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Development of a Monitoring and Impact Evaluation Plan A Case Study on the Refugee Services Program of Islamic Relief USA

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Abstract

This Course Linked Capstone (CLC) paper is focused on the development of a monitoring and impact evaluation (M&IE) plan for a program of Islamic Relief USA (IRUSA). The program is titled IRUSA Refugee Service (IRRS). My analysis was based on M&E best practices laid out in a prominent textbook, *RealWorld Evaluation,* by Bamberger, M., Rugh, J., & Mabry, L. (2011). After initial analysis, I realized the program lacks a logical framework, a logic model, and an M&IE plan. I developed these components for the program. In addition, I navigated the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) constraints of the IRUSA, and the challenges of the IRRS program, and made recommendations. I utilized document analysis, observation, and interview methods for my research. After the data collection, analysis, and data interpretation, I found that IRUSA faces budget and data constraints. The data constraint is mostly because of the low technical capacity of the IRUSA grantees in project design and the M&E. Homogeneity of the program recipients, bureaucratic procedures, insufficient staff, and lack of a fixed office and a proper reporting mechanism are the major challenges of the IRRS program in North Carolina. I proposed recommendations for the challenges, too. The quality counseling and the reskilling and rental assistance are compelling supports to the refugee families. The findings of the latest evaluation corroborated my findings and indicated the positive impact of the program on the integration and self-sufficiency of the refugee families. I am pleased to be part of the program expansion and improvement.

Introduction

This capstone paper is a case study on the IRRS program of IRUSA in North Carolina (NC). IRRS is a pilot refugee resettlement program that serves the most vulnerable refugees in NC. My paper is focused on the development of an M&IE plan to measure the progress and the success of the program with regard to its outputs, outcomes, and impact. In the first section of this paper, I introduce IRUSA and provide a description of the program and the reasons I selected the IRRS program for my capstone paper. In the second section, I will present the constraints that nonprofits face in monitoring and evaluation of projects that range from budget, time and data, to political, administrative and technical constraints. Much of my review of the program was based on a framework for looking at M&E provided by Bamberger, et. al. The third section is my research design. I will briefly discuss the methods I used for data collection and how the information gleaned from this M&E activity will contribute to the larger body of "knowledge" in the M&IE management and the development process as a whole. The fourth section will discuss activities carried out prior to generating the M&IE plan, for instance, development of stakeholder roles and analysis, development of a logical framework as well as a logic model. Section five is allocated to the M&IE plan and a description of the planned process of implementation. The next section is allocated to the challenges of the IRRS program and recommendations. Finally, I will reflect on what the experience of developing the M&IE plan was for me and what thoughts I can offer to future M&IE professionals.

IRUSA

Islamic Relief USA is a nonprofit 501(c) (3) organization founded in California in 1993. I started my career as a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) intern at IRUSA headquarters on June 20, 2018. IRUSA is a donor agency that receives around 200 grant applications annually. As an

M&E intern, I reviewed grant applications in regard to program planning and management and monitoring and evaluation. I basically concluded the applications and commented on whether the proposals have a solid M&E plan, logical framework, the scope of work and other components such as timeframe and needs assessment. After my review, I submitted the applications to my supervisor. In addition, I joined my supervisor to monitor and evaluate a few projects of IRUSA in North Carolina. I helped him design the M&E plan, develop questionnaires to interview the project's team, stakeholders and beneficiaries. I was with him during the whole process and learned how he monitors and evaluates projects. I also helped him whenever he needed my assistance.

Recently, the organization started a pilot program titled Islamic Relief Refugee Services. It is a post-settlement refugee program that includes three parts: rent supplements for up to six months, reskilling (workforce development) and emergency assistance. This program follows two basic objectives: a) stabilization – to stabilize the beneficiary by the provision of in-kind and monetary support and b) engagement – to help the beneficiary develop short and long-term growth plans toward workforce development, such as ESL programs, short-term certifications, advanced training. Stabilization and Engagement are mutually entwined requiring beneficiaries to be committed to the program. Beneficiaries will be monitored every month through the whole cycle of the six-month program.

Utilizing my practicum opportunity, I decided to write my CLC paper on this program for two reasons. Firstly, IRRS is a pilot program that requires further improvement in certain components such as the M&E plan, logical framework, and stakeholder analysis. Taking into account the nature of the program, IRUSA is also interested to know the program's strengths and points for improvement, how impactful the program is and what can contribute to its effectiveness and efficiency. Secondly, I had prior experience in refugee/returnee related programs. With Help International NGO in Afghanistan, I designed projects, monitored and evaluated impacts, and wrote grants on livelihood and workforce development projects for Afghan returnees.

Literature Review

M&E is vital for effective implementation of projects and programs. It provides evidence-based data and allows implementing agencies to learn from their experiences and improve their effectiveness, efficiency and impact. M&E provides a basis to test assumptions; hence, implementing agencies have the opportunity to discover their mistakes (Bamberger, et. al., 2012, pp. 1-3). It is also a means to receive funds, as donors nowadays require their grantees to showcase the results of interventions through robust monitoring and evaluation. Since M&E is a long and essential process, implementing agencies usually face a series of challenges in monitoring and evaluation. The question is what challenges nonprofit organizations face in monitoring and evaluation. My literature-review will provide an answer to this question. I will also indicate what challenges IRUSA faces regarding the monitoring and evaluation of the IRRS program.

