

Monitoring Toolkit: Activity Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Plan Template

Introduction

The template that follows this introductory page provides a suggested outline and basic guidance for the development of an Activity Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Plan (Activity MEL Plan) by a USAID implementing partner. As noted in USAID's **ADS 201.3.4.9/A**: "Activities must have an approved Activity MEL Plan in place before major implementation actions begin." For further policy on Activity MEL Plans, see [ADS 201.3.4.9](#) This template should be used in conjunction with the guidance provided in [USAID How to Note: Activity MEL Plan](#).

How to Use This Template

While Activity MEL Plans are required for most activities, this template is not required, nor is there any Agency-wide required structure or format of Activity MEL Plans. This template is merely offered as a helpful tool for USAID staff and implementing partners.

USAID Missions and other Operating Units that choose to provide a standard Activity MEL Plan template to their implementing partners may adopt this template, adapt it, or devise a standard template of their own. USAID Missions and other Operating Units may also leave the decision of how to structure and format the Activity MEL Plan to their implementing partners.

USAID implementing partners should consult with their COR or AOR about specific requirements or recommendations for their Activity MEL Plan.

The italicized text in each template section provides guidance and recommendations for what to include in that section, including examples and sample text. Required elements are noted in footnotes. For additional guidance on Activity MEL plans see the USAID [USAID How to Note: Activity MEL Plan](#).

Please note that per ADS 579.3.1, all activities that require an Activity MEL Plan also require a Data Management Plan (DMP). The DMP may be developed and approved as a section of the Activity MEL Plan or as a separate plan. For further guidance on Data Management Plans, see [ADS 579](#).

ADS 201, ADS 205, and the GE/FE Policy require rigorous monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) that takes gender into account. For additional guidance on Activity MEL plans see [ADS 205.3.8](#) on Gender Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning.

Given the Biden-Harris Administration's prioritization of climate change and GCC tackling as prerequisite for successful development and humanitarian assistance it is important to start using and reporting on GCC indicators when relevant and appropriate to your activity interventions: Review the Global Climate Change Standard Indicators Handbook (Definition sheets) [2020_USAID_GCC-Indicator-Handbook-August-2020-Update.pdf](#)

For remote monitoring techniques and when they can be employed, use this guide [USAID Remote Monitoring Guide - May 2020.pdf](#) to identify and pursue appropriate remote-monitoring approaches for your needs.



[ACTIVITY TITLE]

Activity Monitoring, Evaluation, & Learning Plan

Approved Date: [e.g., April, 2018]

Version: [1]

Contract/Agreement Number: [Insert number]

Activity Start and End Dates: [e.g., January 1, 2018 to December 31, 2023]

AOR/COR/Activity Manager Name & Office: [Insert name, office]

Submitted by: [Insert name, position]

[Name of Prime Implementing Partner (IP)]

DISCLAIMER

The author's views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

I. Introduction

This section introduces the Activity MEL Plan, describes the structure of the plan, sets the time period covered by the plan, and describes how it will be updated.

ACTIVITY THEORY OF CHANGE

Include a brief summary description of the activity theory of change.

LOGIC MODEL

Add a logic model that graphically depicts the activity theory of change. Performance indicators and learning questions may be added to the logic model where relevant to indicate the connection between elements of the theory of change and MEL tasks.

2. Monitoring Plan

Describe the activity's monitoring approach, including monitoring processes and systems.¹ The Activity MEL Plan must include performance indicators and should include context indicators but should also look beyond indicators to incorporate other monitoring approaches, when needed. The Monitoring Plan should detail each monitoring approach used and associate it with specific results from the Activity's LM.²

A. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

This section describes how the Activity will monitor progress towards the results. A summary of the relevant performance indicators of the activity's outputs and outcomes, their baseline values (or plan for collecting baseline), and annual targets should be listed in the Annex.³ USAID requires the disaggregation of performance data by sex for all performance indicators that capture data about people⁴. Setting gender-sensitive indicators and performance targets are also recommended⁵. Criteria for selecting indicators can be found [here](#)

Use this guide when selecting indicators related to GCC:

https://www.climatelinks.org/sites/default/files/asset/document/2022-06/2022_USAID_GCC-Indicator-Handbook-June-2022-Update.pdf and this guide for remote monitoring [USAID Remote Monitoring Guide - May 2020 \(2\).pdf](#)

Describe efforts to monitor activity performance, including processes for collecting, processing and reporting high quality data. This should include relevant details about sampling, tool design, data collection protocols, use of sub-contractors and project staff for data collection, quality assurance procedures, etc. Details on methods used to collect and analyze data for specific indicators should be

¹ This is a required element of an Activity MEL plan per USAID ADS 201.3.4.10.

