USAID Evaluation
Background

• USAID Evaluation Policy issued January 2011.
• The policy builds on long history of evaluation.
• Addresses decline in quantity and quality of evaluations.
• The policy is an initial step to strengthen USAID’s evaluation practice as part of broader USAID Forward reforms.
USAID’s Automated Directives System (ADS)

- The ADS contains USAID’s policy directives, required procedures, and helpful, optional material. Agency employees must adhere to these policy directives and required procedures.

  Source: http://transition.usaid.gov/policy/ads/

- ADS Chapter 203 is the main “handbook” for Assessing and Learning (i.e. Monitoring and Evaluation)
Trend in Number of Evaluations Submitted to USAID's Document Repository (DEC)

Year
USAID Evaluations
0 100 200 300 400 500
97 116 140 135 131 111 104 139 240 342 425 457 497

Trend in Number of Evaluations Submitted to USAID's Document Repository (DEC)
The Evaluation Policy provides clarity on:
- the purpose of evaluation;
- the different types of evaluation;
- what evaluations are required and/or recommended;
- the requirements for sharing evaluations results; and
- how to use evaluation results.
Why Evaluate?

- **For Accountability**: Measuring project effectiveness, relevance and efficiency, disclosing those findings to stakeholders, and using evaluation findings to inform resource allocation and other decisions.

- **To Learn**: Systematically generating knowledge about the magnitude and determinants of project performance to inform and improve project and strategy design and implementation.
Key Components of the Evaluation Policy

| Integrated into Design | • Evaluation considered during strategic planning and project design  
|                        | • Include evaluation specialists in design teams and collect and maintain baseline data.  
|                        | • Key evaluation questions are identified at the outset of strategies and projects. |
| Minimized Bias         | • For required evaluations, teams must be led by an expert external to USAID and the partner implementing the project that is being evaluated. |
| Relevant to Future Decisions | • Evaluation questions are linked to future decisions.  
|                        | • Local partners and stakeholders are consulted during evaluation design, implementation, and interpretation of findings. |
| Based on Best Methods  | • Methods generate reproducible and high quality evidence.  
|                        | • Qualitative and/or quantitative methods applied with rigor.  
|                        | • Select Methods by considering empirical strength of study design and feasibility. |
| Reinforcement of Local Capacity | • Evaluation capacity-building of local partners.  
|                        | • Use of host country systems and local experts, including as lead or members of evaluation teams. |
| Commitment to Transparency | • Findings from evaluations are shared publically, as widely as possible, and in a timely manner. Uploaded to the DEC within 3 months of completion. |
| Dedicated Resources    | • Evaluation requires dedicating financial and human resources in advance.  
|                        | • Goal of ~3 % of an OU’s total program funds to be set aside for external evaluations. |
USAID Results Frameworks

Mission Goal

Programs (Outcome)
- Development Objective (DO)

Projects (Outcome & Outputs)
- Intermediate Result (IR)
- IR
- IR

Activities/Implementing Mechanisms (Outputs & Inputs)
- Sub-IR
- Sub-IR
- Sub-IR
- Sub-IR
**Key Evaluation Definitions**

**External evaluation:** one that is commissioned by USAID, rather than by the implementing partner, and in which the team leader (at a minimum) is an independent expert from outside of the Agency, who has no fiduciary relationship with the implementing partner.

**Large projects:** one that equals or exceeds in dollar value the average project size for each Development Objective (DO).

**Innovative or pilot projects:** any development program intervention or set of interventions that demonstrate new approaches and that are anticipated to be expanded in scale or scope if the approach is proven successful; could be innovative interventions that involve untested hypotheses.
Performance Monitoring

• The **Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA)** of 1993 establishes requirements for strategic planning and performance measurement for all USG agencies.

• **Performance management** is the systematic process of monitoring the achievements of program operations; collecting and analyzing performance information to track progress toward planned results; using performance information and evaluations to influence DO decision-making and resource allocation; and communicating results achieved, or not attained, to advance organizational learning and tell the Agency’s story.
Monitoring vs. Evaluation

Performance monitoring

• Reveals whether desired results are occurring and whether DO outcomes are on track. It addresses the “what” of performance.

Evaluation

• Answers the “why” or “why not” of performance, as well as the “what else” question.
The purpose of a data quality assessment is to ensure that the USAID Mission/Office is aware of:

- (1) Strengths and weaknesses of the data, as determined by applying the five data quality standards, and
- (2) Extent to which the data integrity can be trusted to influence management decisions.

A DQA must occur for indicators, which are reported externally, at some time within the three years before submission.

Recommended DQA Checklist
Indicator Definitions

- An **impact** is a result or effect that is caused by or attributable to a project or program. Impact is often used to refer to higher level effects of an activity that occur in the medium or long term…”

- An **outcome** is a higher level or end result at the assistance objective level. An outcome is expected to have a positive impact on and lead to change in the development situation of the host country.