M&E scholars frequently claim that nonprofits generally face budget, time, data as well as political, administrative and technical constraints, which can influence the M&E process. Bamberger, Rugh, and Mabry (2012) consider budget, time and data as the main constraints. They noted, “When the evaluations do finally get underway, many have to be conducted under budget and time constraints, often with limited access to baseline data and comparison groups.”(p. 2-3)

Bamberger, Rugh, and Mabry (2012) argued that the budget is one of the main constraints. Taking into account the efforts needed for collecting, processing and analyzing data, M&E requires sufficient resources to be allocated. Therefore, nonprofits intending to do a rigorous study of the impact and progress of their projects have to consider a budget line for monitoring and evaluation. This comes while implementing agencies are struggling to secure funds for their ongoing projects, particularly in developing countries. They are not in a position to secure a separate budget for project monitoring and evaluation. Availability of insufficient funds makes situation tough for nonprofits.

In addition, time is another constraint usually highlighted as a significant factor with the budget (Bamberger, Rugh and Mabry, 2012). Time constraint happens when an external evaluator is invited to do an evaluation at the end of the project. Time pressure and having no baseline data at one's disposal makes it really difficult for the evaluator to do a robust evaluation. A rigorous evaluation requires baseline data and opportunities to meet stakeholders, go site visits, interview a notable proportion of beneficiaries, do the analysis and to produce a final report. It cannot possibly happen when a consultant is recruited to carry out an evaluation at the end of a project within a short time.

Similarly, limited baseline data adds further to the challenges of an evaluator. Baseline data is required to draw a logical conclusion whether any positive changes have taken place in a community as a result of an intervention or not. However, in the real world of evaluation, evaluators often find inadequate or no baseline data from implementing agencies. Therefore, they face challenges in an evaluation's design, implementation, analysis, and reporting. Findings of such evaluations are not that credible and rigorous due to the absence of baseline data (Bamberger, Rugh and Mabry, 2012).

Next is the political constraint. Bamberger, Rugh, and Mabry (2012) introduced political constraint or influence as pressures from government, politicians and, or stakeholders on an evaluation process. These pressures are the requirements of funding or regulatory agencies and or differences of opinion within an evaluation team regarding evaluation methods (p. 12). Therefore, the influence of any of the stakeholders on the monitoring and evaluation process seems to be inevitable. Pressure is also expected as every stakeholder follows their own interest and agenda in any intervention. Disregarding stakeholders may create another challenge to evaluators.

Bamberger, Rugh and Mabry's (2012) final finding was organizational and administrative challenges further trouble the M&E process. Each implementing and funding agency has its own policies to be followed with respect to the preferred methodology, whom to be interviewed, type of data to be collected and analyzed, and other logistical issues (Bamberger, Rugh and Mabry, 2012). Consultants should find a middle way to accommodate the ideas of donors and implementing agencies. One should be experienced and skillful enough as an evaluator to involve all key stakeholders without skewing the data.

Interventions implemented in developing countries are mostly donor driven and funded by international agencies from developed countries. IRUSA is also a donor agency that funds several projects across the globe, particularly in developing countries. Since the context in developing countries differs, the best practices of M&E laid out in textbooks may not match the contexts and meet the needs in developing countries. Therefore, I further reviewed and navigated the M&E constraints in developing countries in the coming paragraphs.

Monitoring and evaluation also may jeopardize the interest of the ruling group or party in certain countries. Due to the absence of a functional M&E system, the ruling party does not feel obliged to report the failures of the government to the people and the donor agencies. M&E holds the rulers accountable for the failures and success through a transparent mechanism. Therefore, it may pose serious challenges for the countries that enjoy a centralized, authoritarian regime, as Jody Zall Kusek and Ray C. Rist (2004) stress:

> Instituting M&E systems that will highlight outcomes—both successes and failures—and provide greater transparency and accountability may be especially challenging and even alien to such countries. (p. 21)

It takes time for governments to adapt to new internationally accepted approaches of transparency and accountability. The role and assistance of donors and implementing agencies is crucial to institutionalize monitoring and evaluation culture in those governance systems.

Another reason that M&E is opposed in developing countries is due to its technicality and lack of technical capacity within the government. In 2004, Kusek and Rist noted that "Some developing countries currently lack the basic capacity to successfully measure inputs, activities, and outputs" (p. 22). Designing a system that produces trustworthy, credible, relevant and timely information on the accomplishment of a government's program, project and policy require relevant knowledge, experience, and skills. It requires data collection, analysis, and comparison in relation to baseline data and set indicators. Such a sophisticated task entails sophisticated people.

A similar case study on the Mfolozi Municipality in South Africa corroborates Kusek and Rist's research. Mthethwa and Jili's (2016) results indicated that "The main challenge faced by the Mfolozi municipality is that the knowledge, skills, and competence required for those aspiring and performing duties related to M&E of public projects is limited."(p. 109). To address this issue, donors and implementing agencies should build the capacity of their public, private and NGO partners. They should develop a contextualized manual and provide the recipient organizations with the necessary tools to apply the fundamental of monitoring and evaluation. Without technical assistance and capacity building, international donors and agencies will face similar challenges and cannot expect developing countries to know everything about monitoring and evaluation. It should also be taken into account that capacity building is a long process and it does not happen overnight.

