

Strategic Planning & Program Performance

Resource Materials & Minimum Standards for Maximizing Political Transition Results

These materials were prepared by OTI Senior Field Advisors and Program Office Staff to provide updated standards for strategic planning that are appropriate to OTI country programs. They distill lessons learned from the office's more than ten years of operating in fast-paced, dynamic environments to provide a framework for strategic programming & evaluation. These materials represent version 1.0. Feedback from staff for version 1.1 is welcome.

*Version 1.0
October 2005*

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P:\DCHA.OTI.PUB\Program Office\Program Development\Strategic Planning\Strategic Planning Guide\Section 1 Assessment\Criteria for Engagement from website.doc

http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/transition_initiatives/aboutoti3.html

USAID Conflict Assessment Guides

http://inside.usaid.gov/DCHA/CMM/documents/CMM_ConflAssessFrmwrk_May_05.pdf

Conducting a Strategic Assessment in a Fragile State

P:\DCHA.OTI.PUB\Program Office\Program Development\Strategic Planning\Strategic Planning Guide\Section 1 Assessment\Conducting a Strategic Assessment in a Fragile State.doc

Sample OTI Country Assessment Reports:

Nepal

P:\DCHA.OTI.PUB\Program Office\Program Development\Assessments\OTI Nepal Assessment-Final 12.14.03.doc

Sri Lanka

P:\DCHA.OTI.PUB\Program Office\Program Development\Assessments\OTI SL Assessment Report Final.doc

Top Three Rapid Appraisal Tools

P:\DCHA.OTI.PUB\Program Office\Program Development\Strategic Planning\Strategic Planning Guide\Section 1 Info & Impact\Top Three Rapid Appraisal Tools.doc

OTI Database Manual

P:\DCHA.OTI.PUB\Program Office\Program Development\Strategic Planning\Strategic Planning Guide\Section 1 Info & Impact\OTI Database User's Manual 2005-04-016Condensed.doc

OTI Reporting Guide

P:\DCHA.OTI.PUB\Program Office\Program Development\Strategic Planning\Strategic Planning Guide\Section 1 Info & Impact\ OTI Reporting Guide 6-15-05.doc

Note: the Program Office will be revisiting these reporting requirements in early FY 2006.

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P:\DCHA.OTI.PUB\Program Office\Program Development\Strategic Planning\Strategic Planning Guide\Section 2 Program Review\PPR feedback summary memo.doc

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P:\DCHA.OTI.PUB\Program Office\Program Development\Strategic Planning\Strategic Planning Guide\Section 3 Strategic Evaluation\Revised matrix evaluation roles & responsibilities 10-10-05.doc

OTHER RESOURCES:

OTI Strategic Plan

P:\DCHA.OTI.PUB\Program Office\Office Strategic Plan\2002-2007 Strategic Plan\Final Strategy Document\OTI Strategic Plan Final 12.03.03.doc

Summary of Agency Reporting Requirements

P:\DCHA.OTI.PUB\Program Office\Program Development\Strategic Planning\Strategic Planning Guide\Agency Reporting\Agency Reporting Requirements Memo\9-15-05.doc

INTRODUCTION TO STRATEGIC PLANNING & PROGRAM PERFORMANCE

In the dynamic environments in which OTI works, static strategic plans and traditional monitoring and evaluation (M&E) models have proven to be more hindrance than help in designing politically strategic programs. A board convened in the spring of 2005 to advise OTI on M&E found that *having a strategic plan is no guarantee that appropriate data for indications of impact will be collected or used effectively to make programmatic [or politically strategic] decisions.* There are several reasons for this. First, the essentially political nature of OTI's programming means that the definition of what constitutes success constantly evolves. Targets and indicators established at the outset of a program may become meaningless within months as new threats or opportunities emerge, dictating a change in program activities or geographic focus. Second, the opportunity for a fast, innovative response in a dynamic political environment is lost when data collection takes too long. Third, when M&E is perceived as a separate step that comes after the fact and the sole responsibility of one person, the sense of shared responsibility and accountability among the team for the outcome of every project is lost. Given these realities, a circular, rather than a linear, approach is required.

PMPs (Performance Monitoring Plans) are no longer mandatory for OTI programs¹ and will be replaced by a more flexible Strategic Planning and Program Performance Review process that examines three levels of analysis on a regular (at least biannual) basis:²

1. Strategic level: ongoing political analysis of emerging issues and opportunities;
2. Program level: overall program design, priorities (target issues, areas, actors) and tactics;
3. Project level: implementation (monitoring) and impact (evaluation) at the activity level.