- An **output** is a tangible, immediate, and intended product or consequence of an activity within USAID’s control.
Standards for Design and Reports

Evaluation Statements of Work will:

- Define a limited set of relevant evaluation questions linked to decisions
- Specify data collection methods and instruments relevant to evaluation questions, data analysis plans, and dissemination plan
- Describe skill requirements for evaluation team members

Evaluation Reports will:

- Address all evaluation questions
- Describe methods and tools, including limitations of data and methods
- Provide findings based on evidence and facts, not anecdotes
- Give action-oriented and practical recommendations based on findings
Evaluation Decisions During Design

• Programs and Projects

Operating units are encouraged to identify opportunities for evaluations at the design stage and during CDCS planning.

In a Performance Management Plan (PMP):

- Include possible evaluation efforts to complement performance monitoring
- Estimate the costs of collecting, analyzing, and reporting performance data, and plan how these will be financed.

When developing a project cost estimate and financial plan, USAID teams must include the costs of evaluation.
USAID Evaluation “Triggers” During Implementation

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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>A key management decision is required, but there is inadequate information to make it.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Performance information indicates an unexpected result (positive or negative) that should be explained, such as unanticipated results affecting either men or women.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Customer, partner, or other informed feedback suggests that there are implementation problems, unmet needs, or unintended consequences or impacts.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Issues of sustainability, cost-effectiveness, or relevance arise.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>The validity of Results Framework hypotheses or critical assumptions is questioned; for example, due to unanticipated changes in the host country environment.</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Periodic Portfolio Reviews have identified key questions that need to be answered or that require consensus.</td>
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Other Factors that Affect Evaluation Decisions

Additional factors to be considered when making decisions about evaluations

• Other USAID, key user, and stakeholder interests and needs

• Program or project readiness or “evaluability”

• Potential benefits and potential costs of evaluation
Evaluation Needs of Key Potential Users

Who uses evaluations?

Users are specific individuals or units that will make decisions based on the evaluation.

• Who are the key potential users?
  - In USAID
  - Other Stakeholders

• What do they want or need to know about the program or project?

• Can they envision how they would use an evaluation?

• Is there real demand for an evaluation?
Evaluation Stakeholder Analysis

• A technique to identify and assess the importance of an evaluation to key people, groups, or institutions.

• Helps determine what roles USAID and key stakeholders should play in an evaluation – including in defining evaluation questions.

• Assists in anticipating the influence stakeholders may have on
  – mobilizing support or resistance to the evaluation
  – use of evaluation findings and implementation of recommendations

Evaluation of Mindanao Multi-Donor Trust Fund supported by World Bank, USAID and other donors
# Matrix of Potential Stakeholder Evaluation Roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation stakeholders</th>
<th>Make policy</th>
<th>Make operational decisions</th>
<th>Make inputs to evaluation (describe)</th>
<th>React to findings</th>
<th>For interest only</th>
<th>Proponent of the evaluation (describe why)</th>
<th>Resistant to the evaluation (describe why)</th>
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<td>Other donors</td>
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Assess Program or Project Readiness or “Evaluability”

Classic “evaluability” assessment questions:

- Does the program or project have clear “theory of change” and measurable objectives?
- Are the program or project’s objectives (intended results) known and shared by all key stakeholders?
- Are there reasonable program design and resources to achieve program/project objectives?
- How likely is it that program/project managers or strategic planners will use the evaluation results?
Theory of Change - What is it?

- A cause and effect model of the “building blocks” needed to achieve the long-term goals of a development program.

- Usually a graphic representation of how USAID and development partners are expected to achieve results and underlying assumptions.
USAID expresses the “theory of change” in its programs and projects using two specific tools.

Program and Project Level: Results Frameworks (ADS 201.3.8.3)

- “How To” guidance can be found in a TIPS on Building Results Frameworks in the DEC at: http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNACA947.pdf

Project Level: Logical Frameworks (ADS 201.3.11.8)

- “How To” guidance can be found in a Manager’s Guide to the Logical Framework in the DEC at: http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNABN963.pdf
Theory of Change - USAID Tools

USAID’s approach links its theory of change at the program level to projects that support them.

Development Objective
(Highest Result for which Mission Assumes Responsibility – same as an Assistance Objective)

Program Level Results Framework

- Intermediate Result 1
- Intermediate Result 2
- Intermediate Result 3
- Intermediate Result 4

Intermediate Result 2.1
Intermediate Result 2.2

Project Logical Framework

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In Burundi, malaria accounts for almost half of child deaths nationwide; malnutrition is the second leading cause of death. Education of all caregivers to promote optimal infant and child feeding; community-based rehabilitation of malnourished children via the Hearth project.
Consider Contextual Factors

- How will the stage of program or policy implementation affect the evaluation?
- Is there baseline info?
- How much time is available to complete the evaluation?
- What is the nature and extent of resources for the evaluation?
- What is the political climate for the evaluation?
- Are there gender issues (evaluation needs or implications) that should be taken into consideration?
## Balance Evaluation Benefits and Costs

### Potential Benefits

- Evidence-based decision making leading to sound decisions:
  - What to scale-up or replicate
  - What to improve
  - What to cut back or terminate
- Contributions to streams of knowledge about what works, what doesn’t and why
- Building local capacity

### Potential Costs

- Cost of evaluation vs. cost of the program
- Burden of the evaluation on beneficiaries, implementers, host country government
- Political costs to USAID and implementing partners if results are highly controversial
- Reputational costs if insufficient time and resources are provided to conduct a comprehensive evaluation
One day Alice came to a fork in the road and saw a Cheshire cat in a tree.

