

# MAPPING THE DEVELOPMENT JOURNEY – USING LARGE-SCALE SURVEYS TO UNDERSTAND CONTEXT AND ADDRESS LEARNING NEEDS

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Decision-makers in international development are increasingly inundated with information. Within USAID Missions this challenge may take the form of data being generated by multiple activities (i.e., monitoring and evaluation data) as well as independent evaluations and assessments conducted by USAID, other donors, and government and non-government institutions. Effectively navigating and utilizing this information is complicated by operational and technical challenges. Operationally, the USAID staff may be stretched, under resourced, or operating in technical silos. Technically, the data being generated may be of variable quality because of different methodologies, instruments, sampling approaches, and timeframes. Combined, these challenges lead to information excess and, paradoxically, a fragmented understanding of the overall context in which donors operate.

For large donors or within multi-donor contexts, such challenges are even more acute. As the largest donor in country, USAID/Jordan manages over 40 implementing partners and, with the five-year Memorandum of Understanding signed between the governments of the U.S. and Jordan in February 2018, a minimum annual budget of over \$1.25 billion through FY 2022. The methodological differences between the available data streams make it difficult to meaningfully aggregate or disaggregate findings. The available information may also present conflicting accounts of the context, without sufficient explanations for understanding “why” this may be or to “what extent” certain findings may be generalizable, and “how” the different findings may fit together. This also makes it difficult to holistically assess Mission performance and contributions while complicating any understanding of the relationship between donor interventions and a country’s overall development journey. All of this has a significant bearing on the ability of the decision-makers to make informed choices.

In response to these challenges and to enhance a better understanding of the overall context, USAID/Jordan requested its Monitoring, Evaluation and Support Project (MESP) to design a large-scale survey in order to measure mission indicators in the Jordanian population and among self-identified beneficiaries, provide implementing partners with survey data that could potentially be adapted for activity evaluation, and explore a learning agenda to identify and better understand the determinants of indicator performance.

## SURVEY DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

The MESP team started with a formal data and document review process, including review of the USAID Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS), Performance Management Plan, DevResults (Performance Management Information System), ArcGIS (Geographic Information System) and material on the [Jordan Development Knowledge Management Portal \(KAMP\)](#). This process was followed by semi-structured **learning agenda discussions**<sup>1</sup> with four USAID technical teams, including Democracy

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<sup>1</sup> According to the [Office of Management and Budget](#): A learning agenda is a set of broad questions directly related to the work that an agency conducts that, when answered, enables the agency to work more effectively and efficiently, particularly pertaining to evaluation, evidence, and decision-making. Once the questions are identified, a learning agenda also prioritizes and establishes a plan to answer short- and long-term questions of the highest value across relevant program and policy areas.

The USAID Bureau of Program Planning and Learning (PPL) [extends](#) this definition to describe a learning agenda as 1) a set of questions, prioritized and often organized around thematic areas, 2) a set of learning activities such as research, evaluation, literature review, stocktaking sessions, etc.,

and Governance (DRG), Economic Development and Energy (EDE), Education and Youth (EDY) and Water Resources and Environment (WRE). The purpose of these discussions was to understand the learning needs of technical teams that may be addressed through a large-scale survey. While some learning needs required generating broader learning agenda questions (see the below table) that will be answered by a combination of survey responses and other existing data, others were addressed more simply by developing specific survey questions; for example, questions focused on water consumption and conservation behavior amongst the general population.

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### **Learning Agenda Questions**

*What are the factors that help determine unemployment or entrepreneurship? What are the greatest impediments to Jordanians starting new businesses? (EDE TEAM)*

*What is the level of citizen awareness and knowledge of Jordan's decentralization agenda? At what level of governance does subsidiarity [decentralization] most effectively reside—local councils, municipal councils, or governorate councils? What is the locus of control for all three levels of government? (DRG TEAM)*

*What is the relationship between citizen engagement and citizen participation? Does stronger engagement and participation lead to improved government effectiveness and legitimacy? (DRG TEAM)*

*Are migrant population flows disrupting local governance institutions and economic livelihoods? How are local institutions, such as mosques, local meeting groups, and CSOs, adapting and responding to the pressures of migrant population flows? (DRG & EDE Team)*

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In addition to meeting with several IPs and the larger US Embassy community, the MESP team held detailed consultations with two of the USAID activities (Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening and the Local Enterprise Support Project) that have conducted large-scale data collection in Jordan to internalize any lessons learned, as well as to consider replicating some of the same questions in the survey to allow for comparison. Several of the existing USAID activity surveys were also reviewed to identify questions to be included in the survey.

The final version of the [survey](#) has modules on household information, general conditions and public services, education, citizen participation, women and society, employment, entrepreneurship and respondent background. Given the geographic spread of USAID in Jordan, a nationally representative sampling plan was developed. To allow for sub-national level analysis, oversampling was done to ensure a sample of 1000 (95% confidence level and a +/-3 margin of error) for each of the 12 governorates, resulting in an overall sample size of 12,000. This will allow the survey to provide national and sub-national level context and trends, as well as the ability to disaggregate data based on key demographic variables of interest such as age, sex, income, nationality, and level of education.

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and 3) a set of learning products that review and synthesize the evidence. Learning products may be accompanied by targeted and pithy communications such as infographics to highlight specific findings.