This new approach is in line with findings from the Agency's Business Model Review regarding strategic planning. Based on a review of recent literature and the realities of the environments in which OTI works, it aims to avoid the pitfalls that practitioners in conflict-prone countries have long observed – for example, “each one of our projects was evaluated to be successful and the country was going to hell.”³

The goal of examining these three different levels of analysis and action is to reduce the substantive disconnects that frequently exist between them.⁴ While “strategy” and “program” analysis provide frameworks, imply baselines and establish parameters, “projects” are the markers against which performance can be judged. Therefore, impact and outcomes – performance – takes place at the “project” level and must be evaluated accordingly, feeding into ongoing analysis and helping to determine future action. Effective projects, however, may still not advance ‘peace writ large’ if overall objectives are not set strategically. The guidance provided on the following pages is designed to measure performance based on how strategically OTI's programs respond to U.S. foreign policy imperatives and local political developments, not how well they count and report against indicators.

¹ Country programs that have found PMPs useful may continue to use them.

² For a summary of findings from the Program Office study on the FY05 Program Performance Review process, see P:\DCHA.OTI.PUB\Program Office\Program Development\Strategic Planning\Strategic Planning Guide\Section 2 Program Review\PPR feedback summary memo.doc.

³ Meeting Notes, “Performance Monitoring in Post-conflict/Transition Programming Brainstorming Session,” by Hal Lippman, USAID/OTI and Gottlieb Duwan, Interaction, Washington D.C., May 13, 2004.

⁴ For more background, see *Towards Strategic Evaluation: Evaluating Conflict Prevention and Peace-Building Activities*, FAFO Institute of Applied International Studies, Oslo Norway, draft September 2005.

OTI *will* need to report against the new Agency-wide common indicators, which are primarily output oriented.⁵ In Missions where the new common indicators have been adopted, the OTI database has been configured to feed them. However, OTI remains interested in capturing outcomes, defined simply as “what happened as a result of our support?” [See section on “How to Evaluate Small Grants ” below.]

The following pages outline *minimum* standards and *simple* good practices for each of the levels of analysis outlined above, plus a brief explanation of expectations regarding Final Evaluations.

If successful, this new approach will lead OTI toward *strategic* evaluations, not merely perfunctory evaluations of program and projects. A recent review of more than seventy “peace-building” and/or “conflict prevention” final evaluations found that they were primarily project evaluations and few, if any, concerned themselves with overall strategy behind them. The common denominator, across a wide range of programs in conflict-prone environments, appeared to be a lack of engagement with key theoretical and practical issues, ranging from the strategic imperatives that supposedly drive and shape projects, to important tactical questions such as prioritization, targeting and sequencing.⁶ The study’s other key finding was that agencies or country programs rarely articulate the theory of change that guides their work. The documentation that results from regular Program Performance Reviews will serve to articulate clearly OTI country programs’ political analysis, tactical choices, and the assumptions – or theory of positive change – that guides their response, thereby creating a wealth of information for truly strategic evaluations at the end of OTI programs.

⁵ For the new list of Agency common indicators, already used by USAID in some OTI countries such as West Bank/Gaza, see P:\DCHA.OTI.PUB\Program Office\Program Development\Strategic Planning\Strategic Planning Guide\Agency Reporting\Common Indicators.doc.

⁶ *Towards Strategic Evaluation: Evaluating Conflict Prevention and Peace-Building Activities*, FAFO Institute of Applied International Studies, Oslo Norway, draft September 2005, for OECD/DAC members (including USAID).

SECTION ONE

FROM ASSESSMENT TO PROGRAM DESIGN: Target Issues, Areas, Actors and Tactics

The following is intended to help link strategic analysis to program level analysis. While these questions need to be taken into consideration during the initial process of program design, they can and should help guide strategic decision-making throughout the life of a program.

First, OTI country assessments undertake comprehensive context and actor analysis to ascertain if there is a clear political rationale for why OTI should intervene, or not. Second, although it depends on the Scope of Work for the specific country assessment, OTI usually expects assessments to also provide a political rationale for proposed interventions, including initial program design, goals and objectives, geographic areas (where), types of programming (how), and the desired outcomes or results that this approach is expected to produce. Moving from broad political conflict assessment to making tough choices about program design requires strategic thinking. While country assessment Scopes of Work clearly should outline expectations for the final report, OTI's minimum standards are: (1) a paragraph explaining basic methodology (e.g. key informant interviews, etc); (2) a summary of key findings & recommendations; (3) a list of individuals interviewed or meetings held and contact information if possible and appropriate; and (4) a bibliography of background resources consulted. This standard information will prove helpful to staff during any program start-up. Initial country assessments inevitably become key reference material for future outside evaluators and consultants.⁷

Country assessments essentially produce a programmatic prescription based on initial assumptions to produce an OTI diagnosis of the political situation and how OTI can intervene to support a transition. This diagnosis and OTI's prescription only remain effective when subject to periodic check-ups or Program Performance Reviews. These participatory, peer reviews are opportunities to revisit initial decisions and assumptions in light of new developments. Initial strategic decisions and activities may no longer be relevant, or may turn out to have been based on false assumptions, once more information is available. In order to remain responsive and effective in dynamic, conflict-prone environments, the process of political analysis, strategic decision-making, targeting and retargeting should never end.

