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MONITORING & EVALUATION IN POSTCONFLICT SETTINGS

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MONITORING & EVALUATION IN POSTCONFLICT SETTINGS



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ACRONYMS

ACE	Army Corps of Engineers
CMM	Office of Conflict Mitigation and Management (USAID)
CPA	Coalition Provisional Authority (Iraq)
CSIS	Center for Strategic and International Studies
CTO	cognizant technical officer
DG	democracy and governance (USAID)
GAO	Government Accountability Office
GIS	Geographical Information System
GPS	Global Positioning System
IDP	internally displaced person
INEE	Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies
IR	intermediate results
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MOA	Ministry of Agriculture (Iraq)
MSEE	Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, Chronic Crises and Early Reconstruction
MSI	Management Systems International
NGO	nongovernmental organization
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OFDA	Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID)
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
OTI	Office of Transition Initiatives (USAID)
PAR	performance and accountability report
PMP	performance management plan
PRS	Project Reporting System (USAID database)
RFP	request for proposals
S/CRS	Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (Department of State)
SO	strategic objective (USAID)
SOE	state-owned enterprise
SME	small and medium enterprise development
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	UN High Commission for Refugees
USAID	U. S. Agency for International Development

PREFACE

USAID has a long history of establishing performance monitoring systems in a wide range of postconflict situations around the world. With the current two major postconflict USAID programs (Afghanistan and Iraq) and the introduction of White Paper goals that specify a tailored approach to the goals of fragile states and humanitarian assistance, PPC/CDIE commissioned Management Systems International (MSI) to undertake a desk review of the state of the art for monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in postconflict societies.

After a systematic review of existing literature and interviews with policymakers and practitioners, MSI prepared this report, which has three components. First, the report identifies various constraints and challenges that USAID and its partners face in enforcing sound M&E standards and practices in postconflict societies, particularly in those where the United States has major strategic interests. Understanding these constraints is essential to the development of an effective system that can realistically monitor performance of USAID-funded projects and programs. Second, the report documents “best practice” examples in key sectors and subsectors that can inform future performance M&E functions. It concludes with a set of lessons for USAID and its partners.

I am sure that my colleagues within and outside the Agency will find the report helpful in developing new M&E initiatives in postconflict societies.

Krishna Kumar
Senior Social Scientist

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 SCOPE, PURPOSE, AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this one-month desk study was to review recent experience, literature, and lessons regarding monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in postconflict settings, with particular emphasis on Iraq and Afghanistan. In addition to a modest published literature, the study draws on the results of several recent workshops and conferences; M&E guidelines from various organizations; 20 key informant interviews; and team members' firsthand experience with M&E in postconflict settings.¹

The report's main aims are to clarify the unique features that distinguish M&E in postconflict settings and to present emerging best practices for responding to these challenges. Because some of these features and methods differ by sector, the report includes discussion at the sectoral level.

1.2 CLARIFICATION OF TERMS

Postconflict. This term refers to situations where a country or region is emerging from a period of overt conflict (such as civil war or foreign invasion) and is expected to move toward a degree of unity, normalcy, and stability. Expectations of peace are often delayed, however, and postconflict settings often remain unstable and violent during much of the period of program implementation.

Transition. Over the last decade, there has been increasing focus on the concept and dynamics of transition—between relief and development, between overt conflict and stable peace, and between fragility and transformational development. This focus is highlighted by the issuance of USAID's recent White Paper describing the goals of foreign assistance. USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) has established a program of tracking, monitoring, and evaluating its transition interventions.

Fragility. USAID has been developing a stronger understanding of fragility and conflict-prone situations, with a focus on appreciating how development interventions can affect economic, social, and political cleavages. USAID developed its Fragile States Policy and established its Office of Conflict Mitigation and Management (CMM) to sharpen the Agency's appreciation of and response to these situations.² CMM has developed a preliminary set of indicators for measuring fragility that are intended to track levels of (and changes in) the legitimacy and effectiveness of nation-states.³ In a similar vein, the State Department's Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS) has developed an analysis of conflict drivers, and the Fund for Peace has published an index of 12 indicators for failed states.

Postconflict programming includes specific goals associated with transition and fragility, with an eye toward longer-term, sustainable development. This requires holding all three perspectives simultaneously. Moreover, given that approximately 50 percent of postconflict countries experience a return to violent conflict within five years, it is fair to assume that such countries are fragile almost by definition.

¹ The report's principal authors are Larry Cooley and Richard Huntington. Sectoral contributions were provided by Steve Hansch (Health), Steve Hochstetler Shirk (Education), James Purcell (Infrastructure and Economic Growth), and Amit Pandya (Democracy and Governance).

² USAID, *Conflict Mitigation and Management Policy* (2005); USAID, *Conflict Mitigation and Management Policy: Implementation Guidelines* (2005); USAID, *Conflict Sensitive M&E: Keys for Successful Programming* (2005); USAID, *Conducting Conflict Assessment: A Framework for Strategy and Program Development* (2005).

³ USAID, *Measuring Fragility: Indicators and Methods for Rating State Performance* (2005).

2. DISTINGUISHING FEATURES OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION IN POSTCONFLICT SETTINGS

This section identifies and discusses seven features that distinguish M&E in postconflict settings from M&E in transformational development countries. Where appropriate, salient differences between types of postconflict settings that have implications for M&E are identified. The distinguishing features are

1. preeminence of political and military considerations
2. confused or conflated objectives
3. foreshortened timeframes
4. weak or missing baselines
5. different assumptions about change
6. need for spatial precision
7. institutional complexity

2.1 PREEMINENCE OF POLITICAL AND MILITARY CONSIDERATIONS

A wide range of countries are described as postconflict settings. While M&E in postconflict situations faces many common challenges, the issues are quite different in Iraq than they are in Sierra Leone. This section discusses some relevant differences among postconflict countries and identifies critical factors that distinguish M&E in these settings from M&E in more hospitable environments. Critical contextual elements that shape the dynamics of M&E in different types of postconflict situations include the level of U.S. political interest, the role or presence of the U.S. military, the ongoing security situation, and the nature of the peace agreement.

- **Level of U.S. Political Interest.** Intense U.S. political and public interest in a postconflict situation strongly influences the level of resources, the time pressures, and the sensitivity associated with monitoring, evaluating, and reporting on accomplishments. The sharpest examples are Iraq and Afghanistan, but Palestine, Haiti, and Kosovo have also been in the media glare. The combined pressure-cooker and fishbowl elements of a high-profile situation influence M&E practices as strongly as on-the-ground factors do. In such situations, the technical task of performance monitoring becomes entangled—for better and worse—with reporting pressures, public relations, and spin control. From a purely technical perspective, performance monitoring and program evaluation are easier in postconflict settings that are outside the glare of publicity.
- **Role of the U.S. Military.** A strong U.S. military presence defines a postconflict situation in many ways, especially for U.S. government-funded assistance programs. The military's need for information often conditions where and how it is collected. In addition, the U.S. military presence publicly allies the postconflict stabilization and development efforts with U.S. policy, thereby limiting access to candid opinion data.
- **Security.** Security problems of various types may continue or even worsen in postconflict situations. In most cases, the security situation remains a determinant of the limits of developmental assistance and a definer of many of the types of required assistance. Logistically, the specific dynamics of insecurity in a given country affect virtually every aspect of the M&E effort.
- **Peace Agreement.** Some postconflict situations operate within a framework of a peace agreement in which the parties have at least nominally committed themselves to the process, a set of activities and outcomes, and an agreed timetable. Other types of postconflict “order” are imposed, and do not signal broad agreement of the various national parties.

2.2 CONFUSED OR CONFLATED OBJECTIVES

The failure to establish clear programmatic objectives is the biggest single obstacle to effective M&E in postconflict settings. There is almost always tension (and sometimes confusion) in postconflict programs between pressures for immediate impact and reconstruction and the need for longer-term capacity building and structural reform. From the perspective of M&E, these tradeoffs are often represented as different levels of objectives and indicators (outputs, intermediate results, and strategic objectives) or as pertaining to different phases in the postconflict process (stabilization, reconstruction, and development).

There are also related tensions between sector-specific outcomes and outcomes relating to the reduction of fragility and increase of stability. In this regard, the most common tradeoffs are between results relating to the perceived effectiveness of the host government and those relating to its legitimacy. Each of these tradeoffs suggests the need for particularly careful specification of objectives in postconflict settings. The failure to establish such clarity is the biggest single obstacle to effective M&E.

2.3 FORESHORTENED TIMEFRAMES

Of all the scarce resources in postconflict situations, time is often the most pressing. Much needs to be accomplished very quickly. Time pressures challenge M&E efforts at every turn, particularly with regard to running starts, short results cycles, and rapid shifts in strategy and tactics.

