donor guidelines.

Stakeholder meetings are a good way to gauge how things are going in a country. USAID/OTI uses quarterly meetings to learn about what is going on with the program and the meetings offer a chance to reflect on activities and events.

Contingency planning is something to consider. USAID/Food for Peace and USAID/OFDA now require plans for programs. USAID/OTI recently implemented contingency planning in Nepal. Some of implementing partners are including scenario planning in proposals. We need to consider the flexibility that is built into M&E systems.

Uganda – Group Discussion

One issue is how a complex humanitarian emergency is defined. We need to identify what to measure in those circumstances. What you set as your objectives will determine what you measure.

In terms of work in Uganda, there are several donors and NGOs implementing programs. MSI is working on a decentralization project that builds the capacity of local government. USAID is working with five NGOs and looking at conflict and post-conflict settings.

In order to measure impact in a continuum, the baseline indicators need to be common/shared. Generally, the organizations come together and determine what baseline indicators will be used.

For collaborations to work, what we are trying to achieve and how to measure it need to be explicitly defined. Often, indicators developed in DC do not apply in the field and their adaptation to the field sometimes does not translate well.

Based on past experiences, report indicators are not meaningful for NGO's day to day work in the field. Sometimes, donors ask for new indicators, but that adds more layers of time and process for the contractor.

All the people involved have to come up with indicators that are relevant (USAID, State Dept) and collaborate on the implementation of the indicators. However, this collaboration takes time that is not normally allowed.

One problem with collaborative evaluations is that evaluations are often considered proprietary.

Another issue is that many projects have very young staff in the field who don't understand USAID and the M&E process. Perhaps, data sharing would help this process.

Collaborative evaluations bring in the experiences from other countries. Using external evaluators can cause conflict if they are not briefed on the local processes. Thus, collaborators review the collected data and make sure the information is interpreted within the right context.

We need different design tools and to modify the log frame at the edge to the center, with indicators against the assumptions. This log frame becomes a monitoring tool and we know that the project needs to adapt as circumstances change.

USAID provides standard indicators that they expect will be used and wants to add the NGOs' indicators as well for reports to Congress and to continue the development of M&E methods

However, the indicator guidelines are becoming more inflexible with the new F process. Flexibility will probably be based on the country's place in American's aid.

Group Presentations

Sudan – Group Presentation

Collaborative M&E – Can We Do It?

DCHA went through an exercise earlier this year to create a Sudan strategy. However, it was a long process because of the issue of different mandates and different partners.

Collaboration takes place at different stages: design, proposal, mid-program, etc...Collaboration means something different at each stage.

When there are proposals coming from the USG, often the implementers are often told which indicators to use.

It isn't a question of whether or not to use M&E, but more that M&E can happen along a continuum and the degree of collaboration varies.

The level of collaboration is very limited in Darfur, in comparison to the collaboration in other areas of Sudan.

Q (from the Sudan group) - What incentives can the donors provide for the implementers to do M&E? Also, what would be incentives for implementers to collaborate on M&E?

A (from larger group) - There are some disincentives for implementers to collaborate on M&E because that collaboration may mean they share information that can benefit other groups in later proposals.

Part of this question assumes that implementers need incentives to do M&E. However, that is not really the case. They are motivated to do it themselves.

DRC – Group Presentation

Results are biased by the way M&E is implemented. Mixing a team of external and local implementers can bring better results. Also, a mix of formal and informal methods is beneficial.

There is the issue of collaboration between NGOs. The major problem is with access to proprietary information and unwillingness to share information. In many cases, the cooperation is forced, not voluntary. Collaboration may not be worth it because of the tension that it can create between organizations.

Uganda – Group Presentation

Lessons Lived:

- Potential value of a nationwide ME project
- Indicators:
 - Participatory indicators are important, and local collectors should understand why they are important
 - Look for ways that methodologists / outsiders have access to context
 - Joint evaluations not entirely likely
 - Provide feedback to those who provide the data (evaluators)
 - Cross-national and regional discussions
- Collaboration
 - Consortium

- Common data systems: useful (are there existing systems that can be utilized now)
- Joint training and capacity building

- Resource and capacity
- Advocacy and funders
- Best data usually is not available by mid or end reports.
- Specifically identify the M&E specialist.
- RFA: Contingencies that you build into the proposal: missions should promote the collaborative effort among grantees

Discussion

A question was raised about what would be the incentives to put greater conflict analysis into an RFA. There is also the issue of implementers “doing no harm.” Often the term is used in proposals without the implementers having a real understanding of the do no harm framework.

There is a risk that the conflict analysis will become just another box to check in the proposal process. Another issue is how the conflict assessment impacts the actual program design and implementation.

In some cases, placeholder M&E plans are put into the proposals with the understanding that a more detailed plan will be developed once the grant is awarded.

How do you communicate to implementing partners why the CA identified certain areas as crucial?

The challenge is to incorporate the conflict lens into our M&E work. The larger issue is how to integrate M&E work into programs in general. M&E specialists are often the first ones to be cut. Our approaches to M&E still need work.

Closing

Session Speaker: Seth Nickinson (Interaction) and Sarah Cohen (USAID/Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation)

Session Purpose: To summarize the day's discussions and establish next steps in the process.

Session Notes:

Ideas about the next steps and future sessions:

- *A meeting to discuss incorporating the conflict lens, both at the macro and micro levels. Perhaps looking at some of the tools that are already out there and being used. Examples include the CAF, CIDA's work, etc... Development contractors, military and other donors should be a part of future events.*
- *A meeting to discuss the conflict indicators.*
- *Each session included a lot of information. Next time, we could spend more time on each topic and get more into detail.*
- *Comparison of conflict assessment frameworks.*
- *Discussion of collaboration and how to make it actually happen. What we would all like to be doing?*
- *To better focus the discussions, we could have case studies or other documents that everyone should read before working group session.*
- *The F process and how it will impact implementation of programs in the field.*