

**A View From USAID
[on Performance Measurement, Evaluation and
Results-Based Management]**

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A View from USAID

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The United States has a strong, historical commitment to be transparent and results-oriented in its domestic public administration. Under the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993, the requirement for effective performance measurement and evaluation is now the law of the land. Every federal agency in the U.S. government must develop strategic and annual plans that include specific performance goals, measure evaluated results against these plans, and adjust programs and budgets accordingly. As President Clinton said when he signed the bill, “This law simply requires that we chart a course for every endeavor that we take the people’s money for, see how well we’re progressing, tell the public how we’re doing, stop things that don’t work, and never stop improving the things that we think are worth investing in.”

In the development sphere, USAID has long and strongly advocated performance measurement, evaluation and results-based management. From the invention of the logical framework in the 1960s to the development of impact evaluations in the 1980s, and the evaluation of strategic objectives in the 1990s, our commitment to evaluating performance and learning from experience has been unwavering. USAID sees the development of effective performance monitoring and evaluation, the development of good information for results-based management, as a key element for all our development assistance. Partnership, collaboration, and empowerment are among the core values that guide this development assistance. And we use performance monitoring and evaluation in all our development programs to work with, learn from, and strengthen the capabilities of our partners. Building the capacities of these partners in both the governmental and nongovernmental sectors is a key feature of our development assistance effort.

These values are explicitly recognized in USAID. Our policy on participation states, “Operating units and project teams shall involve USAID customers and partners in planning approaches to monitoring performance and planning and conducting evaluation activities as well as in collecting, reviewing, and interpreting performance information.” Planning, monitoring and evaluation are seen as closely linked.

In our policy on building performance measurement and evaluation capacity, for example, we state “The agency and its operating units shall attempt to build performance monitoring and evaluation capacity within recipient developing countries. Operating units shall integrate, wherever feasible, performance monitoring and evaluation activities with similar processes of host countries and donors.” And then the section on

information sharing says, “Whenever feasible and appropriate, the agency and its operating units shall participate in networks for exchange and sharing of development experience and development information resources, with development partners, host country development practitioners, researchers, and other donors.”

Evaluation capacity development in USAID is not only about good management, but also (and perhaps even more critically) about good government. USAID’s collaboration in evaluation capacity development is clearest in our efforts to promote more effective and accountable governance. And it is a key feature of our substantive programs in other areas. In health and population, for example, USAID pioneered the development of capacities for collecting performance information through demographic and health surveys. Recently, USAID added a module for education data to these surveys. Through the environmental programs, we focused on strengthening local capacity to monitor and evaluate areas such as biodiversity, greenhouse gas emission, and deforestation. And now USAID is starting a major effort in a more difficult field, that of democratization, civil society strengthening, and the like. This will mean establishing how to monitor and evaluate progress in those activities.

The Center for Development Information and Evaluation (CDIE), is USAID’s central evaluation office. It does not formally list evaluation capacity-building as one of its functions. Nor is there any program budget devoted explicitly to evaluation capacity development activities. But CDIE does carry out various related tasks that contribute to strengthening evaluation capacity in the development process, including participating in workshops, doing studies and conducting technical assistance activities. So by including host country evaluators in our performance monitoring and evaluation workshops and training; by including host country evaluators on CDIE’s own evaluation teams; by participating in joint and collaborative evaluations—and we hope to do more of these; by widely disseminating USAID’s evaluation findings, guidance, and lessons learned; and by organizing and leading international efforts in evaluation information exchange, we hope to contribute substantially to evaluation capacity development.

At the operational level, a review of USAID’s activities database showed that USAID often encourages evaluation capacity development. But this was rarely the exclusive focus of a project; it was usually a subcomponent found in all regions and all sectors.

In USAID’s case, it was also rarely a government-wide evaluation capacity development effort. USAID would seldom go out and work to develop the capacity of that government to monitor and evaluate programs government-wide through the Ministry of Finance or the Ministry of Planning. Typical evaluation capacity development activities were

targeted on institutions, usually project implementing agencies or partners in USAID's strategic objectives. And these were focused on developing the performance monitoring and evaluation capacities of nongovernmental organizations, local governments, NGOs, PVOs, and foundations.

We all recognize that supply without demand in the economic world leads to bankruptcy. In the development world it does not lead to effective development. Our efforts towards democratization and good governance focus on development outcomes that will increase the demand for good performance measurement, good evaluation, and good management.

Our evaluation capacity development efforts, and our performance monitoring and evaluation activities more generally, bear on operational improvement and learning (primarily in terms of how we do the development activities in question). In the last few years, USAID is shifting to a more strategic focus on evaluating capacity, performance monitoring, managing for results, in sectors and in larger program areas.

Under re-engineering, USAID is placing increased emphasis on monitoring and evaluating this broader strategic, sectoral and program performance. There is more emphasis on the performance monitoring side of evaluation, (how to link evaluation to ongoing management processes), and more emphasis on performance information use. From USAID's point of view monitoring is less for external accountability and more to provide managers with the information they need to manage. That need is answered at least in part by more formal evaluation activities. USAID is using the OECD/DAC strategy for the 21st century as a framework for collaborative effort, and the DAC goals are very clearly in our Agency-wide strategic plan required under the Government Performance and Results Act.

Evaluation capacity development is not a distinct goal for USAID or an end in itself. It is a core component of what we do. It clearly includes performance monitoring and a more strategic and results-oriented planning effort. It is clearly embodied in USAID's emphasis on managing for results. It clearly encompasses our focus on good management and good government. It is clearly related to our concern for enhancing democratization. Properly understood, evaluation capacity development is real social action for real social change. It means strengthening both the government's and the people's ability to chart a course for themselves using concrete measures of what is being accomplished and what is wanted.