- **Running Starts.** The sheer rapidity of program startup makes the simplest tracking of activities an enormous task. In Iraq, for instance, the number of development activities doubled every month for the first six months. In such situations, last month's monitoring data are not simply "not quite up to date." They are virtually useless, and even last week's data may be "old news." This problem is compounded when information systems and databases to track and integrate fast-developing data need to be created from scratch.
- **Short Results Cycles.** Truncated timeframes are incompatible with results-based monitoring that stresses the importance of monitoring outcomes rather than simply outputs. Outcomes, almost by definition, develop relatively slowly. In Afghanistan, the National Security Council aims to set up a "metrics" that reports weekly on indicators. USAID pushed back for biweekly reports. The provincial reconstruction teams developed a set of indicators that they proposed be tracked monthly. USAID pushed back for bimonthly. The short timeframe of a postconflict situation demands an intelligent focus on measuring indicators that can meaningfully track rapid changes.
- **Rapid Shifts in Strategy and Tactics.** In postconflict settings, strategies and tactics can—and often do—shift rapidly. These shifts can proceed at different rates for different sectors. In one postconflict country, assistance in the health sector rapidly advanced to a concern for rebuilding national systems, while the economic growth program remained focused on short-term employment. Similarly, security or other elements may cause some regions and provinces to surge quickly toward advanced programs of reconstruction and sustainable development, while other areas revert to crisis modes requiring emergency assistance. Traditionally, monitoring programs are criticized for revising targets or "moving the goal posts." To provide meaningful assessments of progress in postconflict situations, the M&E effort has to have this kind of flexibility built into the system from the beginning.

2.4 WEAK OR MISSING BASELINES

Performance M&E normally analyzes change by making comparisons to both baselines and targets and, occasionally, to comparison or control groups. In many postconflict situations, data systems have been weakened, destroyed, or discredited by their association with a deposed government. As a practical matter,

there is a need to either commission rapid assessments that establish baselines or to analyze results without reference to baselines.

The use of comparison and control groups remains an option, but there are few examples of such methods being used successfully for M&E in postconflict settings. The need to carry out surveys to substitute for missing baseline data can add greatly to M&E costs and reduce its cost effectiveness.

2.5 DIFFERENT ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT CHANGE

Basic assumptions about change and the role of outside intervention are different in postconflict settings than in typical transformational development situations. These differences have direct implications for M&E, particularly as they relate to assumptions about attribution, incremental progress, and fragility.

- **Assumptions about Attribution.** The usual monitoring models assume a significant degree of equilibrium in the overall social-political context. This permits an assumption of “plausible attribution” of program outcomes (results) to USAID’s actions and outputs dedicated to that end. This essential assumption is often stretched beyond the limits of credulity in postconflict settings.
- **Assumptions about Incremental Progress.** The uncertain environment of many postconflict settings undercuts another important aspect of the established results-based monitoring model. By establishing quantitative baselines for indicators with a series of gradually increasing future targets, the model assumes that incremental progress is the norm. Postconflict settings such as Iraq and Afghanistan can be beset by unpredictable and abrupt ups and downs, as well as strong geographic variations due to shifting security situations. In settings such as South Sudan, low local absorptive capacity, even if anticipated as a problem, can slow incremental progress to a seeming crawl.
- **Assumptions about Fragility.** USAID’s Fragile States Strategy stresses that the most important objective for fragile states is to reduce fragility and address factors that undermine political and social stability.⁴ From this perspective, quality education is no longer the only or even the most important outcome resulting from repaired and furnished classrooms, and improved health is no longer the only or most important outcome of a national vaccination day. The planned outcome of these events and activities may instead be some measure of increased security, stability, and optimism that results from the resumption of familiar and valued social services. In this setting, tracking outputs is even more relevant than it would be for normal results-based performance monitoring. Similarly, monitoring the rapidity of accomplishment and the distribution of outputs across regions and target groups has special meaning in postconflict programming, and tracking changes in public opinion has particular significance. Programs in postconflict settings are frequently imprecise about the relationship between sectoral activities and the broader goal of reducing fragility.

2.6 NEED FOR SPATIAL PRECISION

Geography is especially important in postconflict settings. Monitoring information and databases must code activities according to spatial coordinates and be able to report and present information visually and spatially. Problems that complicate this task include lack of consistent place descriptors, reluctance to share security-sensitive information, and absence of an agreed information integrator.

- **Lack of Consistent Place Descriptors.** Often, the simple lack of standardization of place names presents serious problems at the outset in postconflict situations. In addition to random differences in

⁴ USAID, *Fragile States Strategy* (2005); USAID, *Measuring Fragility*.

spelling, opposing sides in the conflict often insist on different place names for the same locale. Part of the stabilization process can involve removing and changing place names reminiscent of an earlier regime. Even when the place is identified precisely by using Global Positioning System (GPS) technology, one still needs to know what to call it, if it has analytical significance. In Sudan, for instance, the Bahr-el-Arab (Arab River), a significant boundary between the Arab north and the “African” south, is called the Kir River by African-Sudanese ethnic groups such as the Dinka. Another common problem is the proliferation of lower-level administrative and political jurisdictions as larger districts are split up to accommodate patronage and special interest pressures. The SPLA in South Sudan and the Government of Afghanistan both multiply districts as part of this ongoing political process.

- **Reluctance to Share Security-Sensitive Information.** When monitoring databases that show precise locations of activities and investments, an issue sometimes raised is that sharing this information presents a potential security risk. USAID/Iraq, after successfully pushing for thorough spatial recording and presentation of all activities, decided—understandably—to downplay this element of the monitoring database when the security situation deteriorated.
- **Absence of an Agreed Information Integrator.** Where no local government or lead donor is empowered to establish an integrated database, it has proven very difficult to create and maintain a single database for multidonor information. Many donors lack integrated, location-specific information, even on their own activities.

In settings that include a significant international military presence and high political salience (such as Afghanistan and West Bank/Gaza), satellite telemetry is often available to assist the spatial mapping of donor activity.

2.7 INSTITUTIONAL COMPLEXITY

While problems of institutional complexity affect M&E of assistance programs in all countries, they are particularly worrisome in postconflict settings. This complexity derives from the larger than usual number of U.S. and international agencies, the need to coordinate across multiple types of implementing partners, extreme weakness of host-country institutions, and the special problems of managing a big program with a small and sometimes inexperienced staff. While these problems are not unique to postconflict settings, they are typically more extreme in these settings.

- **Larger than Usual Number of U.S. and International Agencies.** In high-profile settings, the strong presence of the U.S. military, the intense interest of the National Security Council, and the active involvement of the U.S. Embassy in the details of development assistance often result in multiple metrics and different institutional reporting cycles. Moreover, the United States is not alone in carrying out most postconflict assistance programs. In many postconflict countries, the United Nations (UN) and various coalition partners play significant and often predominant roles. Given security and political goals and realities, it is particularly important that information systems reflect the efforts of multiple agencies, while at the same time meeting U.S. requirements to monitor and assess the performance of U.S.-funded programs. Afghanistan, Kosovo, Haiti, and South Sudan are (or were) all veritable non-melting pots of multiple international and bilateral agencies.
- **Need to Coordinate across Multiple Types of Implementing Partners.** Monitoring USAID/Iraq’s education program in 2003–04, for example, required information from a U.S. consulting firm, a large U.S. construction company and multiple Iraqi subcontracted construction companies, the Army Corps of Engineers (ACE), five U.S. private voluntary organizations, five consortia of U.S. universities, and two UN agencies. To function optimally, a monitoring information system requires a reasonable degree

of common definitions, uniform reporting cycles, and compatible reporting formats. Even with added clauses in contracts, grants, and cooperating agreements, efforts to impose needed levels of uniformity across such an array of institutions are problematic.

- **Extreme Weakness of Host-Country Institutions.** Typically, USAID monitoring systems rely on host-country institutions and statistics for baselines, targets, and time-series data. In postconflict settings, the weaknesses, nonexistence, or fractured nature of host-country governments present serious challenges. The tasks of monitoring without established national institutions, strengthening M&E capacities in such government institutions as exist, and establishing new civil-society monitoring organizations add significantly to the costs and responsibilities of USAID monitoring programs in postconflict settings.
- **Special Problems of Managing a Big Program with a Small Staff.** In a postconflict country, the USAID mission is often overextended, since relatively few people are managing and overseeing uncharacteristically large and complex assistance programs.⁵ Moreover, in the rapidly changing environment of postconflict settings, priorities change. Implementing partners are often directed to alter the direction, focus, or level of assistance faster than paperwork and contractual modifications can keep up. Rapid staff turnover and a higher than usual proportion of inexperienced staff compound this problem.