Traditional development projects move along a continuum from initial assessment, to program design, to implementation, to evaluation. For OTI, political analysis, program design and project implementation remain an ongoing process of responding to rapidly evolving situations, seizing opportunities when they arise and leveraging local and national opinion makers. Analyzing what the most appropriate scope and scale is for a program is not a one-time event. Maximizing political impact in dynamic operating environments requires an equally dynamic process of ongoing analysis.

The following sample questions may be useful in determining where OTI-supported activities could have the greatest impact and which issues to consider as part of ongoing context analysis. These questions are intended to be illustrative, not comprehensive.⁸ They begin by considering politically significant locations, then look at local power and conflict dynamics, and finish with key program design questions regarding scale and scope.

⁷ See the OTI Program Office resource materials for good examples of OTI Country Assessments and Agency resources to draw on when conducting an assessment in transitional countries (conflict, crisis and fragile states).

⁸ These questions have been developed based on USAID materials and other conflict and development literature.

1. Which geographic areas in the country have historical legacies that tend to cause events there (both good and bad) to:
 - Take on increased importance?
 - Resonate across the country and/or with certain groups?
 - Affect popular perceptions and confidence in the future?
2. Which areas may have increased strategic importance due to recent political developments?
3. Which areas are likely locations for spoilers to foment violence or instability in order to sabotage momentum towards peace?
4. Are there high levels of tension between rival factions, political parties, ethnic groups, or religious leaders?
 - To what extent are these differences manipulated for political gain?
 - How great a threat do “hardliners” or potential “spoilers” represent?
 - What role do armed forces and militia play? How could operations in different areas be tailored to different security environments?
5. Are there pockets of relatively low levels of tension that present an opportunity to promote increased cooperation across political, ethnic and religious lines?
 - If so, what is the value? Does cooperation already exist?
 - Would it be useful to expand and magnify existing cooperation in a way that could favorably impact popular perceptions and public confidence?
6. Who are the key actors capable of shaping public opinion on a broad scale, for better or for worse?
 - Are there “moderate” leaders and local partners interested in pursuing public – rather than partisan – interests? What strategic entry points could be used to leverage their influence?
 - Are there “hardliners” that continue to pursue partisan or private interests? Are they potential “spoilers”? What level of support do they have from local populations? How could they be neutralized or isolated?
7. Do the causes of conflict at the local level mirror constraints to peace at the national level?
 - If so, would “modeling” (through demonstrating positive examples of where citizens have chosen to overcome these constraints) and “magnifying” (through strategic use of media) be effective programming options?
 - What local mechanisms, processes, or resources exist to mediate conflict and/or address priority needs?
8. What kind of scale and programmatic scope is required to produce political transition results in this environment? At what level does it make sense to intervene (national, provincial, local, or all of the above?)
9. What are the desired political transition results (i.e. end war, make peace, engage citizens in political life, connect government with population, buy time for longer-term political reforms, prevent ‘flash-point’ regions from destabilizing a transition)?
10. What kind of mechanism, staffing and support systems are necessary to produce rapid results in this operating environment?

ROLLING ASSESSMENTS: IDENTIFYING EMERGENT ISSUES, CALENDAR OF CRITICAL EVENTS AND SCENARIO MAPPING

The following is intended to help link strategic analysis to program and project level analysis and decision-making.

Having established an overall policy approach in its Fragile States Strategy, USAID has begun to focus on how to adopt an *operating* approach, as an Agency, to support Transition States (conflict, crisis and fragile). A DCHA colleague recently wrote that:

“The bulk of USAID assistance programming avoids investments in the critical events that make up stability in a particular country or critical events that over time result in destabilization, conflict and crisis. This is true even though most events are planned, predictable or at least foreseeable.... The present approach of programming all our resources towards development-based sector results or one that over-emphasizes the relief model leaves little space, if any, to program directly toward the calendar of critical events that can make or break a transition. This often results in misunderstandings within the interagency where State, DoD and NSC are focused on the events that drive the transition process while USAID is focused on the extreme ends of the process with relief and development models.”⁹

Since its inception, OTI has strived to bridge that gap. The increased emphasis on these political, transitional issues validates the need to continue regular, rolling assessments of emerging issues and encourages more systematic scenario mapping.

The following outlines a simple exercise that has proven to be a useful analytic tool for OTI field staff, when undertaken with implementing partner local staff. It is designed to support the ongoing process of “rolling assessments.” Although many people (particularly country experts) will say that the underlying issues and problems are all very well known and future events are entirely foreseeable, engaging in a participatory process with local staff can turn up unexpected conclusions. OTI needs to capitalize on local political analysis and also respond to U.S. government political imperatives. In some countries this is a balancing act.

