Background: A recent assessment seeking to understand the effectiveness and best practices for a holistic approach uncovered valuable insights for Localization. Based on the findings and recommendations from the assessment, USAID/Mexico held a learning event with staff from across the Mission to contextualize the results and propose key considerations for future activities.

About the Assessment: USAID/Mexico is supporting two complementary Femicide-Prevention and Response (F-PAR) activities in Nuevo León. The implementing partners (IPs) for each activity are Mexican organizations and each activity focused on working with different audiences (government and civil society) to prevent and respond to Gender Based Violence (GBV) against women.
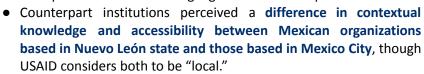
Engaging different sectors through multiple activities operating in the same geographic area and working towards the same goal represented a new experience for USAID/Mexico. The Mission commissioned an assessment on the effectiveness of this holistic approach–that sought change at various interconnected levels of the broader system– to LINC and its partner SIMO under the Monitoring and Evaluation Support for Adaptation (MESA) Activity.

Learn more about the assessment from the brief here or from the full report on DEC here.

Findings and Conclusions with Implications for Localization:

In answering the assessment questions, the USAID/Mexico technical team and the assessment team recognized the potential value of many of the key learning themes for the Agency to consider in its Localization processes. Among the findings and conclusions of the assessment that most resonated with Mission staff to support future Localization efforts:

"If we truly want to make aid inclusive, local voices need to be at the center of everything we do."

-ADMINISTRATOR SAMANTHA POWER

- Each activity individually made progress toward their goal, however, the activities **missed an opportunity to improve their results and sustainability** through increased collaboration. Some examples of collaboration highlight its value to improve results.
- Counterpart institutions perceived a **difference in contextual knowledge and accessibility between Mexican organizations based in Nuevo León state and those based in Mexico City**, though USAID considers both to be "local."
- The role of **USAID/Mexico as a facilitator was valuable**, but may have created a dependency as communication between the two activities rarely happened without the Mission.
- Given the one-year gap between the start of the two activities, the IPs reported that **expectations for collaboration lacked clarity** and they **had not allocated appropriate resources for collaboration**.
- Similarly, the IPs reported a **lack of alignment of objectives, indicators, and messaging**, including that one activity directly supported government institutions while the other supported CSOs to hold the government accountable.
- **Previous experience collaborating and inherent trust in like-minded organizations** enabled further collaboration.
- In contrast, **philosophical differences between consulting firms and nonprofit organizations hindered collaboration**. These differences affected workstyle, expectations, approach, and ultimately trust.
- The **traditional "prime-sub relationships" caused awkward power dynamics, stress, and distrust among IPs within a consortium**, especially to IPs new to USAID or who entered the activities with expectations of more equitable partnerships.

Addressing the Challenges of Localization:

With the F-PAR assessment as a catalyst, the USAID/Mexico learning event included discussions on the above findings, and resulted in a series of tips and guiding questions for the Mission to keep in mind. The guiding questions will serve to remind and reinforce the shift in mindset as Mission staff design new activities, oversee existing ones, and work with both local and international implementing partners.

Thematic Area	Guiding Questions
Assumptions and mental models about "local" partners	
Recognize your own bias in working with different types of partners	• Does the terminology used in a solicitation or other design document work for different types of partners? (NGOs, contractors, academic institutions, private sector, government counterparts) • Does solicitation messaging encourage formation of consortiums that maximize proposal scores per the solicitation evaluation criteria rather than implementation effectiveness? How can the Mission support effective partnerships?
Be clear in defining and identifying "local" partners	• What type of local context knowledge and relationships are necessary to consider to improve development results? • How local should implementers be positioned: national, state/district/region, municipal, community?
Role of USAID and International Partners	
Allocate adequate resources	• Are additional resources required for collaboration with other local stakeholders, for capacity strengthening, or for other support necessary for managing USAID funding? • Do indicators and targets include measurement of local engagement, local capacity strengthening, and incorporation of local voices?
Plan for sustainability	• Is there an opportunity and benefit to transitioning leadership of the activity to national, regional, or local stakeholders as part of an activity awarded to an international IP? • Can USAID and its international IPs use subawards and grants under contract to engage more and diverse local voices? How will this be incentivized and measured?
Reduce the administrative burden on national IPs	• Are there aspects of standard reporting that can be simplified, including regular progress reports, indicator tables, or financial reports? • Does reporting have to be delivered as a written document or are there other options (such as regular progress update meetings or a presentation) that would ease the burden on local IPs?
Adapt USAID's role to facilitate success	• Is USAID driving the agenda more than the local partners? Do all have a valued voice? • How does USAID ensure its accountability to IPs, especially local partners? • If USAID's role is facilitator, what other types of support can USAID provide to help IPs succeed (e.g., connections, training, technical expertise)?
Listening Locally	
Share power, listen to local actors, enter consultations with an open mind	• Are USAID and/or its IPs using consultations to adapt and improve design, or just to validate pre-existing assumptions? • How can USAID create space for diverse local voices to influence design and implementation to address their priorities better throughout the program cycle? • Are timelines and resources adequate to engage diverse local communities and beneficiaries in activity design and implementation? (e.g., co-creation, consultations, pause and reflect sessions)
Support organic activities emerging locally	• Are there examples of successful solutions emerging locally? How can USAID support their expansion, replication, and adoption? • In addition to funding, what type of support would allow organic solutions to grow and succeed? (e.g., connections, training, technical expertise)