Specifically, the survey covers six mission performance indicators from all of USAID/Jordan’s Development Objectives (DOs), while also measuring a selected number of activity performance indicators.

<b>Development Objective and Indicators Measured by the Survey</b>
<p><b>DO 1: Broad-based, Inclusive, Economic Development Accelerated</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1.2.a Number of individuals with new or better employment following completion of USG-assisted workforce development programs (EG.6-1)</li> </ul>
<p><b>DO 2: Democratic Accountability Strengthened</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2.c Percent change in perceived government effectiveness</li> <li>• 2.d Citizen confidence level in select government, public services and religious institutions</li> <li>• 2.4.1.b Community ability to handle stressors</li> </ul>
<p><b>DO 3: Social Sector Quality Improved (Education and Youth)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality of education services</li> <li>• 3.c Percent of targeted at-risk youth reporting preparedness to enter higher education, vocational training and/or the</li> <li>• 3.2.a Number of students re-entering formal education system (partial)</li> <li>• 3.2.3.c Number of youth who report increased self-efficacy at the conclusion of USG supported training/program (cross-cutting youth</li> </ul>
<p><b>DO 4: Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Enhanced</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4.b Percentage of participants reporting increased agreement with the concept that males and females should have equal access to social, economic, and political opportunities (F GNDR-4)</li> <li>• 4.c Percentage of target population that views gender-based violence as less acceptable after participating in or being exposed to USG programming</li> <li>• 4.1.a Percentage of participants with increased level of knowledge and understanding of gender equality principles and women’s rights as a result of USG interventions</li> </ul>

For each Development Objective indicator measured, there are survey items eliciting respondent responses and exposure to USAID activities, or similar activities that are consistent with an activity’s development hypothesis and theory of change. Tracking indicators of exposure to a general development programming activity has been called the ‘funnel of attribution’ in which increasingly targeted subsets of the population are identified as potential, indirect, or direct beneficiaries of a USAID or other donor activities. These exposure indicators thus become proxy measures for exposure to USAID or other donor programming and are used to test the generic development hypothesis and theory of change of a given Mission activity, regardless of whether attribution to a specific USAID input may be feasible.

### ILLUSTRATIVE MAPPING OF ITEM TO INDICATOR

Learning agenda question	Development Objective / Indicator	Survey Questions	Analytic Approach
<p>What is the current composition of Jordan's labor market, and how has it changed in the previous 12 months? Are Jordanians gaining new or better employment in general, and/or as a result of USG, other donor, or government assistance?</p>	<p>1.2.a Number of individuals with new or better employment following completion of USG-assisted workforce development programs (EG.6-1)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compared to your most recent prior employment, would you consider your current employment to be better than your most recent prior employment, worse than your most recent prior employment, or about the same as your most recent prior employment?</li> <li>• In the past two years, have you participated in any training to improve your job skills?</li> <li>• How helpful was this training in helping you gain your current employment?</li> <li>• Think back now to the last five years. In the last five years, have you ever thought about starting your own business?</li> <li>• What were some of the reasons you decided not to pursue this idea?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Survey measures will be disaggregated by age, sex, municipality, and other covariates as demanded.</li> <li>- Data will be cross-referenced against USG, other donor, and government investments in workforce / enterprise development over the previous 12 months to see if there is any correlation between investments and subsequent employment.</li> </ul>

### SURVEY UTILIZATION

The data collection for the survey started in mid-June and conclude in mid-September 2018, with survey data and initial analysis products becoming available in mid-October. Once available, there are various possibilities for utilizing the survey:

- By providing contextual data at the national and sub-national levels and corresponding to USAID's DOs, indicators, themes and learning needs, the survey data can inform USAID's internal portfolio review conversations. Related to this, the survey data will also allow for an exploration of the key determinants of indicator performance.
- By integrating the learning agenda discussions into the development of the survey questionnaire, the results from this survey will help answer critical questions of interest to the USAID technical teams to help improve ongoing activities as well as to more effectively design future activities.
- The survey can provide a national and sub-national level baseline of key indicators, which can be tracked over time, assuming the survey is repeated. In the case of Jordan, where a new CDCS may be developed soon, this survey could also provide a good baseline of public opinion.
- The survey findings can be used by both USAID and implementing partners as baselines for specific activities, as well as to estimate realistic targets by tracking change overtime. As the sample size allows for meaningful disaggregation at the geographic (governorate level) and is based on demographic variables of interest (e.g. sex, age, employment status, etc.), baseline and targets can be set up for very specific sub-sets of the population.
- The donor exposure questions allow for identifying the type and extent of exposure. Responses from these self-identified beneficiaries provide an opportunity to test theories of change, as well as to set up realistic targets. For example, are there any differences (in terms of perceptions and attitudes) between those who have been exposed to donor interventions versus those who have not; or those who may have heard or noticed a donor activity, versus those who have not?
- Findings from this survey can contribute to the current conversations related to self-reliance by providing tailored country-specific data on general population perceptions and opinions.
- As part of addressing learning agenda needs, exploration of survey data may generate interesting questions that may be investigated more thoroughly by individual assessments or activity-level data collection.
- Given the broader relevance of the data, the findings from the survey are useful for a much wider group of stakeholders including USAID, USAID IPs, donors, Government of Jordan, private sector entities, and non-government organizations working in the development realm.