When the focus is on emerging issues in target areas, it narrows analysis in such a way that immediate, political imperatives – things that are in OTI’s manageable, short-term interest – tend to become quite clear. Conducting this exercise with a country team on a regular basis is the simplest way to test our assumptions. It is also a good way to prepare for a Program Performance Reviews.

Staff should work in groups by target region or field office to answer the following questions:¹⁰

1. What are the emerging issues in your area?
2. What are the “critical events” planned in the next six months?
3. What events are predictable over the next six months?
4. Map out the best-case, worst-case and most likely scenarios. What are the implications or expected outcomes of the most likely scenario?
5. What conclusions can be drawn? What types of activities and/or overall approach could positively affect the above?

⁹ Tim Shortley to Agency Fragile States Working Group, July 8, 2005.

¹⁰ The best approach is to map out the calendar of critical events and describe the three scenarios under each one. Suggested activities should stem directly from the implications of the most likely scenario.

IMPLEMENTATION & IMPACT: ONGOING INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AT THE PROJECT LEVEL

How to Create a Constant “Feedback Loop”

The following is intended to help link project analysis back to program and strategic level analysis.

The project activity level is the last of three levels that country program staff analyzes during Program Performance Reviews. For the most part, “monitoring” is the act of closely following project **implementation**, through which impact is achieved. “Evaluation” is the act of assessing **impact**. Therefore, in an effort to demystify and mainstream “monitoring & evaluation” (M&E), it is simply referred to as “implementation & impact” (I&I). The impact that OTI needs to be able to continuously capture and rapidly report on at the project level are **outcomes**, defined in the simplest terms as: “what happened as a result of our assistance?” [See Annex on “How to Evaluate Small Grants.”]

Information management systems (the OTI database) and staffing are required to create and maintain a constant programmatic “feedback loop” that can support the ongoing learning process in the field. The same process of **ongoing analysis** that takes place at a macro level in terms of overall strategy and program design takes place on a daily basis at the micro level in terms of ongoing project development. The cycle of constant feedback and analysis at the micro level can repeat itself a dozen or a hundred times each month, depending on volume and speed as well as human and financial resources.

Creating this “feedback loop” and mainstreaming informal, participatory monitoring and evaluation through “I&I” ensures that responsibility for managing information and maximizing project impact is shared among different team members at various stages of project development and implementation. The purpose of this data collection is for field staff to: (a) learn what worked, what didn’t and why; (b) continue ongoing analysis of where new strategic opportunities may lie; and (c) feed accurate, timely information to a variety of different sources in both the field and Washington.

MINIMUM STANDARDS & STAFFING REQUIREMENTS

Every OTI program configuration and implementing partner is different; therefore every management solution will be different. While the tasks are always the same, how they are divided up between OTI and our partners, international and national staff, is up to the OTI Country Team to decide. The OTI Team Leader will outline at the outset of a program how these functions are expected to be filled. The Country Representative is responsible for ensuring that these expectations are met in the field – or for revising systems and make staffing recommendations as required.

Two people are required: a Database Manager to manage the technical side and help to ensure “data reliability” and another person who is clearly tasked with ensuring overall information management and “quality control.” Database managers can be either an OTI FSN or implementing partner staff. Experience has shown that database managers should be regarded as key professional staff and hired as a matter of priority. The person tasked with overall information management and quality control will depend on the size of the program: for a small program, it may be the Country Representative or Deputy; for a large program, it may be an implementing partner Information or Program Officer. Once defined, this two-person team shares responsibility for integrating OTI & implementing partner systems and interfacing with appropriate field staff, as necessary, to:

1. Track & report on grant status
2. Track & report on project implementation status (i.e. monitoring)
This information may feed into military metrics, Embassy or USAID Action Plan reports
3. Track & report on project results (i.e. rapid impact appraisals)
This information may feed into the above as well as OTI Hot Topics and Monthly Reports

Together, the two members of this Information Management Team ensure that monitoring and relevant reporting from a political transition perspective are taking place in appropriate sections of the database at each stage of project development, implementation, and close-out. Systems come down to staffing. The key to information management is ensuring that staff roles and responsibilities are clearly defined at each step of the process.

In high-profile, high-pressure environments, OTI's reputation for rapid response leads to expectations for rapid *results* reporting. Reporting on volume of activity says nothing about the impact of the program. Our information management system (the database) provides the means to meet OTI's needs and to exceed the Agency's expectations in terms of reporting.