Although the capacity building is a solution, it requires a lot of resources. First, it requires financial resources and means such as expat practitioners to provide training for civil servants and other local NGOs in developing countries. Next comes human development tools for capacity building including IT equipment and software. In order for government in developing countries to monitor and evaluate projects based on minimum international standards, they need to be trained and equipped with the necessary tools. Both human development and equipment necessitate sufficient budget. This may add to the budget constraint.

Elkins (2006) not only confirms limited financial resources, local capacity and limited time as the main constraints but also stresses that monitoring and evaluation get more challenging in a peace-precarious setting. She believes that politically unstable circumstances increase the costs for monitoring and evaluation, which in turn adds to the budget constraint. This usually happens in current conflict, post-conflict and fragile states where the uncertainty rate is high. Therefore, it is hard to predict the outcome or impact of an intervention because there are unknown and unpredictable variables that may change the whole scenario. She noted:

> Costs are added when government counterparts change or entire institutions and operations are restructured during times of political and other transition. All of these additional costs further cut into resources that might otherwise be used to design and

> implement more complete and robust M&E systems which could provide more valuable support in analyzing program results, generating relevant evidence to use in fine-tuning activities, implementation strategies, and associated resource allocations toward enhancing the overall impact of the intervention. (p. 5)

The literature reviews show budget, time, political, technical and administrative challenges in the M&E field. The other challenges are limited capacity with partners and misconceptions of some governments about M&E arising from their limited knowledge. These challenges get worse in in-conflict, post-conflict and fragile states. In some cases, it makes monitoring and evaluation impossible to be implemented in conflict zones as Elkins (2006) argued in her research on M&E in a peace-precarious setting. What will be the M&E constraints of the IRRS program? This will be answered at the end of this paper.

Research Design

To develop a monitoring and impact evaluation plan, I collected data from four sources: document analysis, field observation from the IRRS program in NC, and reflection on my experience at IRUSA, and interviews with the program team and two of the IRRS stakeholders in NC. For document analysis, I reviewed all the available documents related to the IRRS Program. This included two annual reports of IRSUA for 2016-17, the organizational structure, the concept note of the IRRS program, M&E reports, forms, and the needs assessment. Whenever I faced any ambiguity in the documents, I contacted the program team for clarification. To make sense of the program, I conducted field research in Greensboro, North Carolina (NC) on an M&E mission with my supervisor; Greensboro is one of the cities in NC where the project is implemented. I stayed there for three days. As an observer, I was with the case manager, for one day. We visited two families who are beneficiaries of the program. I was with him to know the nature of the program in person. I witnessed how he treats beneficiaries, what assistance he creates, how he offers hopes to the desperate recipients of the program and what challenges he is dealing with in day-to-day business.

Third, my analysis was also based on my own personal experience with Help and IRUSA. Back from 2006 to 2017, Help nonprofit in Afghanistan implemented similar projects for Afghan returnees in Herat and Bamyan. Under the program of ‘Repatriation, Vocational Training and Reintegration of Afghans from Abroad’ Help and local NGO-partners train more than 1,000 beneficiaries per year in marketable skills, facilitate decent jobs and support lasting re-integration of graduated trainees in Afghanistan. To understand what the reintegration process is like, I accompanied our social workers from the reintegration department to see how they facilitated the reintegration of beneficiaries in their communities. In addition to assessment, I wrote several success stories on successful cases.

Fourth, I conducted a series of interviews with program stakeholders and developed a questionnaire about the program focused on the nature of the program, selection criteria of beneficiaries, types of services provided, relevant stakeholders, and the nature of cooperation with stakeholders, monitoring and evaluation of the program, baseline data, existing challenges, and recommendations. I interviewed the employees who are directly involved in the program, IRUSA Director of Programs, Programs Manager, Case Manager, and the M&E Officer, to get different perspectives on the program: understanding of the program, the existing challenges in the program and recommendations. I also met three of the stakeholders in Greensboro, NC with the case manager: Reading Connects, World Relief and The University of North Carolina. During the meeting, I also had several questions about the nature of their cooperation with IRUSA, the types of services they offer to refugees and asylees, the referral system, and their

M&E system. Overall, I used front-end analysis, observation and interview methods for my thesis.

The information gleaned from this M&E activity and the lessons learned will function as a guide for practitioners in the field. My initial research shows that there are lots of case study M&E templates in the health sector, while templates of M&E plans on post-refugee resettlement programs targeting the most vulnerable are rare. Therefore, my thesis will be a template of an M&E plan on case management that will contribute to the general knowledge in M&IE management and the development process as a whole. In addition, this paper will inform the decision makers at IRUSA about the program, challenges, and recommendations. It contributes to the improvement of the program and whether the pilot program should turn into a regular one. Finally, my literature review indicated that nonprofits face several constraints in monitoring and evaluation of the program that include but are not limited to budget, time, political, administrative and logistical constraints. Through this paper, I want to show the challenges that IRUSA is facing with regard to monitoring and evaluation of the IRRS and other similar programs.