3. PORTFOLIO MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

A donor can take concrete and meaningful actions to improve the M&E of its overall portfolio or activity in postconflict settings, but only with senior management's full and unambiguous support. Given the many competing priorities and complicating factors present in postconflict settings, midlevel officials and implementing partners will legitimately find good reason to neglect M&E unless leadership—beginning at the highest levels—makes clear that it needs such information to manage and defend programs. For the most politically salient postconflict countries, this leadership and direction should reflect interagency perspectives and anticipate interagency audiences.

3.1 PERFORMANCE MONITORING

In Afghanistan, Iraq, West Bank/Gaza, the Balkans, and other postconflict settings, three mission-level practices appear to have contributed to effective portfolio-wide monitoring:

- developing a country strategy and a performance management plan (PMP)
- establishing a specialized M&E project to support the program office and coordinate the monitoring efforts of multiple implementing partners
- developing or adapting a comprehensive performance information database

Examples cited below are drawn primarily from Iraq and Afghanistan.

1. Developing a Country Strategy and Performance Management Plan

While there are understandable pressures in the early days of a postconflict program that delay the development of a country strategy and PMP, there is much that can be done. A review of actions taken by USAID missions in Iraq and Afghanistan offers insights into what is possible and where improvement is needed.

⁵ USAID, *Operating in High Threat Environments* (2005).

Iraq

USAID/Iraq did not develop a full strategy statement during its first year, choosing instead to rely on documents produced in Washington through interagency committees before the U.S. military action began. Despite serious limitations relating to the ability to conduct informed needs assessments or establish valid baselines, these documents established an overall concept for the program and ambitious output targets for all sectors.

In the early months of FY 2004, USAID/Iraq developed a more complete results framework and a draft PMP for each of its strategic objectives (SOs). The mission maintained these in draft status, but used them as the basis for quarterly monitoring reports and a program-wide evaluation. In some respects, keeping the PMP in draft provided a framework for monitoring while maintaining a degree of flexibility in the face of changing conditions. Indicators and targets were, for the most part, output indicators that could be tracked within short time periods. Quarterly, monthly, weekly, and daily reporting noted the differential progress (or lack thereof) for a large number of outputs: number of schools and local councils established, community projects completed, short-term jobs created, and so on. USAID/Iraq has since developed a new strategy statement and intends to develop a PMP to match it.

Afghanistan

USAID/Afghanistan operated under an interim strategy throughout FY 2003 and FY 2004. In FY 2005, the Agency produced and approved a five-year country strategy (2005–2010). It was similar to those produced by other USAID missions, but more closely linked to the U.S. Embassy's mission performance plan than is the case in most countries. The mission developed a set of performance measures (accelerated success initiative performance measures) for all sectors in June 2003. These measures were modified during FY 2003 and incorporated, to varying degrees, into implementers' contracts. Targets were subsequently modified in response to inputs from other agencies. Early in FY 2006, the mission developed a full PMP to match its new strategy

While plans in Iraq and Afghanistan had obvious limitations, they provided a useful foundation for M&E, a point of departure for explaining subsequent changes, and a basis for establishing reporting requirements in contracts and grants. In both countries, the USAID missions remained cautious and flexible about preset targets, and each mission had difficulty keeping its plans up to date with changing realities. Nonetheless, both missions successfully tracked a large number of the indicators they had established and managed to report on them in very short time cycles.

2. Establishing Dedicated M&E Projects

Given the size and complexity of the M&E task and the relatively small number of mission staff in postconflict settings, establishing a dedicated M&E project has proven to be of great utility. Again, the experience in Iraq and Afghanistan is instructive.

Iraq

USAID issued a request for proposals (RFP) for a dedicated M&E contract before the initiation of the U.S. military action in Iraq. The contract was awarded to MSI two months after the U.S. occupation of Baghdad, and the contractor produced its first monitoring reports the following month. MSI produced monthly and quarterly monitoring reports for five sectors—education, health, economic growth, infrastructure, and local government—as well as ad hoc informational and analytical reports on demand. As the Agency's need for immediate access to data became apparent, the project provided personnel to assist USAID in managing internal information systems and onsite analysis of performance data. The project also included provision for independent verification and validation field assessments (manned by Iraqi project staff) in the areas of education, health, and local government. In March 2004, the Monitoring & Evaluating Program

Performance (MEPP) Project carried out a program-wide evaluation in Iraq. USAID rebid the project, incorporating lessons learned and changes into the new RFP. A new contract was awarded in 2005.

The premise that the M&E contractor would serve as a neutral or independent source of data proved not to work well in Iraq's highly stressed postconflict setting. The mission needed constant inputs of information, data, and analysis on demand. From its side, the M&E contractor depended largely on data collected by implementing partners and required active support from cognizant technical officers (CTOs) to assure the flow of needed data. This experience suggests that a genuine partnership is essential for success—not an arms-length relationship between USAID staff, implementing partners, and the designated M&E contractor. In turn, this kind of partnership requires active leadership by mission management.

USAID/Iraq also initiated an agreement with ACE to provide monitoring for the entire capital construction component of the mission's portfolio. This included technical oversight of all construction activities, including reviewing and approving scopes of work and technical specifications, tracking and monitoring progress, follow-up, and assessment.

Afghanistan

USAID/Afghanistan relied on its implementing partners to report directly on progress in meeting targets set. As in Iraq, the mission used ACE services to monitor infrastructure activities. For assistance monitoring its new strategy (2005–2010), USAID/Afghanistan is developing a comprehensive project to provide support to the program office in information management, including M&E, financial monitoring, progress reporting, and Geographical Information System (GIS) data on USAID-supported activities. This arrangement embodies the principal lessons learned in Iraq.

3. Establishing a Comprehensive Information Systems

By tracking the activities and investments of multiple implementing partners, well-designed databases in several postconflict countries demonstrated the potential to provide close to a real-time monitoring of program expenditures and outputs, using web-based communication. Over the past several years, several effective databases have been developed and deployed for this purpose:

- The web-based Project Reporting System (PRS) database developed by CHF International allows multiple nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to enter data from relatively remote locations in real-time.
- The UN has made a major commitment to its humanitarian information centers, which serve to coordinate, aggregate, and share information among numerous agencies and NGOs.
- ACE has robust databases for tracking all aspects and phases of large infrastructure projects.
- USAID's OTI and Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) each implement databases that track their many projects worldwide. In addition, most implementing partners have developed their own databases to track their operations and facilitate their reporting to USAID.

In Iraq, MSI developed a database for USAID that could incorporate data from OTI, OFDA, ACE, and PRS databases into a comprehensive information system on all USAID-supported activities and link them with successive versions of information systems developed by the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). The database was available on a website for approved personnel to use in responding to a variety of information needs. This database included primary and secondary codes that allowed cross-sectoral analysis and reporting on issues, such as the number of schools built, program activities in the Sunni Triangle, and job creation across all programs. All data were identified by location, either by governorate or a system of coordinates (GPS or military grid). The database also allowed comparisons of planned to actual

accomplishments and tracked numbers of (male and female) beneficiaries, along with specific local budgets and expenditures on projects.

USAID/Afghanistan also made effective use of databases as a tool for monitoring and reporting implementation progress. When the program was initially managed in Washington, D.C., an Access database was designed and maintained there as a repository of information on the Agency's reconstruction activities. This database was widely used in those early years, but its utility waned and eventually ended when it was moved to Kabul and not updated.

In September 2004, work began on the design of the web-based GeoBase Activity System to facilitate planning and coordination between governmental and nongovernmental projects and as a reporting mechanism between USAID and the government of Afghanistan.⁶ CTOs, prime contractors, or subcontractors enter data directly into templates on the web. Another well-regarded web-based system incorporating GIS elements was developed to monitor USAID's programs in West Bank/Gaza.

Each of these USAID-sponsored information systems initially were forced to operate without the benefit of binding and consistent data requirements for the many contractors, NGOs, UN agencies, and other entities implementing USAID-funded programs. This occurred because the grants, contracts, cooperative agreements, and interagency agreements were entered into before USAID's data needs were established, and no provision was made for introducing these requirements at a later date. In addition, no reliable system existed for consolidating USAID information with information on programs funded by other donors. While these problems lessened somewhat over time, they continue to be an area of difficulty and source of friction.

3.2 EVALUATION

During the 1990s, several studies by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), and the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) addressed the challenges of doing evaluations during complex emergencies, a phrase that usually implied a strong conflict element.⁷ For USAID, consideration of the role of evaluation in postconflict situations is overdue and underway.