Note: Some programs will be able to follow-up on more grants than others. It depends on security as well as available human and financial resources. It is up to each country team to determine with the OTI Program Office (during Program Performance Reviews) what is appropriate in the context of their country program and/or what additional resources may be required. Given the pace at which OTI needs to operate, each program needs to find an appropriate balance between speed and quantity on the one hand and quality of impact and reporting on the other. Realistic expectations need to be set.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT THROUGH I&I: THE BASIC GRANT CYCLE

After a grant is approved, two things are monitored: the implementation process and the impact it had.

STEP 1: BEFORE PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Once a grant is approved, the database manager, or their designee, changes the grant status from pending to cleared. In the case of infrastructure or building projects, ensure that a "**Before**" photo is attached, with date and caption.

STEP 2: DURING PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

In every OTI country program, monitoring project implementation is the key to maximizing impact. In high-profile countries, this step is essential in responding to the Embassy or military's request for information on: "what did we actually do for the people of x country today?"

Once an activity begins, the database manager, or their designee, should change the projected activity start date to reflect the actual start date (the date "the shovel hit the ground" or an event started). This lesson has been learned as a result of programs where OTI field staff spent the vast majority of their time trying to track down and report on this information.

Implementing partner project development staff meet with project implementation staff (normally comprised of some combination of grants managers, logisticians and procurement staff) at least once a week. Implementation staff provide brief notes describing (and may attach periodic photos documenting) project implementation. They provide information on any unforeseen developments likely to adversely (or positively) affect the outcome of the project. This information should be entered into the **Grant Notes** section of the OTI database, as appropriate.

Program development staff that develop grants at the outset must remain engaged with the grantee and aware of project progress, for example attending any scheduled events. Even when not directly involved in technical aspects of implementation, they should remain in contact with the grantee, particularly if problems arise during implementation. Sometimes projects where the greatest challenges or conflicts arise often produce the greatest results *if* project development staff keep themselves in the “constant feedback loop” and can manage them constructively. This is the basis of monitoring implementation in order to maximize impact. In non-permissive environments, local site monitors can always be hired as part of a grant.

STEP 3: AFTER PROJECT COMPLETION

Once the activity is completed, implementation staff notify the database manager (as well as project development staff) to immediately change the status of the grant from cleared to completed. Implementation staff file a copy of the grantee report and attach an “**After**” photo, where applicable.

Note: As much as project development staff often want a one-size fits all template, grantee reporting requirements for each small grant should be tailored to reflect the project’s specific objectives and be appropriate in light of local capacity and the operating environment. The minimum reporting required (in non-permissive environments) is a note signed by the grantee certifying that all goods & services were delivered in satisfactory condition on x date and that the activities took place.

Project development staff schedule a field trip to conduct an informal, rapid impact appraisal. These subjective assessments are based on:

- (a) their own problem analysis, understanding of political dynamics in that community, and the project’s main objectives;
- (b) the implementation team’s Grant Notes and observations during implementation;
- (c) the grantee’s report, if any.

Information gathered goes into the **Final Evaluation** section of the grant. (See “How to Evaluate OTI Small Grants.”) Project development staff will bring different levels of understanding and skills to this process. There is therefore a need for the person tasked with overall “quality control” to continue to provide helpful feedback and guidance on this process so that staff skills – and the quality of rapid impact assessment reporting – gradually improve over time.

If the grant has produced a result that passes the “If I Had Five Minutes To Tell The President About The Impact Our Program Is Having And The Difference It Is Making, What Story Would I Tell” Test, then a synopsis of that story – from beginning (background section) to the outcome at the end (final evaluation section) – should become a **Hot Topic** and appear in that field of the database.

When the database manager is implementing partner staff, they should review all grant documentation to make sure everything is in order before closing a grant. Some programs have adopted the good practice of having the database manager prepare and circulate a “close out memo” for signature by project development, implementation and finance staff before completion of paper files so that the grant can be closed. [When the database manager is an OTI FSN, a similar process between OTI and the partner should take place.] Once the status of the grant is changed from completed to closed, the estimated grant amount becomes the actual amount disbursed and any unused funds go back into “grants funds available” (see OTI Database Manual for this procedure). The ongoing, circular process of creating and maintaining a constant feedback and reporting loop begins again. The more information and analysis we have, the more lessons we learn and the more likely we are to identify new opportunities.

HOW TO EVALUATE SMALL GRANTS: RAPID IMPACT APPRAISALS

The following is based on common sense. If field staff want more details on how to elevate common sense to social science, see details on rapid appraisal technique tools such as key informant interviews.¹¹ Analyzing and describing what happened *after* an activity has been completed is no more complicated than it is for program development staff to analyze and describe the problem *before* developing a project to address it (the basis of all good grant development). Every grant is a story. A rapid impact appraisal is simply a summary of findings from field interviews that tell the end of the story. The purpose of this exercise is not just to catalogue success stories and sing praises; it is to practice due diligence and to learn what approach is most effective in which places. The goal is to create the feedback loop necessary for OTI to: continue to identify strategic opportunities; learn from success and mistakes; and rapidly report on results.