Description of the Organization

IRUSA is a nonprofit 501(c) (3) organization founded in California in 1993. IRUSA works to provide relief and development in a dignified manner and to empower people and give them a voice in the world. The services are offered regardless of race, gender or religion. IRUSA’s donors help millions of people in more than 40 countries including here in the United States. (IRUSA, 2017). Its vision, mission, and values are as follows:

Vision: Working together for a world free of poverty.

Mission: Islamic Relief USA provides relief and development in a dignified manner regardless of gender, race, or religion, and works to empower individuals in their communities and give them a voice in the world.

Values: Islamic Relief USA is a community of diverse people sharing a set of common values such as excellence, sincerity, social justice, compassion, and custodianship.

The organization is run by an executive team that includes a chief executive officer, president, director of programs, director of fund development, director of public affairs, director of communications, corporate counsel and controller. IRUSA also enjoys a board of trustees. All the executive team members are practitioners who are experts in their fields and are committed to the vision and mission of the organization. IRUSA runs two programs a - domestic and international. Each program has a manager and officer who implements projects inside and outside the U.S. annually.

Having read the organization's website and the project documents, I did not see any objectives and goals for the organization. I even asked one of the program managers of the organization. He said that we have objectives and goals at project and program levels, but not for the organization. One can expect that every nonprofit should have a vision, a mission, a set of values, objectives, and goals. However, organizations are not always the same as we study theories and books. There is always a difference between the real and the ideal world of nonprofits. An organization can still function properly without having objectives and goals.

IRUSA Development Projects

IRUSA is implementing several development projects inside the U.S. and abroad. The primary development issues that IRUSA is addressing are livelihood, health, education, and water sanitation. These programs are implemented for the most vulnerable in the United States, Africa, Europe, and Asia. The beneficiaries are mostly women, children, and youth. Some of the development projects that IRUSA is currently implementing are as follows:

Livelihood. One of IRUSA livelihood projects is providing young adults with job skills and assistance in finding internships or jobs in Palestine. Due to limited employment opportunities and challenges due to continued conflict in the region, youth in Gaza have great difficulty finding employment. This program will create customized training programs tailored to each student's unique needs and teach technical skills that will help them become eligible for specific jobs, (IRUSA website, 2018).

Education. Islamic Relief makes education a priority among its long-term and development-based efforts. Projects are aimed at both adults and children and include building and equipping schools, offering literacy classes and training teachers. Many of the education projects target impoverished women and young girls, helping them break free from poverty and ensuring stability for generations to come.

Health. IRUSA supports six programs that offer free healthcare in the U.S. IRUSA partners with HUDA Clinic in Detroit, Michigan; Inner-city Muslim Action Network (IMAN) in Chicago; Mariam Clinic in Cary, North Carolina; IMANA in Lombard, Illinois; Arab American Association of New York; and YMCA International Services in Houston, Texas. IRUSA works with each free healthcare partner to provide resources like medical evaluations, mental health assessments & support, health literacy, and co-pay waivers, (IRUSA website, 2018).

Water and Sanitation. Islamic Relief water and sanitation projects–both at the emergency and long-term levels–have been providing essential aid for many years. In places like Mali, Nepal, and Niger, Islamic Relief is rehabilitating/constructing solar-powered water wells, hygiene education, and upgrading sanitary facilities. Currently, IRUSA donors are providing access to clean water for displaced families inside Syria, specifically in Azaz and Jabal Samaan. This project will allow for the installation of water tanks as well as the maintenance of existing wells and water chlorination. Additionally, it will help secure clean living environments by supporting waste removal, conducting daily cleaning of camps and installing community garbage bins. The project will also include a monthly distribution of hygiene kits as well as hygiene awareness activities. This project is expected to help 120,000 people, (IRUSA website, 2018).

Description of Development Process of the M&IE Plan

Front-end analysis. Prior to generating the M&IE plan, I did a front-end analysis. Joe Harless, the father of front-end analysis (1973) explains that "Front-end analysis is a procedure for asking various questions up front to analyze performance issues and to determine effective interventions". (p. 121) I read about the IRUSA's vision, mission, and values. I reviewed two annual reports for 2016-17 and got to know the organization's scope of work. Annual reports helped me understand types of the interventions, the setting, number of beneficiaries, and the budget. I also studied the organizational structure to know who designs and implements these interventions. As for the program documents, I reviewed the concept note of the program, M&E reports, forms, and the needs assessment. I even summarized the whole project's concept note and wrote my analysis on what components need to be added to the program. To clarify whether some components are missing, I initiated a conference call with the project team in North Carolina and asked their insights about the project. Finally, I read a piece by Melita Piercy on 'Refugee Resettlement and Religion' written in 2018. In her short essay, she explored the role religion plays in refugee resettlement in the U.S. She focused specifically on the IRRS program and how cultural competence helps organizations integrate refugees in communities.

Similarly, I studied the OECD standards of evaluation: utility, feasibility, propriety, accuracy, and accountability. The utility standard entails an evaluation to be conducted by qualified people who can establish and maintain credibility in the evaluation context. An evaluator should be culturally competent to understand and observe cultural ethics and values being practiced in a community. Knowledge of the context is key to a credible evaluation. Involvement of key stakeholders, whoever invests or gets affected by an affected by the evaluation helps evaluators see the project from a bottom-up angle. The utility also facilitates getting a comprehensive picture of the intervention. The utility is meant to result in a rediscovery and a change in behavior, policy or strategy of an organization, (JCSEE, 2014).