Experience with evaluation in postconflict settings suggests two more major difficulties in conducting the type of program and project evaluation carried out in other settings:

- *Security.* Evaluation faces the expected challenges and limitations of a difficult security situation. Site visits and interviews with beneficiaries tend to be less extensive and less candid than is normal for a major evaluation.
- *Independence.* Maintaining an acceptable degree of independence for the evaluation function in high-profile and difficult settings is more complicated than usual.

Taken together, these limitations suggest that evaluation in a postconflict situation—particularly one that is highly political and insecure—cannot be both fully cooperative and adequately independent. It cannot manage access to beneficiaries that is broad, free, and safe enough to take the analysis beyond the closed

⁶ www.geobase.org.af

⁷ Plan:Net, *Enhancement of the Evaluation Function in UNHCR* (1998); DAC/OECD, *Guidance for Evaluating Humanitarian Assistance in Complex Emergencies* (1999); Alistair Hallam, *Evaluating Humanitarian Assistance Programmes in Complex Emergencies* (1998).

circle of implementing agencies and program participants. In addition, the evaluation cannot rigorously establish causal links between activities, outputs, and results.

In the absence of conventional program and project evaluation, there are alternative ways to accomplish important evaluative functions in postconflict settings. Many are already taking place:

- In Iraq, Afghanistan, West Bank/Gaza, the Balkans, and elsewhere, USAID programs supported opinion surveys and focus groups with strong involvement of local professionals.
- Extensive independent studies by organizations such as the Brookings Institution, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), and news media provide important insights on what is happening on the ground, what the populace think, and whether underlying assumptions of the overall program are holding up.
- Such USAID-supported efforts as “Telling Our Story,” the human-level experiences of individual beneficiaries, provide an important (albeit perhaps unrepresentative) insight into the effects of programs.
- Distribution and analysis of monitoring data offer important insights on accomplishments, problems, patterns, and trends.
- Independent validation and verification surveys carried out by Iraqi staff of the M&E contractor present a balanced view of the experiences and viewpoints of Iraqi participants and beneficiaries of USAID interventions.

Taken together, these recommendations do not imply that outcome-level assessment should rely exclusively on journalism or other independent third parties. Rather, the need is for multiple sources that deliver information from a variety of perspectives.

4. SECTORAL PERSPECTIVES

Sectoral perspectives, drawn from infrastructure, economic growth, education, health, and democracy and governance (DG), illustrate the general themes and variations of M&E in postconflict settings. This section briefly reviews experience and lessons; it should be read in conjunction with useful work outlining programmatic goals in postconflict settings by S/CRS, CSIS, OTI, and CMM.

4.1 INFRASTRUCTURE

In important respects, infrastructure is the most significant sector in a postconflict setting and the simplest to monitor. Because infrastructure investments are usually by far the most expensive programs, the U.S. government has great interest in monitoring the utilization of funds and the performance of projects. Infrastructure projects are also highly valued in postconflict countries, both for their large contribution to the national capital facilities and for the effect the rapid provision of water, electricity, and roads has on public attitudes toward the government and its external partners in reconstruction. Infrastructure projects often offer the most immediate prospects for job creation. Improved infrastructure is integral to achieving sectoral goals in education, health, economic growth, and democratic governance. By their nature, infrastructure projects lend themselves relatively easily to detailed output and lower-level outcome monitoring. Such output monitoring provides a good proxy for services provision and other outcomes.

Outputs and Outcomes. Monitoring infrastructure outputs provides a meaningful way of tracking the immediate effects of public investment in stabilization and reconstruction. Reporting on this week’s

accomplishments—the number of kilowatts generated; kilometers of roads (railroads, canals) completed, rehabilitated, or dredged; or hours of water or electricity service provided—offers easily understood and meaningful performance measurements on the reconstruction program. Moreover, estimates of people served by each service can be relatively easily and reliably extrapolated from such output measures. Although each infrastructure subsector presents its share of technical and definitional challenges, donors and host-country institutions normally have the ability to monitor such output performance at frequent intervals and aggregate the resulting information.

The focus on outputs, however, is not in lieu of monitoring and assuring technical quality in infrastructure. There is an important oversight element that ensures that construction projects meet engineering and other standards, in addition to meeting simple output targets. Meeting these standards is important for postconflict settings. One does not win hearts and minds with shoddy work, and local citizens know shoddy work when they see it. However, establishing and applying reliable and widely accepted indicators of quality is somewhat more problematic.

In postconflict settings, the regional distribution of infrastructure and infrastructure rehabilitation projects has particular and direct bearing on the dynamics of group grievances and reconciliation. For example, there are frequent requests for reports that indicate the number, size, and progress of projects in Iraq's Sunni Triangle, along with comparisons of these results with activities in other regions of the country.

Many infrastructure investments in postconflict settings support other sectoral goals. These investments meet social-sector goals by building or rehabilitating schools, hospitals, clinics, or water supply systems; stimulate economic growth by upgrading or rehabilitating roads, airports, ports, telecommunications, and electricity; or support local governance by carrying out local infrastructure projects. In other cases, the intended benefits are largely the short-term employment that infrastructure investments create or the opportunities they provide for strengthening local contractors. In such cases, outcome and impact measures should be drawn from these sectors, and evaluation should be in the context of these non-infrastructure goals.

In many countries, postconflict infrastructure investments have a specific and important objective of enhancing the country's integration as a single nation. In such cases, measuring increases in commercial transactions or movement of people between regions become useful outcome measures associated with infrastructure investments.

In infrastructure—as in provision of social services—perceptions have particular importance in postconflict settings. In particular, citizen opinions about the fairness of the distribution and provision of these services and the ability of their government to provide them directly influence attitudes toward the future and views about the legitimacy of postconflict governance. It should be noted, however, that public opinion data are notoriously variable over time; they are subject to dramatic swings, based on current events unrelated to specific donor interventions.

Establishing Standards. When problems relating to engineering quality develop, the results are usually highly visible and public. For example, buildings constructed to local standards (and not modern earthquake-proof standards) collapse when an earthquake occurs, as in Afghanistan. In addition, some of the hundreds of poorly supervised local construction firms used in the rush to complete school “restoration” work before the start of the academic year may do shoddy work, quickly eliciting complaints from local officials. Alternatively, donor-financed infrastructure is sometimes roundly criticized for being built to international standards that are much more expensive than prevailing local standards. Numerous such examples make clear the importance of seeking and articulating a meeting of the minds early on with regard to standards and performance measures that will be used to judge these activities.

Job Creation. Job creation, an important crosscutting issue in many countries, has particular importance in settings where incomes and hopes for the future have been eroded by conflict. Since youth are of particular concern in conflict-prone settings and most conflicts have an ethnic and/or regional dimension, disaggregating job data along these lines is important. While the aggregation of data on job creation faces methodological challenges, there are now well-established guidelines for overcoming these obstacles.

Measuring Capacity Building. For infrastructure activities, capacity building is of great importance from the outset. As quickly as possible, restored facilities need to be managed, operated, and maintained by local cadres. Monitoring of capacity building begins with a strong output emphasis—for example, how many nationals were trained—but quickly expands to include low-level outcomes as well. These outcomes include what percentage of those trained mastered the skills and practice them effectively and whether necessary maintenance procedures are taking place. Other indicators (such as cost recovery and number of complaints) are also relevant at this stage.

Spatial Dimension. For infrastructure, most activities and the populations they serve can be precisely expressed in terms of their locations and performance accomplishments can be presented spatially and visually. When facilities serve the entire nation or a large catchment area, minor interpretation problems can occur. In Iraq, for example, the number of Sunnis benefiting from U.S. investments was at first erroneously inflated because the largest newly rehabilitated electricity generation plant happened to be in their region, but it provided electricity for the national grid.

Fragility Measures. Periodic public opinion surveys can be used to track trends in citizen’s utilization and appreciation of public service delivery and provide an indication of whether such services are strengthening political stability. USAID’s local governance program in Iraq, for instance, carried out such sample surveys on a quarterly basis. While useful, the results of such attitudinal surveys are notoriously volatile; they are useful only as measures of trends over time.

4.2 ECONOMIC GROWTH

The effort to restart and grow the economy in postconflict settings is perhaps the most important element leading to the intended stability of the country. The immediate emphasis is normally the creation of short-term employment. At the same time, economic growth programs must begin building, rebuilding, and reforming economic institutions known to be essential for regulation and stimulation of economic activity.

