



CONTEXT INDICATOR REFERENCE SHEET (CIRS) TEMPLATE

Introduction

This resource complements ADS 201 by providing a template to USAID staff and partners for reference information about context indicators.

Background

Context monitoring is the systematic collection of information about conditions and external factors relevant to the implementation and performance of an Operating Unit's (OU) strategy, projects, and activities. Context indicators are a means to monitor factors outside the control of USAID that have the potential to affect the achievement of results.

A Context Indicator Reference Sheet (CIRS) is a tool USAID uses to define context indicators; it is key to ensuring context indicator data quality and consistency. While context indicators are not required, if a Mission PMP or an Activity MEL Plan includes them, the Mission should document indicator-reference information on them. A Mission may do this by completing a Context-Indicator Reference Sheet (CIRS), or by documenting the location of existing reference information when a third party collects the indicator data.

The first part of this document includes a table describing the recommended reference information to include along with an explanation. The second part of this document provides a blank template to be used to complete a CIRS for a context indicator. The third part provides a sample CIRS.

In many cases, USAID will be tracking context indicator data from third party sources, such as local government agencies, other donors, and multilateral organizations like the World Bank or the United Nations. When completing a CIRS from third party sources, USAID staff and partners should use the information provided by these sources where appropriate.

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CIRS Content	
Reference Information	Definition/Guidance
Name of Context Indicator	The full and complete name of the indicator should be specified. Context indicators from third party sources should use the name from that source, and also include the indicator number.
Name of Relevant Result	<p>If the context indicator is related to a specific result(s), list it here. It may be the case that the context indicator is not related to a specific result, but relevant to the overall operating environment. If so, list “operating environment” here.</p> <p>If the result has a number that corresponds to a Results Framework or logic model, this number should be included as well (e.g., Intermediate Result 2.1: Business Enabling Environment Improved).</p>
Precise Definition(s)	<p>Context indicators from third party sources should use the definition from that source here.</p> <p>Indicator definitions should clearly explain all terms and elements of the indicator to ensure consistent interpretation and that intended measurements are reliably collected.</p> <p>Vague terms (e.g., “effective,” “quality,” “youth,” “vulnerable,” etc.) should be defined. Indicators that pertain to populations, geographic areas, or scores should include specified parameters or range. An equation or description of any calculations required to derive the data should be included. If the indicator is a percentage or ratio, there should be a description of the numerator and denominator.</p>
Unit of Measure	Unit of measure (e.g., number of hours, percent of households) should be indicated. Minimum or maximum values should be included, if applicable. Indicate if the number is cumulative or specific to the reporting frequency.
Data Type	<p>Data types should be indicated. Data types include, but are not limited to the following:</p> <p><u>Integer</u>: A whole number having no decimal places (e.g., number of legislators who support the ruling party).</p> <p><u>Decimal</u>: Define if the number is expected to have a decimal and how many decimal places should be tracked (e.g., average rainfall in inches).</p> <p><u>Percentage</u>: Both numerator and denominator should be defined (e.g., percent of farmers with mobile phones. Numerator: Number of farmers with mobile phones. Denominator: Total number of farmers.).</p> <p><u>Proportion/Ratio</u>: Both numerator and denominator should be defined (e.g., Infant mortality rate.</p> <p>Numerator: number of deaths of children less than 1 year old. Denominator: 1,000 live births.).</p> <p><u>Currency</u>: Should include a conversion to USD rate, rate source, and date (e.g., price of wheat).</p>