Findings from informal “key informant” field interviews should be summarized in a mini-evaluation report no more than 3 paragraphs—approximately 20 sentences total—that must be ***entered into the Final Evaluation field of the grant in the OTI database.***¹² It should provide information that answers at least some of the following four types of questions. **These are not interview questions; they are broad lines of inquiry.** Questions will vary depending on the “informant,” the type of person being interviewed (e.g. grantee, participant, beneficiary, etc.) Because this is a learning exercise, there are no right answers. This is also not about personnel performance. Field staff are expected to draw conclusions from multiple sources, “triangulating” between different points of view, just as they do during initial problem analysis and project design.

1. Grant Development & Implementation

- Did the initial problem analysis (by project development staff, provided in the background section of each grant) prove to be accurate?
- Was the project design the right response? Was it a timely response? Did it effectively address the (local or national) political realities, priorities and power dynamics described? [Expect to hear different opinions – project development staff must triangulate between them.]
- What lessons did the grantee, direct beneficiaries or secondary beneficiaries (such as community members) learn from the implementation process (including in-kind assistance and community contributions, if any)? [Expect to hear different perspectives, depending on who is interviewed.]

¹¹ The 2005 draft Performance Monitoring & Evaluation Toolkit, commissioned by OTI, provides 24 different methodologies to choose from. The toolkit observes that “rapid appraisal techniques are the most appropriate for OTI.” The three tools that fall into that category are all different methods of beneficiary-based analysis: Key Informant Interviews; Focus Groups; and Storytelling. See OTI Program Office Resource Materials for more information.

¹² Each program must determine, in consultation with the OTI Program Office, what percentage of projects they intend to follow-up on and then seek to meet their target.

- What could have been done differently? Could some other way of working have accomplished more sooner in terms of producing greater potential impact and political results in support of overall program objectives?
2. Objectives
- Did the grant achieve its objectives?
[Grants may be designed to do one thing and actually end up achieving another. This is sometimes called a “secondary effect” or a “catalytic effect.” See Outcomes & Impact below.]
3. Outputs & Beneficiaries
- What *tangibly* happened as a result of the assistance provided? How many people directly benefited from it? [This information should be use to update the beneficiaries field in the database.]
4. Outcomes & Impact
- After the project was completed, what kind of political effect did it have? What *intangible* effect did this initiative have on people’s attitudes, perceptions and behaviors? [For example, did the grant help to change certain types of behavior in certain communities? Did it help to improve relations between different factions or components of society? If so, how? What demonstrated this in the eyes of those interviewed? What examples or evidence did they cite?]
 - What became possible that was not possible before?
 - Has this effort caused grantees, participants and communities to go on to develop their own initiatives (after the initial project was completed)?
 - Given all of the above, what recommendations do project development staff have in terms of future projects? Another course of action? Another type of target community or audience? More of the same? What about strategic connections to OTI supported activities in other locations or follow-on activities designed to build on initial “momentum” created, if any?

SECTION TWO

PROGRAM PERFORMANCE REVIEWS: FIELD MONITORING AND PROGRAM REVIEW

The following is intended to link the ongoing process of political analysis and decision-making in the field with a process of peer review and evaluation at headquarters.

Conventional “mid-term” assessments and final evaluations can’t meet OTI’s need for timely, actionable information necessary to refine and adjust transition programming. It is difficult to define the ‘mid-term’ of an OTI program and results come too late to be relevant. As described in Section One, in dynamic, fast moving environments strategic programming requires commitment to continuous or ‘rolling’ assessment and analysis for program refinement and retargeting.

FIELD REVIEW PROCESS

Field reviews are an integral part of the strategic programming process. Programs benefit from fresh eyes and constructive feedback from disinterested parties, and OTI benefits from a review’s structured conclusions. Experienced staff can challenge assumptions, offer experiences and lessons from other programs, and stimulate creative thinking within the country team. Field reviews are necessary to ensure programs are running smoothly, with discipline and impact. A field review can take a variety of forms, depending on the requirements of the country program, but will typically involve a combination of in-country, bullpen, and Washington-based OTI staff conducting an assessment on the ground. Minimum standards for field reviews are outlined below.

PROGRAM PERFORMANCE REVIEW

The Program Performance Review (PPR) brings a discrete group of Washington-based colleagues together on a biannual basis to review program performance, challenge assumptions and exchange experiences through a structured dialogue. It gives the Country Team (Country Representative, Program Managers, and Team Leader) an opportunity to step back and look at their programs from a macro perspective, to consider the large questions of strategic approach and impact. The PPR challenges the country team to describe their program’s strategic objectives to the review board and explain how those aims are met through the activities and the implementation methods employed in the field. Additionally, the PPR helps prepare country teams to explain their program to other parties.