In comparison to donor-supported programs in other sectors, there is wide variation in economic growth programs in postconflict countries. In some cases, this appears to reflect differences in country circumstances; in other cases, the variation appears to reflect a lack of clarity about the best use of economic growth activities to reduce fragility. Partly as a result, there is no consensus about best practices for M&E of economic growth programs in postconflict settings and relatively little adaptation to the idiosyncrasies of those settings. It is nevertheless instructive to explore some of the criteria and methods by which such programs are being assessed, as illustrated by the starkly different postconflict economic growth programs in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Afghanistan

Strategic Objective. USAID/Afghanistan formulated its economic SO as “a thriving *licit* economy led by the private sector,” reflecting that a substantial focus of activities is alternatives to poppy production. Success in achieving this SO is measured in terms of increase in foreign direct investment, percent of GDP from the private sector, and reduction in percent of GDP derived from drugs.

Afghanistan’s economy clearly meets the fragile conditions described in USAID’s *Fragile States Strategy*. In keeping with this overall strategy, USAID fosters institutional and policy development that promotes

near-term economic growth in the rural economy, increases incomes and improves physical infrastructure essential for growth. Two intermediate results (IRs) are accelerated growth in the rural economy and increased incomes through economic growth.

IR 1: Accelerated growth in the rural economy

This IR emphasizes agricultural activities, mainly the creation of alternatives to poppy production that are profitable enough to replace the drug in the local rural economy. The three indicators for tracking this growth are

- increase in production of selected high-value agricultural products and livestock
- percent of business support clusters that meet standards
- total change in rural household licit incomes

The first two indicators measure improvements that are closely tied to the interventions—the introduction of new products to replace poppy and development of business support centers. The performance data are fairly easily tracked in the process of providing the interventions. The third indicator is more difficult to monitor, given the secrecy of the drug industry, and it requires surveys to track.

IR 2: Increased incomes through economic growth

This IR takes a broader approach to putting the basic institutions in place to undergird the development of a private sector that can quickly impact household incomes and provide a sustainable basis for growth in the post-Taliban era. The three indicators to track progress are

- customs revenues and taxes as a percentage of government budget
- number of business licenses issued
- poverty index

The first two indicators are relatively easy to track: government customs, tax revenues, and budget are known quantities. The third indicator, at a higher level, requires survey work.

Collecting data on these economic performance indicators in Afghanistan is challenging. However, the indicators are relatively few in number, considering the size and scope of the program, and the implementing partners can be expected to devise acceptable means of collecting data and reporting. At the same time, the indicators are a useful and necessary means of monitoring economic activity.

Iraq

The U.S. economic recovery program for Iraq immediately following the war was more institutionally ambitious than that of Afghanistan. Iraq had a history of sophisticated economic activity. With the looming potential of large revenues from the world's third largest oil reserves, the program sought to quickly put in place a complete, modern, market-oriented set of necessary institutions. This U.S. program was developed by USAID, working closely with the CPA, and included nine IRs, each tracking three to five indicators. Whether the U.S. program was too ambitious is not an issue to be discussed here. Given its ambitions, the monitoring could not be too simple, and no less than 30 IR-level indicators were developed to track the program. The nine IRs and their indicators are listed below:

1. Strengthened financial sector through Central Bank, commercial banking, and interbank payment improvements.

- Central Bank's statistical capacity developed.
- Currency auction organized, implemented, and documented.
- Number of state-owned insurance firms assessed and oversight provided.
- Insurance regulatory and market-entry framework reviewed and long-term recommendations made.

2. Improved fiscal capacity in budgeted planning and execution, tax administration and modernization, and intergovernmental planning.

- Budget planning and organization developed and implemented; budget legislation drafted or approved.
- Budget execution supported by development of a financial management information system, budget analysis reports, a loans/grants unit, and core accounting system.
- Tax administration supported with a tax commission and strategic plan.
- Tax modernization supported with reconstruction levy fully implemented; corporate and personal income tax and land and property transaction taxes introduced.
- Intergovernmental fiscal issues addressed.

3. Expanded private sector development through job creation, commercial law modernization, small and medium enterprise (SME) development, microcredit, and state-owned enterprise (SOE) reform.

- SME and microcredit supply and demand assessed and participating banks selected.
- Number of state-owned enterprises assessed and disposition plan drafted.
- Commercial law framework developed and modernization implemented.
- Jobs program implemented, monitored, and reported in all governorates.

4. Improved utilities and regulatory capacity in electricity by determining cost structure, strengthening SOE capacity, and developing a master plan.

- Electricity delivery cost of service determined and new tariff policy developed.
- Electricity SOE institutional capacity strengthened.
- Electricity sector master plan developed.

5. Key special projects conducted, including currency exchange and Oil-for-Food transition.

- Currency exchange planned, implemented, and completed in three months.
- Oil-for-Food program transferred from UN to CPA jurisdiction.

6. Increased capacity of institutions supporting Iraq's agricultural economy.

- Capacity of the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), Ministry of Transportation, and Ministry of Water Resources to support private-sector agriculture enhanced.
- Private sector agribusiness increasing in number, regional competitiveness, and efficiency.
- Farmer organizations increasing in number, regional competitiveness, and efficiency.

7. Improved market-led environment in the agricultural sector.

- Price and market policies modified to enhance private sector growth.
- The SOEs of MOA operating within the national framework and moving toward independence.
- Regulation, certification, and research and extension programs of MOA established.

8. Enhanced food security for Iraqi population.

- Safety net program focused on need established.
- Increasing amounts of PDS (public distribution system) commodities purchased locally.
- Input and output prices providing incentives for domestic production.

9. Improved sustainability practices for resource use.

- Area of irrigation practicing efficient on-farm water management.
- Use of improved technology for crop and livestock production.
- Area of reclaimed and rehabilitated land.

Assessment of Indicators. There has been little adaptation of economic growth M&E methods and indicators for postconflict settings. Measures of short-term job creation are drawn principally from those

used in emergency or food-for-work settings, and other output and outcome measures are adapted from work in more hospitable settings. In addition to broader indices or measures of economic performance, most of the widely used indicators are output measures: for example, they count people trained and loans given or benchmarks, asserting that reforms—or steps to reforms—have been completed. Disaggregated analysis of the distribution of jobs, training, and other economic benefits among regions or groups often receives and warrants special importance in these settings.

4.3 EDUCATION

Outputs and Outcomes. Perhaps more than any other, the education sector has emphasized its role in addressing fragility. It provides a clear example of output measures used to indicate or proxy the accomplishment of higher-level, extra-educational results. Measuring a constellation of related outputs—schools fixed, school desks provided, textbooks provided, students enrolled, and so forth—can provide a strong indication that schools are up and running to a certain standard. This signals at least one dimension of a return to normalcy that is quickly felt in almost every family and community. In postconflict settings ranging from sparsely populated, rural African locales to dense, urban environments in the Middle East, schools provide a general sense of wellbeing and a safe haven. In postconflict situations with large movements of displaced persons, studies have shown that people will settle in locations where there are functioning schools and move on from locations where there are none. For example, border surveys of refugees repatriating to Liberia revealed that health and education services were two key requirements that determined where and when they resettled.

In addition to aggregate measures of access and enrollment, it is essential that M&E of education in postconflict settings disaggregate and closely track data on the equity of access and enrollment across any ethnic, geographic, or regional cleavages characterizing the conflict. This data will be (over)interpreted by many as a measure of the ability and willingness of the new government and the international community to attend to historical grievances or meet the needs of disaffected and disenfranchised groups. Similar disaggregated data on the ethnic or religious profile of teachers and school administrators are relevant in some settings.

Measures of educational quality and educational relevance are also critical, whether the goal is seen in purely educational terms or in terms of stabilization. Here again, proxy measures play an important role, particularly data on the availability of physical inputs and teachers. These have been shown to be relatively reliable measures of citizens' perceptions about educational quality. In the early postconflict period, tracking school enrollment provides an important summary measure, particularly since research indicates that parents are less likely to send their children to school if schools are not seen as meeting at least minimal quality standards. In most postconflict settings, tracking test scores, the percentage of students that complete grade five, and other standard measures of educational results is premature. However, measures of these outcomes will be required at some point, suggesting that they should be stated in results frameworks, even if not monitored immediately. Parents' attitudes about the quality, relevance, and utility of the education their children receive are also important measures, and these perceptions can and should be collected at the earliest feasible time.

Most postconflict education programs do not include major objectives for educational reform, but many do include new textbooks and new curricular components. In such cases, additional measures are needed to track the implementation and, if possible, the efficacy of these efforts.

