ANNEX II. USAID/WASHINGTON DOCUMENTED LEARNING AGENDAS

DCHA/DRG LEARNING AGENDA

DRG has one of the most fully developed office-wide learning agendas at USAID, with high-quality documentation, extensive learning activities and products, and integrated mechanisms that promote ongoing collaboration. The initiative grew from a concept note developed in summer 2015 by Learning Division staff members and supported by the director of DRG and the deputy assistant administrator of DCHA. The formulation, implementation, and updating of DRG's learning agenda are supported by seven full-time staff in the Learning Division. Updated annually, the agenda aligns learning efforts with the DRG's strategy and theory of change, and relies on participatory processes to ensure questions, activities, and products focus on knowledge utilization.

The learning agenda has built broad-based excitement and buy-in through the creation of internal groups (e.g., Theme Teams, an Advisory Council) and mechanisms (small-grants program) that support ongoing communication and collaboration horizontally across DRG divisions, vertically between staff in Washington and the field, and externally with academic and other evidence-building efforts. Learning agenda teams highlighted their promising practice of issuing small, competitive grants to universities to conduct multi-disciplinary literature reviews around high-priority learning questions. Before final products are written, DRG brings together academics with USAID program staff for discussions about what information/evidence would be most useful for their work. According to interviewees, the resulting documents have been useful in planning and implementing DRG-related projects and activities. Learning agenda efforts focus on conducting learning activities, "sharing back" findings and information with staff, and disseminating findings.

Status	✓ Created learning agenda (completed) ✓ Generating knowledge (ongoing) ✓ Capturing/synthesizing knowledge (ongoing) ✓ Sharing knowledge (ongoing) ✓ Applying knowledge (ongoing) ✓ Updating/adapting learning agenda (completed)
Materials	2016 Brochure; 2017 Brochure; How to Create a Learning Agenda; Examples of Research; Examples of Evidence
Key Learning Questions	2016 learning agenda: 12 mid-level learning questions in four thematic areas (3 questions per theme): 1) Participation & Inclusion; 2) Transparency & Accountability; 3) Human Rights; and 4) DRG Integration 2017 learning agenda: 11 learning questions in five thematic areas: 1) Participation & Inclusion; 2) Transparency & Accountability; 3) Human Rights; 4) DRG Integration; and 5) Theories of Democratic Change
Key Learning Activities	Multiple research projects in each thematic area; evidence/literature reviews; and learning product development & dissemination (infographics, 2-pagers, short video posts, and webinars)
Timing	2015: Initiated by DCHA deputy assistant administrator, DRG director, and Learning Team leader; first learning agenda took 5-6 months to develop; update of learning agenda took 2-3 months

Steps in Process	1. Wrote concept note, aligning learning agenda with DRG strategy 2. Convened Theme Teams around DRG objectives with cross-division membership 3. Developed action plans for each question 4. Created materials & publicized learning questions 5. Surveyed stakeholders to prioritize questions 6. Conducted utilization-focused research 7. Shared findings with Theme Teams, Missions, and other stakeholders 8. Strategized about utilization of findings (& tracking utilization) 9. Created Learning Agenda Advisory Group to oversee annual update of learning agenda
Current Activities	Implementation of research, "sharing back" with staff, disseminating findings
Next Steps	● Integrate and build from current DRG research & evaluation ● Advisory Group reviews and updates learning agenda
Strengths	● Focus on practical questions and utility of evidence ● Support from leadership ● Participatory process for learning agenda creation ● Seven full-time staff on learning team involved with the learning agenda initiative
Challenges	● Timing: learning agenda development process was long and convoluted—needed streamlining ● Uneven pace & participation of theme teams—needed more consistency & clear expectations

Promising Practices	● Created ongoing, internal structures and mechanisms to facilitate learning agenda work, including:
	  ○ Center teams have Learning Division backstops to improve communication/information flow & consultative processes.
	  ○ Advisory Group provides oversight & keeps learning agenda updated and relevant.
	  ○ Small-grants mechanisms fund interdisciplinary graduate student working groups to assist with literature reviews, and provide funds for evidence generation and dissemination.

Recommendations	● Use existing structures or create new channels of communication that facilitate broad-based consultation and collaboration in developing and using the learning agenda ● Get people excited about the learning agenda ● Focus on how evidence will be used from the beginning ● Create opportunities for program staff to engage with researchers and evidence
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