² If you work in a region that may face security or travel restrictions, think about opportunities or needs for potential remote monitoring from the start.

³ This is a required element of an Activity MEL plan per USAID ADS 201.3.4.10.

⁴ See ADS 201.3.5.6(g) and ADS 205.3.6

⁵ Ask your Backstop for F/ standard gender indicators

explained in its PIRS.

USAID expects performance data to meet data quality standards outlined in the ADS. Please note that CORs/AORs are responsible for conducting data quality assessments (DQAs) of PPR indicators and other indicator data the Mission collects and reports externally. DQAs are conducted prior to reporting and then every three years thereafter.]

BASELINES AND TARGETS

Baselines and targets are used to assess progress in implementation and achievement of outcomes. All intermediate outcome and end-of-Activity outcome indicators must have baselines established at the time the Activity MEL plan is submitted for approval or a concrete plan to collect the data. If the Activity does not have baselines set, please describe how and when baseline data will be collected and targets set.

Information about baselines and targets are stored in the PITT and the DIS. All indicators, including outputs, must have targets for the life of the indicator. Data reported to USAID must include baselines and targets for disaggregated data in accordance with the Activity's PIRS, the Mission's PIRS or the standard indicator PIRS. Targets may be set quarterly, annually, or at another frequency are determined by terms of the award, IP management needs, and USAID reporting requirements. To the greatest extent possible, targets should align with USAID's fiscal year calendar.

Although set for the life of the project, targets can be adjusted based on new information and changing circumstances (see CLA section). Any major changes to targets should be noted here, in addition to updates to the modification log.

For more Agency information on baselines and targets, including USAID's Monitoring Toolkit's Performance Indicator Baselines Version 2 (2021) and Targets Version 2 (2021), please go to USAID's Learning Lab at <https://usaidlearninglab.org>

B. CONTEXT MONITORING

Describe any efforts for monitoring the activity's context and emerging risks that could affect the achievement of the activity's results.

C. DATA QUALITY ASSURANCE

This section details data quality assurance procedures that will be used to ensure data quality, such as staff training and internal DQAs,⁶ addressing the five USAID data quality standards: Validity, Integrity, Precision, Reliability and Timeliness. Data limitations identified during DQAs should be documented in the data limitation section of the PIRS.

E. Third Party Monitoring (TPM):

⁶ Resources on DQA can be found here: [How-To Note: Conduct a DQA](#); [USAID Recommended DQA checklist](#)

Per ADS 201.3.4.10 and ADS 201.3.4.10, third-party monitoring helps USAID Missions comply with Agency's ADS guidelines regarding the need for independent validation, verification, and monitoring on USAID-funded activities.

USAID/WBG Mission hires a MEL contractor to support the AORs in their monitoring efforts and to ensure compliance per the above ADS requirements. As a USAID implementing partner, we expect you to provide all needed support to have them do their duties. Therefore, the AMELP must state how the IP's MEL system and team will provide full cooperation and facilitation for the USAID/WBG Mission MEL Contractor TPM team for planning and conducting the TPM visits and other monitoring tasks

3. Beneficiary Feedback Plan⁷

1. Determination on whether collecting beneficiary feedback is appropriate for the activity. If not, then a written explanation for why not
2. Describe procedures for collecting feedback from beneficiaries.
3. Describe procedures for responding to feedback from beneficiaries.
4. Describe procedures for reporting to USAID.

⁷ This is a required element of an Activity MEL plan, "as appropriate" per USAID ADS 201.3.4.10.

4. Evaluation Plan

INTERNAL EVALUATION PLAN

If intending to conduct an internal evaluation using USAID funds, then complete the internal evaluation table for each evaluation expected over the life of the activity ensuring to adopt a gender-sensitive⁸ approach.

Internal Evaluation Table

| | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Evaluation Type | <i>Performance or Impact</i> |
| Evaluation Purpose and Expected Use | |
| Possible Evaluation Questions | |
| Estimated Budget | |
| Start Date | |
| End Date | |

PLANS FOR COLLABORATING WITH EXTERNAL EVALUATORS

If USAID is planning to conduct an external evaluation of this activity, describe how the activity will collaborate with the external evaluation team.