Measuring Capacity Building. Capacity building is extremely important in postconflict situations. Especially in situations such as South Sudan, where security problems are held at bay by a peace accord process, the major challenge is to establish a functioning education system as rapidly as possible. At school and district levels, agencies begin training and orientation programs for teachers, school administrators, and

nascent parent-teacher associations. At the ministry level (and at its various levels of decentralization), there are efforts to develop standards, systems, logistical support, and so forth. At first, basic output information on numbers of persons trained, disaggregated by gender and identified by geography, is appropriate and useful as an indicator of the process of capacity building. Involving school officials in the monitoring activity builds capacity. Eventually, more sophisticated and country-specific outcome measures are needed.

Spatial Dimension. Elements of a education program that take place in schools are relatively easy and meaningful to track in a spatial database, and they provide an important and revealing record of the geographical and ethnic distribution of assistance. There are, as always, technical definition issues, such as what constitutes a school when two “schools” are using the same facility, one in the morning and one in the evening. The database on schools also provides the beginning of a reconstituted education information system.

Unique Educational Challenges. Conflict spawns additional challenges within the education sector that add complexity to effective M&E design. One is helping groups made especially vulnerable, including refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), child soldiers and war-affected youth, orphans and child-headed households, and disabled persons. Another challenge is addressing special issues that relate to the conflict, often through special classroom modules, including psychosocial support (for students and teachers), peace education and human rights, reduction of household and gender-based violence, landmine awareness, and other health and safety issues. A third is the need for remedial attention to education subsectors—postsecondary, vocational, adult, and nonformal—that tend to be neglected during conflict and in postconflict interventions.⁸

Phases of Postconflict Education. Some in the education sector find it useful to distinguish three overlapping phases of postconflict education:

- The *acute phase* features recreation activities and literacy and numeracy programming.
- During the *stabilization phase*, formal education is restarted, especially primary education.
- In the *reconstruction phase*, education systems are reestablished.⁹

The use of such distinctions has direct implications for the choice of indicators used to monitor and report progress.

Problematic Baseline Data. Official national education data in international databases are especially incomplete for postconflict countries. There are questions about the accuracy and reliability of the reported data, and they sometimes differ markedly from other official statistics on the country or from more recent survey results. Also, “official data are often not disaggregated by region and district, so that the effect of conflict is masked by national averages.”¹⁰

The Data Collection Burden. The burden of data collection is particularly troubling in postconflict settings, where information systems are in disrepair and meeting day-to-day operational needs is—and should be—the highest priority. This is illustrated by the example of one indicator relating to school attendance in a recent PMP that required school record books to be kept in triplicate and one copy periodically sent to the capital. Another indicator in the PMP was the “percent of PTAs that have raised at least five education issues annually to the community and/or local government, of which two are related to educational quality and equity issues.” It is reasonable to question whether the benefit of this information justifies the considerable cost and effort involved in collecting it.

⁸ World Bank, *Reshaping the Future: Education and Postconflict Reconstruction* (2005), 57–58.

⁹ Marc Sommers, *Education in Emergencies: Critical Questions and Challenges* (2004).

¹⁰ World Bank, *Reshaping the Future*, 4.

Common Indicators. Many indicators are being used in postconflict settings to track inputs, outputs, and outcomes at project, sectoral, or national levels. Real difficulties arise, however, in trying to distill those down to just a few for global use. By way of illustration, after six iterations of indicators for quality of education, Save the Children ended up requiring none for global-level reporting, though field programs continue to track their own quality indicators in-country. For example, using student flow (promotion, repetition, dropouts) was considered, but one country office reported that promotion through its first five grades is automatic. Save the Children experimented with indicators of “inputs for quality,” such as number of schools built, textbook/student ratio, and percentage of teachers given training, but decided these were process, not quality, indicators, given the paucity of evidence establishing causality between such inputs (except for textbook availability) and quality outcomes in education.

UNHCR’s Camp Indicator Report, introduced in 2003 for all major refugee camps, includes five indicators considered critical for monitoring the quality of UNHCR educational programs:

- percentage of the population aged 5 to 17 enrolled in school (M/F) [standard: 100 percent]
- percentage of students who successfully completed the school year (M/F) [standard: 90 percent]
- student/teacher ratio [standard: 40]
- percentage of qualified or trained teachers (M/F) [standard: 80 percent]
- percentage of schools with structured retention initiatives for girls [standard: 80 percent]

The number of people returning to postconflict areas is another measure used as an aggregate indicator of service availability and quality. Their return also reflects a contribution to and a measure of growing stability and confidence. The UNHCR reports the annual number of returned refugees and returned IDPs and extended the indicator for 2004 to include returnee areas. The UNCHR has not comprehensively published indicator data, but uses them for results-based management and has published some reports. New indicator formats for returnee situations were designed for 2005.

The Interagency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) in 2004 issued the Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, Chronic Crises and Early Reconstruction (MSEE), with indicators for each standard. The MSEE condense experiences and best practices into industry-wide sectoral standards for quality, but the accompanying indicators are descriptive, not operational, and are meant to be contextualized and defined on location. Implementers choose how to measure them. The MSEE are thus mostly used to ensure that quality is built into programs, rather than for centralized reporting.

4.4 HEALTH

This section reviews M&E practices that are specific to postconflict health activities (including drug supply, nutrition, water), including the nature and focus of these projects, suitable indicators, data collection methods, and some of the institutional arrangements for effective performance M&E.

Nature and Focus of Health Programs and Projects. The question of the SOs of USAID funding of health programs after conflict (or in fragile states) elicits differences of opinion, even within the Agency. Perhaps more than in other sectors, there are diverging views about whether health activities in countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Liberia, and Sudan are for the purpose of achieving improved population health, instilling confidence in a new government, or winning hearts to U.S. involvement.

Issues of what to monitor and how—and then what to evaluate—are inseparable from the intended purposes of the intervention. Unlike education, where the presumed linkages between children in school and reduced fragility are relatively clear, the logic of postconflict intervention in health is typically portrayed exclusively in terms of humanitarian or health outcomes. As a result, almost all of the M&E of USAID-funded health activities is focused on indicators of healthcare delivery and the health status (or health outcomes) of target populations. Typically, most of the data are generated by USAID’s

implementing partners and the UN, not by local governments, which tend to be late in the game in collecting data relevant to longitudinal comparisons of project impact.

Beginning with USAID Bureau for Africa strategies in the mid-1990s, various aid professionals have posited that postconflict health programming has been an effective activity for achieving peace.¹¹ They argued that community health programming created novel peace agreements during conflict (such as through national immunization days), and that it could promote longer-term tolerance and understanding when health systems include employees from contesting factions and provide services without regard for politics, race, or ethnicity. Because healthcare and physicians are widely perceived as being independent of politics and bias, aggressive health outreach might also serve to remind populations of common vulnerabilities and common solutions. This view of “health as a bridge for peace” has rarely been tested.

Similarly, some argue that the rationale for health interventions in postconflict settings should focus on government legitimacy: the minimum coverage of the population’s needs that a legitimate government must be able to display. Other rationales entail the signaling function of programs—tangible manifestations of reconstruction, progress, and increased employment postconflict.

Stages and Subsectors of Programming. To assess health needs and outcomes during emergencies, USAID and its international partners mainstreamed the use of SMART and Sphere (humanitarian) indicators, which are primarily the crude mortality rate and weight-for-height and immunization coverage percentages.

Health interventions go through an almost 180 degree change between the humanitarian response phase and the stabilization and reconstruction phases. Perhaps the biggest change is from a focus on small pockets of populations who are most in need, typically those in displaced persons camps, to a view of the whole population. This quickly changes the institutional relations and roles of the service providers. In South Sudan, for example, NGOs sought to minimize their dealings with the government during the long conflict and provide direct healthcare services to citizens of the country.¹² Yet when the conflict abates, the same NGOs often are expected to reorient their resources to second its staff, technical expertise, computers, and other resources to that same government, enabling it to extend its reach and control to areas it had previously marginalized. Monitoring then switches from being about direct voluntary delivery to the accountability, fairness, and scope of state capacities. An important rationale for restoring minimal health services to the population is that these are the services that a legitimate government needs to be able to display.

Providing Primary Care on a Population Basis

The transition from crisis to postconflict healthcare often involves the transition from the funding of NGOs, UNICEF, UNHCR, World Food Programme, and Red Cross programs to postconflict channels of funding directed through the host government, World Bank trust funds, umbrella grants, and private contractors. Even when the same organizations remain active in providing services, they need to adapt to new funding arrangements and changed M&E requirements.

Indicators tend to capture process (outreach, messaging) and output measures, such as number of children immunized, number of caretakers reached, and number of children seen. Health outcomes are understood to be the goal by most implementers, though representative prevalence surveys are done irregularly and their interpretation is hampered by inadequate guidance or training of field staff in inference and extrapolation.