PROGRAM REVIEW PROCESS: A COMBINED APPROACH

Combining field reviews with the PPR better integrates conclusions from field reviews and better animates the PPR process.

This combined approach will:

- Assess the three levels of analysis described above (strategy, program and projects/activities) as well as operational management (organization, finances and systems).
- Engage colleagues in a structured performance evaluation process.
- Incorporate timely, independent field-based observations into the PPR process.
- Produce recommendations for consideration by country teams, draw conclusions about program operations and performance.
- Help to inform program support and funding decisions.

The field review team members will work with the in-country staff to examine issues to be discussed in the subsequent PPR. The field review will help country teams prepare for the PPR, and make observations to assist the review board members.

- Field reviews will be conducted once a year regardless of the frequency of the PPR.
- Teams will consist of three persons: a Field Advisor, a Washington-based staff person member (a review board member if appropriate, and/or a Program Manager from another country program) and an in country local staff person. Composition of the team will be determined by the Program Office in consultation with the Country Team and Field Programs Division chief.
- The Field Advisor will serve as the Team Leader.
- The Team Leader will work with the Country Representative to select an appropriate local staff team member.
- The field review will run roughly 10-14 days depending on the country.
- The Team Leader will be responsible for producing a review document (to be provided to the country team, the Program Office and the Performance Review Board), and providing a structured in country debrief with the Country Representative and the team.

The review document will complement the materials provided by the Country Team to the Review Board in advance of the PPR. The purpose of the in-country debrief is to discuss the observations and recommendations if any from the field review, as well as brainstorm strategic and operational issues (much like an extension of the earlier 'team building session').

Members of the field review team will participate in the PPR both to provide observations not captured in the documentation and to provide a fresh from-the-field perspective to other Board members less familiar with the details of the program.

TIMELINE AND PROCEDURES FOR PROGRAM PERFORMANCE REVIEW

1. The Program Office sets the date for the biannual review at least one month in advance, in consultation with the Country Team and Program Review Board. The Country Representative will participate by conference call.
2. The Country Team organizes its presentation to the Program Review Board, using the discussion template below. Country Teams should allocate approximately 1 ½ hours for the review. Country Team presentations should last approximately 30 minutes, leaving up to an hour for questions and discussion. A member of the Program Office team will facilitate the discussion.
3. The Country Team provides relevant documentation to the Program Review Board at least one week prior to the scheduled review session, with a copy to the Program Office.
4. At a minimum, the Country Team should provide the following documents to the Program Review Board: 1) Country strategy, 2) Program summary and/or most recent monthly report, 3) Description of information management systems (info & impact), 4) OTI and partner staffing chart(s), 5) Country budget estimate, 6) Summary of program spending, 7) Any relevant field review documents.
5. The Program Office will meet very briefly with the Country Team and Program Review Board for each country to answer any procedural questions before the review. This will occur about two weeks before the review is scheduled to take place.
6. The Program Review Board identifies a chair to the Program Office. The chair may rotate if desired.
7. The Program Review Board documents its findings/recommendations to the Country Team and Front Office in a short memo within one week of the Country Team presentation. A member of the Program Office team will serve as note-taker for the discussion, and draft the memo. The Board chair will be responsible for clearing the memo.

8. The Front Office holds a consultation with the Country Team to discuss the Program Review Board's recommendations within one week after receiving and reviewing the memo. This meeting may take the place of the weekly Front Office team briefing, if the Country Team so chooses.
9. The Front Office documents any action planned or taken on the Program Review Board's recommendations in a one page action memo within one week after meeting with the Country Team. A member of the Program Office team will serve as note-taker for the discussion, and draft the memo. The Director and Deputy Director will be responsible for clearing the memo.

DISCUSSION POINTS FOR PROGRAM PERFORMANCE REVIEW BOARD INTERVIEWS

Country programs should prepare **brief** points (preferably bulleted) to inform discussion of the following broad lines of inquiry. *Recommended length: 2 pages. Maximum length: 4 pages*

These questions were revised based on feedback from OTI staff regarding the FY05 Program Performance Review process. They are designed to incorporate findings from recent literature on conflict and peace-building as well as lessons from past OTI programs.

I. STRATEGIC LEVEL ANALYSIS & EVALUATION

1. Briefly describe key political developments over the last six months. Did these developments result in any changes in strategy, approach or activities?
2. Briefly describe the program's analysis of emergent issues, an upcoming (planned, predicted or foreseeable) calendar of events and scenario mapping for the next six months. What implications does this analysis have for future strategy, approach, activities?
3. Describe the logic behind the proposed course of action (operational strategy) for the next six months and what it is supposed to achieve (objectives and desired outcomes). [Be prepared to describe the following during discussions: How do program staff articulate the theory of change that guides their work (complete explanation)? How do program staff articulate the essence of what the program is about in two sentences or less? (simple "sound bite")]

II. PROGRAM LEVEL ANALYSIS & EVALUATION

4. What lessons have been learned over the past six months with regard to initial analysis, assumptions and program design (target areas, actors and issues)?
5. Briefly describe the utilization of available financial resources (from within or outside OTI) in support of specific program activities and how they contributed to overall program performance over the past six months. What human and financial resources are required (and why) in order to maximize program performance in the next six months?
6. Provide any relevant feedback on the program from key stakeholders (inside or outside the country, inside or outside the USG).