5. Knowledge, Data, and Information Management

This section describes appropriate data-management procedures to treat data as a strategic asset and to ensure that timely and high-quality monitoring, evaluation, research, and other data generated or acquired and are ready for analyses; accessible and usable for learning and adaptation (both now and in the future); sharable for accountability and transparency; and that the sharing and use of data come with strong privacy and security protections. Also include procedures for delivering USAID-funded data and information to USAID per award guidelines and Agency policies.⁹

DATA STORAGE

This section describes the systems and formats in which data will be stored, along with processes for sharing knowledge internally and externally.¹⁰

Data Security

⁸ [ADS 205.3.8.2 Evaluation](#) entails collecting appropriate sex-disaggregated data, asking clear questions about male and female roles to uncover intended and unintended positive and negative changes, developing indicators designed to track changes in key gender gaps from baseline to endline and using appropriate qualitative and quantitative methodologies.

⁹ If you have a related plan (such as a separate data management guide), that should be clearly referenced and linked, and the most important points summarized, as relevant.

¹⁰ It includes an explanation of how any paper-based data will be stored, as well as where electronic data will be kept. This section should also discuss that performance management information would be submitted to USAID using the Development Information Solution (DIS).

This section describes data security protocols to ensure information is safeguarded during storage and transferred to USAID. In particular, describe methods for protecting personally identifiable information (PII).¹¹

DATA ANALYSIS AND USE

This section describes how data will be analyzed and used to address learning priorities and learning questions. If specific software will be employed for this purpose, it may be useful to identify it by name or function.¹²

DIS AND GIS PLAN

This section explains how geographic information system (GIS) data will be gathered, managed, analyzed and utilized.

6. Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting Approach

Include learning questions related to the theory of change or knowledge gaps and plans to address them including gender gaps and considerations. Describe plans for strategic collaboration with other activities or stakeholders; reflection opportunities; how the implementing partner will use new knowledge and learning for adaptations; and plans for knowledge capture at closeout.

7. Resources

Specify the budget allocated to monitoring, evaluation, and learning by listing the tasks, estimated costs, and proportion of the budget.

8. Roles and Responsibilities

Describe the general and individual roles and responsibilities for activity monitoring, evaluation and CLA tasks and approaches.

9. Schedule of Activity MEL Plan Tasks

Provide a schedule of recurring tasks related to monitoring, evaluation, CLA or other planned learning efforts during the activity and the individuals who are responsible for them.

Schedule of Recurring Tasks Table

| Tasks | Frequency | Responsible person or team |
|-------|-----------|----------------------------|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

¹¹ Explain the data security approaches that will ensure all data is safe and free from unintended changes, such as limiting access and securing access through passwords.

¹² Explain how the data analysis methodologies reflect the type of indicators, and how these methods will transition raw data to learning. Include a plan for collecting and using geocoded data with administrative disaggregates. The Activity MELPlan should have a separate paragraph specifically discussing data analysis methods and explaining how these methods inform learning priorities.

10. Schedule of Activity MEL Plan Deliverables to USAID

List the various monitoring, evaluation, and CLA or other learning deliverables (including ad hoc and recurring reports) that will be provided to USAID.

Example Schedule of Activity MEL Plan Deliverables to USAID Table

| Deliverable | Frequency | Transmission to USAID via | Description of Content |
|-------------|-----------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

11. Change Log

Describe the changes that are made to the Activity MEL Plan over time.

Example Change Log

| Date: | Change By: | Change to: | Description of Change: |
|----------------------------------|--|---|--|
| <i>Effective date of change.</i> | <i>Person or team who made the change.</i> | <i>Section of the Activity MEL Plan changed. If indicator is changed, include the Indicator No.</i> | <i>Summarize the change that was made to the Activity MEL Plan and the reason the change was made.</i> |
| | | | |

Annex I: Indicator Summary Table

An Indicator Summary Table is provided below. This plan may be adapted to include other information based on what is most relevant to the needs of the activity implementing partner or the USAID Operating Unit.

Instructions

1. **Indicator:** State the name and unique identifier for the indicator that will measure the expected result listed in the next column. Disaggregates of an indicator may be listed on a separate row below the parent indicator. Provide sex-disaggregated data for all people-level indicators ([see ADS 201.3.5.7.g](#)).
2. **Result Measured by Indicator:** State the result statement and the unique identifier for the expected result in the theory of change that the indicator intends to measure.
3. **Type of Indicator:** State whether the indicator is (1) a “Performance” indicator or a “Context” indicator, and (2) a “Standard” indicator or a “Custom” indicator.
4. **Data Source:** State the source of the data or planned source of the data.
5. **Frequency:** State how often the data are reported to USAID.
6. **Unit of Measure:** State the unit of measure (e.g., number of hours, percent of households).
7. **PPR:** State “Y” if this indicator is included in the PPR or “N” if this indicator is not included in the PPR. (Note: standard indicators are required to be reported in the PPR.)
8. **Baseline Date:** State the month and year (mm/yyyy) when the baseline data were collected. If baseline is still planned, state the month and year when the baseline is planned to be collected.
9. **Baseline Value:** State the value of the indicator at “baseline,” i.e., before major implementation actions of the planned USAID-supported activity. Enter “TBD” if the baseline has not yet been collected.
10. **Target Date:** State the month and year (mm/yyyy) for when the target value is expected to be achieved. This may be aligned with the reporting frequency of the indicator, it may be an end-of-activity target, or some other relevant milestone date.
11. **Target Value:** State the estimated value of the indicator expected on the target date including targets for disaggregated data.