Feasibility is the second standard of evaluation intended to increase evaluation effectiveness and efficiency. To be effective and efficient, evaluators ought to apply practical methods of evaluation in designing an M&IE plan that is cost-efficient and meet the intended purpose. Therefore, an evaluator should consider and utilize all the available resources to carry out an evaluation of the organization's human resources, (JCSEE, 2014).

Propriety is the third standard that stresses evaluation to be inclusive, legal and right. An evaluator must protect the rights and dignity of the participants and do-no-harm should be the first priority. Similarly, it should meet the needs and purposes of the stakeholders. To avoid a conflict of interest, the role and influence of all stakeholders should be analyzed and any conflict of interest from stakeholders should be identified. In the end, the evaluation should be transparent and share the findings with all stakeholders unless doing so would violate any legal obligation, (JCSEE, 2014).

Accuracy is another crucial standard. Like every research design, an appropriate design considering the scope and the context of an intervention should be opted for. Evaluators should take all measures to avoid misconceptions, biases, distortions, and errors. In doing so, evaluators should employ systematic information collection, review, verification and storage methods. Similarly, data analysis, interpretation and conclusion drawing should also be systematic; there should be a logical flow from design, to implementation and to the conclusion, (JCSEE, 2014).

Accountability is the last standard of OECD. Every step of evaluation should be well-documented to avoid any misunderstanding including negotiated purposes, implemented designs, procedures, data, and outcomes. Meanwhile, some standards should be utilized to examine the accountability of the evaluation design, procedures employed, information collected, and outcomes, (JCSEE, 2014).

Having studied the concept note of the program, M&E reports, forms and the needs assessment, I found out that IRRS program lacks a) a stakeholder analysis, b) a logical framework, c) a logic model, and d) a monitoring and impact evaluation plan. I have developed these components that are organized respectively.

Stakeholder Analysis

IRRS Program provides rental, reskilling and emergency assistance to documented refugees and asylees in North Carolina. These services make the program unique because no other agency provides the same or similar services in the area. Hence, a lot of local refugee resettlement agencies in the area are interested to work with IRUSA. As a result, it puts IRUSA at a prominent position to partner with key stakeholders throughout the state.

Currently, IRUSA partners with seven resettlement agencies, four religious and volunteer-based institutions, and two local based agencies that provide services for refugees and immigrants in North Carolina. The purpose of the partnership is to coordinate delivery of services, avoid duplication, and to recruit eligible beneficiaries through the existing referral system among these agencies. The nature of cooperation with these agencies is informal; there is no official contract or agreement signed between IRUSA and the partners. In spite of that, IRUSA is well-rooted and known in NC and it is in touch with all partners. I briefly introduce the stakeholders below.

Refugee resettlement agencies. IRUSA is not an official refugee resettlement agency; however, it has recently launched a refugee resettlement pilot program in North Carolina that provides case management services as well as rental and reskilling assistance the most vulnerable refugee populations. To get experience and be recognized as a refugee settlement agency, in the long run, IRUSA started this program and established connections and rapport with other refugee resettlement agencies.

The fact that IRUSA is not exclusively, or even primarily, a refugee resettlement agency brought difficulties but also unique perspectives in understanding its impact and role in the resettlement process, IRUSA in North Carolina is closely cooperating with Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), Catholic Diocese, U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI), Church World Service, World Relief, African Services Coalition (under ECDC) and Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services. These seven resettlement agencies provide services to refugees through their affiliate offices in cities across the U.S. These agencies on behalf of the U.S. Government resettle refugees across the country through their affiliate offices and provide a wide range of services such as employment and language skill classes. In addition, some of the agencies provide comprehensive immigration services to assist refugees on their paths to becoming permanent residents or U.S. citizens. Refugee services agencies including IRUSA meet quarterly with the resettlement agencies via a statewide Advisory Council Meeting.

I visited one of the refugee resettlement agencies, World Relief (WR), in Triad, NC and talked to two of their program staff about nature cooperation with IRUSA. During the meeting, I found out that no official agreement has been signed between World Relief and IRUSA yet; however, there is an informal and organic partnership in place. WR like other refugee resettlement agencies basically refers beneficiaries to the IRUSA team in NC and follows that up in their quarterly meetings or through phone calls. It is worth mentioning that World Relief in Triad offers a range of services to refugees and immigrants including refugee resettlement services, employment, immigration legal service, personal development services, health and wellness, and anti-human trafficking.

Religious and volunteer-based institutions. These institutions are comprised of local mosques and grass-roots service providers that play a key role in the refugee resettlement process. Networking, in-kind needs, transportation, coordination and delivery of resources are just some of the services that these institutions provide to refugee families. Moreover, some of the local mosques and community centers work directly with the Refugee Resettlement Agencies, to the point where the religious institution or volunteer organization might become the first point of contact when a refugee family lands in the United States. The four organizations IRUSA works directly with are Islamic Center of the Triad and Greensboro, Muslim Education Center Charlotte, Islamic Association of Raleigh, and Al-Muslim Net.