¹¹ Rosalia Rodriguez-Garcia et al., *How Can Health Serve as Bridge for Peace?* (2001).

¹² Southern Sudan was such an example for many years, as were Somalia, Mozambique, Cambodia, Afghanistan, and now Burma.

Reestablishing Networks of Healthcare Facilities

In emergencies, funding is rarely for systems that entail referral and tertiary care. Postconflict, the reestablishment of integrated systems becomes the priority. Thus, indices of performance switch from simpler measures of primary healthcare contacts (visitations) to the building of and access to the more multidimensional system of medical care facilities, labs, referral linkages, and drug supply chains. A large proportion of postconflict reporting is about buildings built, which rarely leads to any calculations or estimates about benefits to the population. Experts skeptically claim that building, repair, painting, and other references to physical rehabilitation end up providing little insight into whether the health system is improved.

A recent WHO-convened interagency retreat claimed, “Methods and systems to measure and monitor overall sector performance are still insufficient.”¹³ The same WHO paper concluded that “to date there seems to be scarce or no agreement regarding how the collective efforts of humanitarian actors can be assessed.” One notable exception is tracking the evolution of drug supply, which can be and frequently is reported. Aid agencies record access to essential drugs and routinely measure this in terms of whether or not there was a shortage. “Is Mebendazole available now?” or “Were there recent stock-outs?” are sample questions.¹⁴ Such questions were also asked about oral rehydration solution, chloroquine, doxycycline, erythromycin, tetracycline, cotrimoxazole, nystatin, ciprofloxacin, and other drugs defined as needed in every clinic.

Landmine Injuries

Civilian landmine casualties became one of the largest subsectors of aid for a period on the Cambodian border of Thailand, and in Angola, Mozambique, Bosnia, Kosovo, and El Salvador. While much of the resource flow went to area-based minefield demarcation and demining, the aid community also developed benchmarks for hospital access, quality of hospital care, availability of necessary blood supply, and the efficacy of prosthetic limbs. Because most landmine-blast victims failed to survive only because medical facilities were inadequately prepared, aid agencies developed standards for M&E. Increasingly, simple and straightforward metrics have been applied to determine whether the prosthetics were still in use after one-, two-, or five-year followups.

Psychosocial Disability

During and immediately postconflict, the number of people claiming psychological and physical trauma often amount to more than half the population. A high proportion of women in Kosovo, for example, claimed to have been raped in the immediate aftermath of the civil war and forced migration of 1999. Over time, psychosocial disability persists, but it is crippling to only a small percentage who fail to recover from depression or post-traumatic stress disorder.

Though aid agencies have struggled to develop meaningful metrics to track these changes, they have been largely unable to define mutually agreed-upon measures of output or impact to monitor the effectiveness of their programs. There is a growing recognition that the most widespread measure used in the past—the prevalence in the population suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder—is unreliably diagnosed. There is too much inter-observer variation, and the measure is insufficiently appropriate to the cultural and social nuances of many postconflict societies. Where outcomes are measured, there is general agreement that they may need to rely on functional aspects of psychosocial disability (such as ability to hold a job) and not on the underlying ailment. Finally, when focusing on the psychosocial needs of children, there is an emerging consensus around the existence of safe havens (most often safe schools) as a relevant output measure.

¹³ Alessandro Colombo, “Tracking Health Performance and Humanitarian Outcomes” (2005).

¹⁴ The questions are from a health facility assessment tools form used in Kosovo and Liberia in 2000.

Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS

Reproductive health has come to be seen as particularly important postconflict, given that it is a lower priority (compared to child health, nutrition, and shelter) during early emergency relief programming. The maternal mortality rate (deaths in childbirth) has dominated attention. However, the experience of USAID and its partners has been that the maternal mortality rate is relatively intractable; it is therefore unsuitable for monitoring the progress of postconflict efforts in reproductive health. In the long run, the population's access to all-weather roads and transit-time to cities may prove to be more predictive of reductions in maternal mortality in difficult-terrain places such as Afghanistan, Kashmir, and Ethiopia than expansions in health facilities.

In the last few years, other measures in obstetric healthcare have been promoted in the fields of emergency relief, protracted refugee populations, and now postconflict. Coverage of the population by the Minimal Initial Service Package is now widely accepted as a useful postconflict performance measure.

HIV/AIDS receives more targeted intervention postconflict than in the past, principally in West Africa, Angola, Mozambique, Cambodia, Haiti, and Ethiopia, where it is growing fast. However, despite the international surge in attention to and funding for HIV/AIDS programs, the relationship of this disease to postconflict populations remains poorly understood or measured.

Water Supply

Increased importance of urban populations distinguishes postconflict benchmarks from traditional relief-supply targets, where water is generated through smaller-scale efforts (handpumps, buckets at rivers, wells). The output measure used most often during conflict is the percentage of the population with access to 15 liters of water per person per day. Postconflict, the focus has also been on the rehabilitation of more complex water generation plants.

Rehabilitating large industrial water systems in cities such as Maputo, Mogadishu, Sarajevo, and Baghdad tend to involve sui generis capital projects, and their evaluations are based on how quickly they meet commercial demand for one or two of the largest urban populations.

Community Based Management of Severe Malnutrition in Children

An emerging approach promoted by USAID is the extension of therapeutic feeding beyond clinics and into the community, a practice recently coined as community-based management of severe malnutrition in children. The goal is to expand coverage of the treatment of severely malnourished children with ready-to-use therapeutic foods that can be used at home, and it has the potential to address the nutritional status needs of larger populations in postconflict countries. This area of activity is new, and M&E standards are being pilot tested, with outcome measures of malnutrition defined by mid-upper arm circumference and weight-for-height. What this community-based approach adds is the prospect of expanding coverage to treat severely malnourished children. If implemented on a large scale, it can have a much larger public health impact than the traditional facility-based approach.

4.5 DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE

The implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of DG programs are inherently and directly political. Whereas health, education, economic growth, and infrastructure have an apolitical professional core, DG is more closely embroiled in political pressures, both local and international, that characterize postconflict settings.

Variations in Peace Arrangements. In monitoring and evaluating DG programs in postconflict settings, the precise definition of the political context is of great importance. Examples of activities conducted under conditions of relative stability and security, with a degree of consensus among the parties, are El Salvador and Guatemala after peace accords and, arguably, post-apartheid South Africa. The Balkans from the Dayton Agreement onwards—perhaps including Kosovo—provide an example of a peace agreement entered into under circumstances of duress. Though agreed-upon policymaking procedures, implementation mechanisms, and goals existed, there was a differential and uncertain degree of consensus and commitment among the parties.

These are clearly different cases than Afghanistan and Iraq, which involved unilateral and non-permissive military action, in alliance with local armed parties that reflected ethnic and political cleavages in the polity and society. Moreover, these later cases constitute postconflict situations only in that the initial and hottest phase of conflict has passed, and some civilian and political activities are possible.

Outputs and Outcomes. DG, like infrastructure, is characterized by an abundance of cross-sectoral linkages. Building schools is an educational output, but the principal rationale for this effort might well be its contribution to social and political stabilization or empowerment of local governments. By contrast, both the outputs and outcomes for DG programs are DG concerns, and programs undertaken with DG resources usually produce outputs (such as elections, independent media, and trained judges) that link directly to the broader political goals of restoring order, reforming political institutions, and enhancing government legitimacy. USAID's DG Office has invested considerable effort in developing and disseminating output measures for each of the subsectors in which it funds programs. While DG monitoring plans often focus on outputs to track short-term progress and the establishment of the necessary capacities for governing, they incorporate such elements as

- changes in public attitudes through periodic surveys
- benchmarks of constitutional progress
- expansion and development of civil society organizations
- introduction of local self-government and community action
- building of national and regional public administration capacities

Efforts have been made to tailor these measures to postconflict settings. The *USAID/OTI Guide to Performance Management*¹⁵ provides a collection of monitoring and evaluative best practices tested and developed during a decade of working in postconflict and postdisaster transitions. Other monitoring techniques are regularly employed: regular surveys of media articles and editorials that track shifts in subject matter and assessment over time. Human rights and rule-of-law programs, especially, have developed strong systems for strengthening independent media and utilizing surveys of such media to track critical changes in attitudes toward legal and judicial reforms. CMM has also developed a series of toolkits and a set of indicators relating to reducing and assessing sources of fragility.