"Which road do I take?" she asked.

His response was a question:

"Where do you want to go?"

"I don't know," Alice answered.

"Then," said the cat,

"it doesn't matter."

- Lewis Carroll, Alice in Wonderland

Any road will get you there....
Evaluation Purpose

Evaluation Purpose:

To conduct an evaluation of the Rural Enterprise Project

The **Evaluation Purpose** should explain why the evaluation is being undertaken:
- what prompted it?
- what management purposes will it serve?
Evaluation Purpose

Be specific about why the evaluation is needed.

Is it being undertaken to help make a specific decision – whether to fund a follow-on project?

Was it “triggered” by something that occurred during program or project implementation – weak performance?

Is it being undertaken to rigorously test the effects of an innovative approach or model?
Purpose – Intended Users

The primary intended users of the evaluation:
- USAID decision-makers?
- The project implementation team?

Important secondary audiences for the evaluation:
- The government of the assisted country?
- USAID staff in other countries who might want to design a similar project?
Purpose – Intended Uses

- Decisions about an on-going project
- Decisions about a follow-on project
- Refining USAID policy based on a rigorous test of the effects of a project intervention on a target group compared to a comparison group
- Fostering the scaling-up of what works by others
- Accounting for funds expected to interested stakeholders
Review Questions

• What factors should “trigger” you to consider evaluating a given project?

• What makes a program or project “ready” for evaluation?

• What potential costs and benefits should be considered when making an evaluation decision?
Integrating Evaluation into the Program Cycle

• **Evidence** from previous evaluations should inform Policy and Strategy development and Project Design decisions.

• **Planning and budgeting** for evaluation and monitoring should be done when a policy, strategy or project is being developed.

• Evaluation is a tool for making **mid-course corrections** during project implementation and to inform future project and strategy decisions.

• Unplanned evaluations can be triggered by unexpected **monitoring results** or implementation issues.
When is Evaluation Required?

**Required for:**

- **Large projects**: at or above average dollar value for projects within each development objective managed by an operating unit.
- **Innovative or pilot projects of any size**: demonstrate new approaches that are anticipated to be expanded in scale or scope if the approach is proven successful (*impact evaluations recommended*).

**Recommended for:**

- Evaluations at the **program or sector level**, particularly valuable in preparation for the development of a strategy.
- Any other time an evaluation is identified by an operating unit as needed for **learning or management purposes**.
USAID Forward Evaluation Target

250 high quality evaluations to be completed by January 2013

- The Office of Evaluation and Regional Bureaus worked with missions to identify a numerical target

- Mission totals: 244 or about 3/mission

- Plus USAID/W evaluations = 250
Evaluation Standards

**Integrate Evaluation into Design**
Include evaluation specialists in strategy and project design teams, identify questions, plan for baseline data collection.

**Minimize Bias**
Disclosure of conflicts of interest, external evaluation experts as team leads.

**Ensure Relevance to Future Decisions**
Evaluation questions developed with stakeholders and are linked to future decisions.

**Use the Best Methods**
Qualitative and quantitative methods that generate reproducible and high quality evidence.

**Reinforce Local Capacity**
Work with local expert evaluation leads, use host country systems, and build local capacity.

**Be Transparent**
Findings from evaluations are shared publically and in a timely manner.

**Dedicate Sufficient Resources**
Goal of approximately 3 percent of a USAID operating unit’s total program funds to be set aside for external evaluations.
Standards for Design and Reports

Evaluation Scopes of Work will:

- Define a **limited set** of relevant evaluation questions *linked to decisions*
- Specify data collection **methods** and instruments relevant to evaluation questions, data analysis plans, and dissemination plan

➤ See RDMA Evaluation SOW Checklist on RDMA M&E Sharepoint Site

Evaluation Reports will:

- Provide findings based on evidence and facts, not anecdotes
- Give action-oriented and practical recommendations based on findings

➤ See RDMA Mission Order or Appendix I of USAID Evaluation Policy
**Feedback loop**

- Liberia → youth-oriented job training
- Armenia → adjusting objectives of anticorruption project
- Colombia → design of three targeted regional governance projects
Results: Going beyond a single evaluation

- Dissemination
- Evidence Summits
- Systematic Reviews
- Development Innovations Ventures
USAID's DEC is the largest online resource for USAID-funded technical and program documentation from more than 50 years of USAID's existence, with more than 155,000 documents available for viewing and electronic download.

- **Search**: Use words or phrases, or perform a more advanced search. Display results in a title list or summary with links for downloading and social sharing.

- **Submit**: All USAID-funded development experience documentation is submitted to the DEC

- **Share**: Comment on documents, rate them, or vote on them to increase their usefulness to others.