Local NC-based service providers. The focus of these local agencies within NC is on local needs and dynamics. They are specialized in dealing with local issues at an intimate level. For instance, Reading Connections is a grantee of IRUSA that provides ESL services to refugee families who have very little or no background in a formal education setting. To address the challenge of English illiteracy, IRUSA approved a grant for Reading Connections that will eventually help refugees communicate effectively, fill out job applications, convey their potentials in job interviews, attend PTA meetings and help their children with their lessons. To monitor and evaluate the progress of their students, Reading Connections has pre-test and post-test evaluations that take place at the end of each class. Human Relations Commission - Greensboro and Durham is the other local partner that improves the quality of life for Greensboro residents by encouraging fair treatment and promoting mutual understanding and respect among all people. Please see the below chart:

Stakeholder Analysis Chart

Stakeholder	Interest / Need	Risk if involved	Support / Opponent
Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS)	Mutual interest and need (referral)	No Risk	Support
Catholic Diocese	Mutual interest and need (referral)	No Risk	Support
U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants	Mutual interest and need (referral)	No Risk	Support
Church World Service	Mutual interest and need (referral)	No Risk	Support
World Relief	Mutual interest and need (referral)	No Risk	Support
African Services Coalition (Under ECDC)	Mutual interest and need (referral)	No Risk	Support
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services	Mutual interest and need (referral)	No Risk	Support
Islamic Center of the Triad and Greensboro	Referral & in-kind contribution	No Risk	Support
Muslim Education Center Charlotte	Referral & in-kind contribution	No Risk	Support
Islamic Association of Raleigh	Referral & in-kind contribution	No Risk	Support
Al-Muslim Net	Referral & in-kind contribution	No Risk	Support
Reading Connections	Grantee	No Risk	Support
Human Relations Commission	Referral	No Risk	Support

Power

Keep Satisfied	**Manage Closely**
HIAS, Catholic Diocese, USCRI, Church World Service World Relief, African Services Coalition (Under ECDC) Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services	Beneficiaries Donor(s) Case officer(s)
Reading Connections Human Relations Commission - City of Greensboro and Durham	Islamic Center of the Triad and Greensboro, Muslim Education Center Charlotte, Islamic Association of Raleigh, Al-Muslim Net
Monitor	**Keep Informed**

Interest

Selection Criteria

Refugee Resettlement Agencies refer beneficiaries to IRUSA. To assess, identify and select programs' recipients, the IRRS program team developed selection criteria. These criteria are also included in referral forms. To become a recipient of the program, first, the contracted 90-day support period with the sponsoring voluntary agency must be expired and per Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) standard, the max end of this time limit is 5 years. Second, an applicant must have refugee or asylee status. In addition, the applicant must provide the following documents in 2018:

- Social Security Number
- I94 visa
- Employer's contact information (in case the applicant is employed)
- Apartment Lease
- 3 months for all Bank Account Statements (checking, saving & investment)
- Last 2 Pay stubs

- Most Recent Federal Income Tax Return
- United States Department of State Bureau of Population, Refugee, and Migration (document with family pictures)
- Health report- can be a letter from your health provider with the Patient Active Diagnosis(can be waived)

Meeting the above criteria qualifies refugees to benefit from the IRRS program services.

Logical Framework

Department for International Development (DFID) of the United Kingdom is one of the major donor agencies that fund development projects across the globe. DFID (2002) developed a tool called logical framework and defined it, “A log frame is a tool for improving the planning, implementation, management, monitoring, and evaluation of projects. The log frame is a way of structuring the main elements in a project and highlighting the logical linkages between them” (p. 1). Logframe is a helpful document in project design that gives an overview of the project. It includes impact (overall goal), outcome (purpose), outputs (direct results) and activities of a project and the link between them. For instance, it shows what activities lead to outputs, how outputs produce impact(s), and how impacts result in the overall goal and produce an impact. It also provides information about external elements that may influence the project, called assumptions. Finally, it tells you how the project will be monitored, through the use of indicators. Basically, all this information is presented in a table with four columns and four rows. Using a basic structure of a logic framework, I developed one for the IRUSA Refugee Program that is as follows:

LOGFRAME MATRIX OF THE IRRS PROGRAM

	Intervention Logic	Indicators	Sources and means of verification	Risk/Assumptions
Overall objective: Impact	Refugees under the IRRS program in North Carolina were integrated into their local communities and became self-sufficient.	Improved access to refugee families to health services, social services, education, transportation, grocery shops, and etc. Percentage of the total refugees in NC that was covered in this program. Percentage of the total refugees that are employed.	Reports by refugee resettlement agencies in NC, final reports of the program, success cases, monitoring, and evaluation reports, photos	The current administration will continue accepting refugees in the U.S. Federal government, refugee resettlement agencies and local partners in NC welcome and support refugee programs.
Specific objective (outcome) I	Improved stabilization of refugees through counseling, following a development plan for the family and rental support.	Refugees are relieved of a stress and have a plan to follow. They become financially stable after the program. Their balance of monthly expenses is positive.	Monthly monitoring of their development plan, Bank statements, Copies of job contracts.	Beneficiaries are motivated. They are determined to be financially independent and to follow up their development plans. They utilize all the available means and apply for relevant vacancies during the program.
Specific objective (outcome) II	Improved employability through ESL classes and reskilling (short-term certifications)	Improved English proficiency level Achieved advanced certifications in the interest fields At least one member of the family got a job.	Project progress reports, M&E reports, English pre-test, and post-test evaluations, certificates achieved, employment verifications.	Beneficiaries with low English proficiency attend ESL classes to manage their day-to-day business and to get a job. They participate in advanced training courses to get employed.