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Disaggregated by	<p>List any planned ways of disaggregating the context indicator data and note why this disaggregation is necessary and useful.</p> <p>Sex: It is recommended that context indicators be disaggregated by sex when measuring person-level data.</p> <p>Geography: It is recommended that context indicator data be disaggregated by a geographic level that is feasible and useful for management purposes.</p>
Rationale for the Context Indicator	<p>Briefly describe why this particular indicator was selected and how it will be useful for managing the strategy, project, or activity. It is recommended that both a use and user for the indicator data are identified here.</p>
Data Source	<p>Specific sources of data should be identified. If data are from third-party sources such as a government ministry or international organization, include the location/link to the source. If data are collected by implementing partners, specify where the partner is getting the data. It is critical that sources be specific and detailed to ensure that data collection is consistent and verification is possible.</p>
Method of Data Collection and Construction	<p>Tools, methods, and procedures for collecting raw data should be described. Context indicators from third party sources should use the methods described by that source.</p> <p>Examples include document review, structured interviews, focus group interviews, written survey, ledger of patients, etc. If the indicator is an index or composite indicator, describe the procedure or formula for construction or calculation.</p> <p>Include information about who collects the raw data and where it is stored before it gets to USAID.</p>
Reporting Frequency	<p>How often and when data will be reported to or collected by USAID should be specified. Most common reporting frequencies are quarterly, semiannual, and annual. The reporting frequency should be the same for every instance of the indicator (i.e., individual indicators being reported by multiple sources should not have different reporting frequencies). It is recommended that reporting frequency remain constant throughout the life of the indicator.</p>
Individual(s) Responsible at USAID	<p>Specific staff member(s) directly responsible for the data should be identified. It is recommended that the specific position title be used rather than the employee's name (e.g., Contracting Officer's Representative of X contract, or Environment Project team lead).</p>
Baseline Timeframe	<p>The timeframe (month/year) that will serve as the baseline value for the indicator should be stated. If baselines have not been set, identify when and how this will be done.</p>
Trigger	<p>A trigger is a value or threshold which, if crossed would prompt an action by USAID, such as reexamination of the strategy's Results Framework or a project's theory of change.</p>
Rationale for Trigger	<p>Briefly describe why this/these triggers are important or would prompt an action.</p>

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Known Data Limitations	<p>Any major data limitations should be indicated.</p> <p>Including but not limited to data quality issues of validity, reliability, timeliness, precision, and integrity.</p>
Changes to Indicator	<p>Changes to an indicator that substantively affect indicator reference information should be documented and justified. This includes, but is not limited to: changes to the definition, reporting frequency, data collection methodology, data construction, and indicator name.</p> <p>Documentation should include detailed information on the changes made, the date the change was made, and justification.</p> <p>This space is not the place to note changes in the indicator actual data.</p>
Other Notes	<p>Use this space as needed.</p>
This Sheet Last Updated On:	<p>MM/DD/YY</p> <p>To avoid version control problems, type the date of the most recent revision or update to this reference sheet.</p>

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USAID Context Indicator Reference Sheet Template
Name of Context Indicator:
Name of Relevant Result(s) (Goal, DO, sub-IR, Project Purpose, Project Output, etc.):
DESCRIPTION
Precise Definition(s):
Unit of Measure:
Data Type:
Disaggregated by:
Rationale for the Context Indicator (how it will be used by the Mission):
PLAN FOR DATA COLLECTION
Data Source:
Method of Data Collection and Construction:
Reporting Frequency:
Individual(s) Responsible at USAID:
TRIGGER AND BASELINE
Baseline Timeframe:
Trigger:
Rationale for Trigger:
DATA QUALITY
Know Data Limitations:

CHANGES TO CONTEXT INDICATOR
Changes to Indicator:
Other Notes:
THIS SHEET LAST UPDATED ON:

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SAMPLE USAID Context Indicator Reference Sheet
Name of Context Indicator: Average precipitation in depth (mm per year); World Bank Indicator Code: AG.LND.PRCP.MM
Name of Relevant Result(s) (Goal, DO, sub-IR, Project Purpose, Project Output, etc.): IR 2.1: Smallholder Agricultural Productivity Increased
DESCRIPTION
Precise Definition(s): Average precipitation is the long-term average in depth (over space and time) of annual precipitation in the country. Precipitation is defined as any kind of water that falls from clouds as a liquid or a solid.
Unit of Measure: Millimeter (mm) per year
Data Type: Integer
Disaggregated by: Country
Rationale for the Context Indicator (how it will be used by the Mission): The indicator will be used to monitor rainfall conditions to inform agricultural productivity expectations. Performance targets related to IR 2.1: Smallholder Agricultural Productivity Increased may be adjusted as necessary.
PLAN FOR DATA COLLECTION
Data Source: The data are collected by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) through annual questionnaires.
Method of Data Collection and Construction: Questionnaire
Reporting Frequency: Annual
Individual(s) Responsible at USAID: Project Manager, Josie Smith
TRIGGER AND BASELINE
Baseline Timeframe: October 2017
Trigger: Precipitation at 918 mm or above 1122 mm represents a 10% change over the baseline.
Rationale for Trigger: Precipitation levels have not fluctuated more than 3% in the past 10 years and crop yields were only slightly affected. Agricultural experts state that a 10% change would likely drastically affect crop yields – triggering a reexamination of end-of-project targets.
DATA QUALITY
Know Data Limitations: The data are collected by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) through annual questionnaires. The FAO tries to impose standard definitions and reporting methods, but complete consistency across countries and over time is not possible.

CHANGES TO CONTEXT INDICATOR
Changes to Indicator: None
Other Notes:
THIS SHEET LAST UPDATED ON: