

► United States of America

Office of the Director of Foreign Assistance (DFA)

U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)

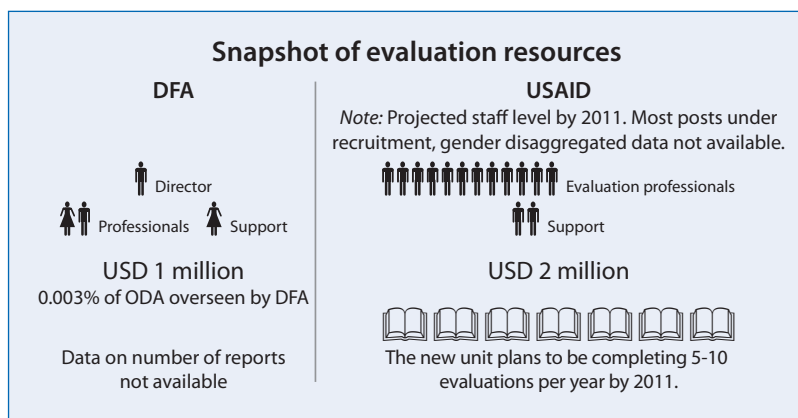
Please note: The Office of the Director of US Foreign Assistance is responsible at a macro level for the ODA activities of the Department of State and USAID. This profile does not include other US Government agencies who have foreign assistance responsibilities, but covers only the evaluation functions of DFA and USAID, where evaluation functions were being more fully developed at the time of writing and plans underway to greatly strengthen the function in the coming years, possibly resulting in changes to this profile.

Director of Foreign Assistance (DFA)

DFA is responsible for co-ordinating US foreign assistance (FA). Since 2006 it has developed a standard programming structure to codify FA objectives; created a comprehensive database to track assistance across all programmes, countries, and Bureaus; and, developed systems to improve performance and accountability. DFA give critical importance to monitoring and evaluation, performance management, and accountability. The office is responsible for interagency co-ordination, training in monitoring and evaluation, development of support tools (glossary, standards, guidelines, indicators) and assistance with the development of evaluation policies for the Department of State and USAID (the primary implementing agencies). The main focus is to build institutional capacity and an evaluation culture.

The evaluation head reports to the director of US Foreign Assistance. Formal procedures for quality control are being developed. There is not yet a management response system in place.

For budgeting, the DFA manages the process for State and USAID. Units submit requests which are reviewed and a budget developed. This is submitted to the US Office of Management and Budget and then to the US Congress. Once an appropriation is passed we the work to reconcile and provide guidance to our 192 operating units who submit revised budgets. These are then reviewed and approved.



USAID

USAID's new central evaluation office is currently being re-established. It is slated to have seven staff (six professionals/one support) by the end of 2009 and to increase to 14 staff (12 professionals/two supports) by 2011. The institutional set-up is also still in flux but evaluation currently reports to the director of Management Policy, Budget and Performance. The Evaluation Interest Group and Agency Policy Co-ordinating Committee provide support to the evaluation function in USAID.

USAID has defined the following evaluation priorities: "strengthen our evaluation capacity, implement a new programme of more rigorous impact evaluations, work with development partners on collaborative evaluations, participate in evaluation organisations and forums, and provide intellectual leadership.

Project evaluations are planned and performed by the missions in the countries. Budget and plans for these evaluations are handled at this level in the organisation. Policy, sector and thematic evaluations are planned and carried out from the central level. The ideas for what to evaluate in these evaluations comes from senior staff members and administrative staff at HQ and at the evaluation unit.

External consultants play an important role in designing and conducting USAID evaluations at all operational levels, both to ensure independence (where appropriate) and as a source of technical expertise. That said, USAID is committed to increasing the role of direct hire staff in designing and implementing evaluations and (as part of cost-saving initiative) plans to in-source about 15% of operational level evaluation work over the next five years.

The USAID has generally not performed evaluations together with the partner countries, though country offices do sometimes involve counterparts from the country. For project and country evaluations, the government in the country is contacted and invited to comment on evaluation questions and to agree on the evaluation. The decision regarding the extent to which national partners are involved is taken by operational units and can therefore vary. National consultants are often involved in evaluation teams.

A management response system is in place. Reports are made available on the web, via electronic distribution, print media, and on a dedicated Development Experience Clearinghouse.