USAID/WBG ACTIVITY MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND LEARNING PLAN TEMPLATE

(Example Indicator Summary Table (Please use Mission required indicators per this list [Here](#)))

| Indicator | Result Measured by Indicator | Type of Indicator | Data Source | Frequency | Unit of Measure | PPR (Y/N) | Baseline | | Target (per reporting years) | | |
|---|---|-------------------------------|--|----------------------------|-------------------------|-----------|----------------|-------------|------------------------------|------|-------------|
| | | | | | | | Date | Value | FY 22 | FY23 | FY24 |
| <i>Examples...</i> | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Indicator DR.1.5-1 Number of USG-assisted courts with improved case management systems</i> | <i>Improved operations of civil courts</i> | <i>Performance / Standard</i> | <i>Implementing Partner count of courts assisted.</i> | <i>Reported annually.</i> | <i>Number</i> | <i>Y</i> | <i>09/2017</i> | <i>0</i> | | | <i>120</i> |
| <i>Indicator 3.4.1(a) Neonatal mortality rate (number of deaths of infants during the first 28 days of life per 1,000 live births) in childbirth facilities in the southern region</i> | <i>Improved child birth outcomes in the southern region</i> | <i>Performance / Custom</i> | <i>Survey of child birth facility vital registration data.</i> | <i>Reported quarterly.</i> | <i>Number per 1,000</i> | <i>Y</i> | <i>01/2016</i> | <i>55.3</i> | | | <i>40.0</i> |
| <i>Indicator 3.4.1(b) FEMALE - Neonatal mortality rate (number of deaths of infants during the first 28 days of life per 1,000 live births) in childbirth facilities in the southern region</i> | <i>Improved child birth outcomes in the southern region</i> | <i>Performance / Custom</i> | <i>Survey of child birth facility vital registration data.</i> | <i>Reported quarterly.</i> | <i>Number per 1,000</i> | <i>Y</i> | <i>01/2016</i> | <i>55.2</i> | | | <i>40.0</i> |
| <i>Indicator 3.4.1(c) MALE - Neonatal mortality rate (number of deaths of infants during the first 28 days of life per 1,000 live births) in childbirth facilities in the southern region</i> | <i>Improved child birth outcomes in the southern region</i> | <i>Performance / Custom</i> | <i>Survey of child birth facility vital registration data.</i> | <i>Reported quarterly.</i> | <i>Number per 1,000</i> | <i>Y</i> | <i>01/2016</i> | <i>55.4</i> | | | <i>40.0</i> |

Annex 2: PIRS Template

PIRS guidance and template is here [PIRS](#)

| USAID Performance Indicator Reference Sheet | |
|---|--|
| Name of Indicator: | |
| Name of Result Measured (DO, IR, sub-IR, Project Purpose, Project Outcome, Project Output, etc.): | |
| Is This a Performance Plan and Report Indicator? No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> for Reporting Year(s) _____ | |
| If yes, link to foreign assistance framework: | |
| DESCRIPTION | |

| |
|--|
| Precise Definition(s): |
| Unit of Measure: |
| Data Type: |
| Disaggregated by: |
| Rationale for Indicator (optional): |
| PLAN FOR DATA COLLECTION |
| Data Source: |
| Method of Data Collection and Construction: |
| Reporting Frequency: |
| Individual(s) Responsible at USAID: |
| TARGETS AND BASELINE |
| Baseline Timeframe: |
| Targets: (pls ensure providing the disaggregation values) |
| FY1 |
| FY 2 |
| FY 3 |
| Rationale for Targets (optional): |
| DATA QUALITY ISSUES |
| Dates of Previous Data Quality Assessments and Name of Reviewer(s): |
| Date of Future Data Quality Assessments : |
| Known Data Limitations: |
| CHANGES TO INDICATOR |
| Changes to Indicator: |
| Other Notes (optional): |
| THIS SHEET LAST UPDATED ON: 00/00/0000 |