Outputs	Output = Op Op 1.1. Each refugee family enjoys a development plan that shows their progress in achieving the set milestones.	Number of plans that were developed, Achieved targets.	Copies of selection criteria & development plans, verifications that targets were achieved.	Beneficiaries are willing to follow the development plan, cooperate and share all the required documents with the case manager and officer including confidential documents like SSN, bank statements and etc.
	Op1.2. Counseling sessions held, problems identified and referrals occurred.	Number of counseling sessions and hours spent with beneficiaries per month. The identified problems and the frequency of referrals were made to address the issues.	Minutes of the counseling sessions. Copies of referral documents.	Counseling sessions help refugees realize their strength and points for improvement, gain confidence and work on the skills that will secure them jobs.
	Op 1.3. Rent of beneficiaries' houses was paid monthly.	Number of beneficiaries received monthly rents. The amount of monthly rent paid to the beneficiaries.	Financial receipts, copies of lease contracts	There are adequate apartments available for rent with reasonable price in NC.
	Op 2.1. English skills of beneficiaries improved.	Results of pre-test and post-test evaluations, the ability to do shopping, attend PTA meetings, communicate with other people in the community.	Result-sheets, certificates of English, reports of ESL teachers on the progress of students in English, self-reporting of beneficiaries	Beneficiaries know that English is key to landing a job. They attend English classes regularly.

	Op 2.2. Beneficiaries received specialty in a specific field and qualify for related jobs.	Grades and certifications achieved, the duration of the program,	Result sheets of training, copies of certificates, payment receipts for the training, grades.	Certification helps refugees secure a job. Beneficiaries are motivated and attend advanced training classes.
Activities	Activity (Act) Act.1.1.1 Interview, assess and select beneficiaries and produce a development plan for the selected beneficiaries during the program.	Number of selected beneficiaries, number of development plans	Copies of selection criteria & development plans, minutes of the interview process,	Beneficiaries are honest about their socio-economic status and share the required documents with the case manager and officer. The development plans are realistic and meaningful.
	Act.1.2.1. Provide counseling support and refer them to partner organizations for further support.	Number of attendees, duration and frequency of counseling sessions per month, number of referrals that occurred.	Minutes and the content of the counseling sessions, referral documents,	Beneficiaries want and need the guidance and counseling. The case manager and officer provide high-quality counseling.
	Act.1.3.1. Provide rental assistance for the beneficiaries for six months.	Number of beneficiaries received rental payments, the amount paid per month	Payment receipts, rental contracts,	Beneficiaries need shelter assistance. Rental assistance contributes greatly to their resettlement.
	Act.2.2.1. Referral and enrollment in ESL classes run by Reading Connections.	Enrollment numbers	Attendance sheets, result-sheets, students' progress reports,	Beneficiaries know that English is key to land a job. They are willing and able to attend English classes regularly.
	Act. 2.2.2. Provide fees for advanced training courses requested by beneficiaries.	Number of beneficiaries received advanced training, the amount paid for training, achieved certifications	Attendance sheets, result-sheets, list of beneficiaries received training, certificates, grades.	Certification helps refugees secure a job. Beneficiaries themselves ask for certain advanced training considering their interest and job market.

Logic Model

Another approach to indicate the whole program at a glance is to use a logic model. According to W.K. Kellogg Foundation (2004), "A logic model is a systematic and visual way to present and share your understanding of the relationships among the resources you have to operate your program, the activities you plan, and the changes or results you hope to achieve." I developed a logic model for the IRRS program that is as follows:

How?		What do we want?		Why?
INPUT	**ACTIVITIES**	**OUTPUTS**	**OUTCOMES**	**IMPACT**
• Staff • Volunteers • Time • Money • Materials • Equipment • Technology • Partner agencies	• **I**nterview, assess and select beneficiaries and produce a development plan for the selected beneficiaries during the program. • **P**rovide counseling support and refer them to partner organizations for further support. • **P**rovide rental assistance for the beneficiaries for six months. • **R**eferral and enrollment in ESL classes run by Reading Connections. • **P**rovide fees for advanced training courses requested by beneficiaries.	• **E**ach refugee family enjoys a development plan that shows their progress in achieving the set milestones. • **C**ounseling sessions held, problems identified and referrals occurred. • **R**ent of beneficiaries' houses were paid monthly. • **E**nglish skills of beneficiaries improved. • Beneficiaries received specialty in a specific field and qualify for related jobs.	• **I**mproved stabilization of refugees through counseling, following a development plan for the family and rental support. • **I**mproved employability through ESL classes and reskilling (short term certifications)	• **R**efugees under the IRRS program in North Carolina were integrated in their local communities and became self-sufficient.