III. PROJECT LEVEL ANALYSIS & EVALUATION

7. Describe the country program's level of activity, in whatever terms are appropriate.
8. Briefly summarize the impact of the country program's activities to date. [In discussion, be prepared to describe activities that have had the greatest impact as well as those that failed and what lessons have been drawn.]
9. Describe how information management systems (I&I) are working. If they're not optimal, what is needed?

IV. OTHER ISSUES

10. Evaluate broader OTI support for your country program and identify any areas where additional support is required.

SECTION THREE

FINAL EVALUATIONS OF OTI PROGRAMS

OVERVIEW

Evaluations are a learning and management tool for assessing outcomes of OTI country programs and to improve future programs. Measuring, analyzing, and interpreting change helps OTI staff answer the following questions: 1) Was OTI responsive to country's political transition? 2) Were underlying assumptions correct and was the overall program design appropriate? 3) To what degree were program objectives achieved and what impact did program activities have? Evaluations draw on information gathered in the routine I&I and PPR processes described above.

Final evaluations take place toward the end of a country program, preferably within the last three months of presence, while there is still an OTI field office that can provide guidance and logistical support. Unless there are extenuating circumstances, final evaluations are conducted by individuals who are not associated with OTI in order to produce a final product that is as objective as possible.

Final evaluations are the responsibility of the OTI Program Office, in close collaboration with the relevant country team. A variety of mechanisms are available to OTI to conduct independent evaluations, including OTI's IQC with Social Impact as well as other IQCs and agreements. The Program Office and Country Team will determine the best mechanism for a given evaluation. Based on past experience, country teams should budget approximately \$100,000 to \$150,000 for a final evaluation, depending on the size of the program and the logistical complexity of the country context. See attached protocol for definition of roles and responsibilities during the evaluation process.

MINIMUM STANDARDS

- Every country program will have a final evaluation.
- Final evaluations will be conducted within 3 months of close-out.
- The Program Office and the country team will work together to ensure an evaluation product that contributes to OTI learning and is suitable for dissemination to stakeholders.

BEST PRACTICES

- A three-stage evaluation process – an independent, strategic evaluation, an internal management review/lessons learned exercise, and an after action review. See below for more detail.
- Country programs develop three documents over the course of a program: 1) an outline of major events in the country's transition corresponding to major programmatic and management events in the OTI program; 2) a list of key strategic planning and other decision-making documents relevant to the program; and 3) a list of key personnel and stakeholders involved in the program. These three documents will be vital to the final evaluation process, and are better maintained as ongoing living documents than reconstructed at the end of a program when many people who worked on the program and can provide institutional memory have moved on.

THREE STAGES OF EVALUATION

I. Strategic Evaluation Report

WHAT: A desk review of all the data collected and documents produced by the program, and field work as appropriate.

WHY: To assess program impact and effectiveness in achieving stated objectives over the life of OTI presence in-country.

WHEN: Three months prior to close-out. Planning should begin approximately six months prior to close-out.

WHO: Conducted by independent evaluators contracted through available mechanisms.

II. Internal Management Review/Lessons Learned Exercise

WHAT: An internal review of management systems, processes and procedures to lay the groundwork for a productive after-action review with key stakeholders (i.e. OTI and partner staff.) Analysis is based on phone and in-person interviews as possible. Product is a short synthesis of key findings presented in an easy to digest format (i.e. not another lengthy report – can be as simple as a power-point presentation or outline). To be shared across OTI programs worldwide.

WHY: To identify lessons learned from the particular management successes and/or challenges in a particular country, and determine which if any are applicable across programs.

WHEN: Within three months after program close-out.

WHO: Ideally, a two person team comprising departing country representative paired with an appropriate partner familiar with the program (possibly bullpen staff.)

III. After Action Review

WHAT: Half-day or one-day facilitated session with key program stakeholders to discuss findings of the final evaluation and the internal management review.

WHY: To share findings with other OTI and partner staff who are likely to go to work on other OTI programs, to move from 'lessons identified' to 'lessons applied.'

WHEN: Within two weeks of completing stage two.

WHO: Ideally, departing country representative, previous country representatives if applicable, Washington-based country team, partner staff from field and headquarters, and any other key OTI and/or outside stakeholders as appropriate.