Measuring Capacity Building. Capacity building is the megatask of the nation building that must follow and help ensure the end of a conflict. Organizations such as Counterpart International, PACT, and MSI have developed tools for periodically assessing civil society and community-based organizations and NGOs to improve their institutional strength and sustainability. These tools rate mastery of such elements as financial management systems, board development and organizational governance, resource mobilization systems, professional and community outreach mechanisms, strategic planning, and M&E systems. USAID's Bureau for Europe and Eurasia developed and refined an NGO sustainability index,

¹⁵ *USAID/OTI Guide to Performance Management* (2002).

elevating such analysis to the national level. Such tools serve to measure effectiveness in capacity building, but also are adopted as IR level indicators in USAID PMPs.¹⁶

On the grander scale, postconflict programs address building, rebuilding, and reforming national bureaucracies and deliberative bodies. In South Sudan, Iraq, Afghanistan, and other locales, entire governments need to be staffed with individuals who must be trained, often from scratch, in techniques of public management. This includes budgeting, information systems, human resources management, civil service scales and systems, reporting cycles, communication, auditing, and establishing and following common protocols and processes. In countries where war has resulted in relative anarchy or a military approach to decisionmaking, the task is especially challenging. In the short-term, monitoring these efforts typically tracks the adoption of needed policies and the extent to which an adequate number of people are being recruited and exposed to required skills. The information in the box below, from USAID's website, is typical of such monitoring efforts.

**IRAQ LOCAL GOVERNANCE PROGRAM:
CAPACITY BUILDING BY THE NUMBERS**

- **Over 790,000 Iraqis participated in 22,000 democracy dialogues.**
- **The Local Government Program established or rebuilt 16 governorate councils, 90 district councils, 194 city or subdistrict councils, and 437 neighborhood councils.**
- **The program trained 2,000 council members (15 percent women), 28 governors, 42 deputy governors, 420 director generals, and key staff in 380 departments.**

By their very nature, political interventions require longer periods of time for fruition. While many short-term measures may be adopted as indices of progress toward improvements in democratic functioning and good governance, there may sometimes be a tension between short-term and long-term success. This poses the question of what indices constitute the optimal bases for measuring effectiveness. For example, high numbers of individuals or organizations participating in community consultative processes may offer short-term indices of inclusive political processes, but such high numbers may result from relative neglect of the truly representative selection mechanisms that require longer germinating efforts. Ultimately, capacity building is about ownership.

Security Sector Reform and Capacity Building. Among the aspects of institutional reform most likely to be urgently required in postconflict settings, security sector reform warrants special mention. While USAID and other donors have made substantial progress in recent years in understanding the programming needs and performance milestones associated with security sector reform, there is widespread agreement that much remains to be done.

Constitutions and Elections. The most visible events of the postconflict process are elections and the adoption of a new constitution. As a result, these items receive intense and disproportionate attention from the media, the world public, and senior politicians, at least for high-profile places. Even for a country such as Sierra Leone, an election or constitutional agreement rates an article in *Newsweek*, whereas local government capacity building, school construction, and community development rarely get such attention. From a technical point of view, monitoring these pinnacle elements of democratic progress is

¹⁶ USAID/Afghanistan uses the Counterpart Civil Society Organization Scale as an indicator in its PMP.

straightforward. Elections either do or do not occur. The relevant qualifiers are qualitative, discursive, or narrative, such as whether they were free and fair. At most, elections reflect quantitative criteria that are relatively straightforward to obtain and interpret, such as voter registration and participation rates. Constitutional processes either do or do not occur; they are judged for success by their relative inclusiveness. Constitutions are adopted or not adopted. These considerations are susceptible to good journalistic reporting or international observer missions; they do not typically require separate performance M&E instruments.

Dynamic Disequilibrium. DG programs are particularly susceptible to distortion and capture by actors who either enjoy the benefits of incumbency or are disposed by their exclusion to be spoilers. This places a premium on carefully planning and assessing process variables, such as what process is used to make key decisions, who is providing services and receiving credit for doing so, and who is doing the M&E. This consideration explains why many postconflict programs emphasize the governance as well as the methodological benefits of participatory and community-based M&E methods.

Absence of Normal Accountability Mechanisms. This factor is related to the collapse of state functions, but is of broader scope. It may result from more general social dislocation from conflict, which may have dissolved chains of accountability within other social institutions, including commercial enterprises and community, religious, and other organizations. Accountability mechanisms likely to be stressed or destroyed include those provided through professional audit and accounting functions, hierarchical managerial structures, and client and patronage networks in the society. This weakness also clearly detracts from effective M&E in all sectors, but it looms larger here—perhaps symptomatic of the pervasive importance of governance in all other sectors—because of its integral relationship to issues of governance and political responsiveness.

5. SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS

Recent experience with M&E in postconflict settings supports the following conclusions on approaches that work—and work better with improved understanding of how M&E approaches in postconflict settings differ from normal M&E models:

1. Early development and approval of a strategy and results framework contribute to strong monitoring, even in postconflict environments.

Logic. The results framework provides a logical picture of the higher-level objectives of programs, even if the main monitoring effort focuses on many lower-level outputs in the near-term.

Transparency. The strategy and results framework provide a transparent view of longer-term development intentions that might otherwise be obscured by intense short-term pressures. The framework can help personnel of many implementing partners and newly hired USAID staff (including local staff) to understand the connection between the larger picture and the microimplementation and monitoring.

Phases. The strategy and results framework can indicate that the monitoring will shift to outcomes at a later stage, even if monitoring now involves output-level indicators. This forestalls criticism (such as from the Government Accountability Office in Afghanistan) that USAID is interested in measuring only the number of hectares irrigated, not the effects of these changes on agricultural productivity and incomes.

2. Output indicators (rather than outcome indicators) are often effective and legitimate monitoring measures during early efforts at stabilization.

Output indicators are relatively easy to track and count: they change frequently enough to show progress (or the lack thereof) over short time spans, and they demonstrate necessary ingredients (if not always sufficient ingredients) to contribute to the goal of increasing stability and reducing fragility. They also lend themselves to geographic analysis and incorporation into multidonor databases. However, the direct causal link between outputs and outcomes is often not plausible in dynamic, shifting, and dangerous postconflict situations.

3. Assessing the quality of outputs is important, especially in postconflict settings.

Track interrelated outputs. One cannot win the peace or win hearts and minds with schools or clinics perceived as not up to standard. The monitoring of quality takes place several ways. One simple way is to identify a collection of outputs that, taken together, indicate quality. Tracking the number (or percentage) of schools fixed and furnished, the numbers of textbooks printed and delivered, student learning kits distributed, teacher kits provided, and other similar outputs indicates that the education process has passed a critical threshold. Add data on number of students enrolled and number of teachers and a portrait of a return to educational normalcy may result.

Independent verification. Rapid visits to samples of schools, clinics, town councils, and water projects provide valuable impressions on whether facilities or programs are meeting basic quality standards. There are many low-cost ways of doing this, even under a strained security situation, including random site selection and use of uniform checklists. More can be done in this regard in most postconflict situations.

Independent oversight arrangements. Independent oversight of capital projects is a high priority. In some cases, this function can be effectively contracted out, either locally or internationally. ACE's responsibility to oversee and monitor the capital construction program provides an important example that quality of outputs can be enhanced under the pressures of rapid reconstruction.

4. Systematic tracking of opinions and perceptions adds an important dimension.

Given the emphasis in postconflict settings on stabilization, recovery, and government legitimacy, the public's perceptions and interpretations of what is happening are at least as important as more conventional performance measures. There is considerable and growing experience on how to maximize the rigor and utility of such opinion surveys in postconflict settings. Nevertheless, it is important to note that opinion data is subject to dramatic change; such changes may be based on current events unrelated to specific donor interventions.

5. Establishing effective multisector (and, ideally, multiagency) databases is critical.

An important element of the database is the country-level institutional mechanism for providing timely data, sharing data, and reaching agreements on definitions and protocols that meet overall system requirements, while simultaneously meeting the professional requirements of different sectors.

6. Evaluation in postconflict settings is most effectively viewed and implemented in a broader perspective than the traditional evaluation model for international development programs.

Timing. The evaluation function should be ongoing from the early days of the program. The one-time mega-evaluation is naturally subject to extreme pressures and faces constraints (lack of access to citizens and locations) that impede the in-depth investigation.

Multiple strands, institutions, and types of activity. The use of multiple data sources is particularly important in postconflict settings. In particular, the evaluation function should build on, utilize, and

contribute to the related surveys, opinion polls, and public relations reporting of USAID, its implementing partners, independent watchdog organizations, media, and local civil society institutions.

7. High-level leadership is indispensable to the establishment and maintenance of effective M&E in postconflict settings.

Given the competing priorities and technical complications outlined, midlevel officials in donor agencies and the implementing organizations they fund will not prioritize M&E unless they are certain that their bosses demand it.

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