Planned Work

Intended Results

The Narrative of the M&IE Plan

The M&IE plan is focused on the impact, outcomes, and outputs of the IRRS program. I developed indicators, baseline, target, means of verification (MOV) and risks/assumptions for each of the above-mentioned components. The following paragraphs will provide the M&IE plan components (activities, outputs, outcomes, and the impact) as well as the monitoring process. I will explain what data will be collected, at what frequency, and by what approach. Moreover, I will describe the planned process of the M&IE implementation; I provide a description the type of evaluation (formative or summative), and will explain who is responsible for the implementation the M&IE, what aspects of the M&E system are carried out internally, how I determined the indicators, data collection, utilization, management, and analysis mechanisms, how the data will be disseminated and whether the availability of the M&IE results will influence the program design. In the end, I briefly talk about DAC criteria and what other tools I use to measure the impact of the program.

Components of the Program

a) **IMPACT:** Refugees under the IRRS program in North Carolina were integrated into their local communities and became self-sufficient.

b) OUTCOMES

- **I**mproved stabilization of refugees through counseling, following a development plan for the family and rental support.
- **I**mproved employability through ESL classes and reskilling (short-term certifications)

c) OUTPUTS

- **E**ach refugee family enjoys a development plan that shows their progress in achieving the set milestones.
- **C**ounseling sessions held, problems identified and referrals occurred.
- **R**ent of beneficiaries’ houses was paid monthly.

- **E**nglish skills of beneficiaries improved.
- Beneficiaries received specialty in a specific field and qualify for related jobs.

ACTIVITIES

- **I**nterview, assess and select beneficiaries and produce a development plan for the selected beneficiaries during the program.
- **P**rovide counseling support and refer them to partner organizations for further support.
- **P**rovide rental assistance for the beneficiaries for six months.
- **R**eferral and enrollment in ESL classes run by Reading Connections.
- **P**rovide fees for advanced training courses requested by beneficiaries.

The M&IE Plan

Indicator	**Baseline**	**Target**	**MOV**	**Risks/Assumptions**
Impact: Refugees in North Carolina were integrated into their local communities and became self-sufficient by December 31, 2019.				
Improved access of the refugee families to health services, social services, education, transportation, grocery shops, etc. Percentage of the total refugees in NC that was covered in this program. Percentage of the total refugees that are employed.	Refugees are struggling in day-to-day life and are in desperate need of rental and reskilling assistance.	65 refugee families to be integrated and become financially independent by the end of the program.	Reports by refugee resettlement agencies in NC, final reports of the program, success cases, monitoring, and evaluation reports, photos	The current administration will continue accepting refugees in the U.S. Federal government, refugee resettlement agencies and local partners in NC welcome and support refugee programs.
Outcome 01: Improved stabilization of refugees through counseling, following a development plan for the family and rental support.				
Refugees are relieved of a stress and have a plan to follow. They become financially stable after the program. Their balance of monthly expenses is positive.	Refugees are stressed out due to financial problems without any perspective about the future.	75% of the refugees under the program are relieved of stress and become financially stable.	Monthly monitoring of their development plan, Bank statements, Copies of job contracts.	Refugees are motivated. They are determined to be financially independent and to follow up their development plans. They utilize all the

				available means to get employed.
Outcome 02: Improved employability through ESL classes and reskilling (short-term certifications)				
Improved English proficiency level, Achieved advanced certifications in the interest fields, At least one member of the family got a job.	Prior to joining the program, the status of Refugees was not promising; no English proficiency, no certifications in their fields of interest and no job.	100% of the Refugees improve their English proficiency and/or take advanced training courses and certificates. One member per family gets employed by the end of the program.	Project progress reports, M&E reports, English pre-test, and post-test evaluations, certificates, job applications for vacancies, employment verifications	Refugees with low English proficiency attend ESL classes to manage their day-to-day business and to get a job. They participate in advanced training courses in their fields of interest with the goal of employment.
Output 01: Each refugee family enjoys a development plan that shows their progress in achieving the set milestones.				
Number of plans that were developed. Achieved targets.	None of the refugees has a development to follow.	100% of the program Refugees have a development plan.	Copies of selection criteria & development plans, verifications that targets were achieved.	The development plans are realistic and meaningful. Refugees are willing to follow the development plan, cooperate and share all the required documents with the case manager and officer including confidential documents.
Output 02: Counseling sessions held, problems identified and referrals that occurred.				
Number of counseling sessions and hours spent with Refugees per month. The identified problems and the frequency of referrals were made to address the issues.	Refugees of the program did not receive any similar case management counseling to identify their	100% of the refugees counseling sessions at least once a month.	Minutes of the counseling sessions. Copies of referral documents.	The case manager and officer provide high-quality counseling. Counseling sessions help refugees realize their strength and points for improvement, gain

	main challenges.			confidence and work on the skills that will secure them jobs.
Output 03: Rent of Refugees' apartments were paid monthly.				
Number of Refugees received monthly rents. The amount of monthly rent paid to the refugees.	Refugees are able to pay their monthly rents.	IRRS program to pay monthly rent to the needy refugees	Financial receipts, copies of lease contracts	There are adequate apartments available for rent with reasonable price in NC.
Output 04: English skills of refugees improved.				
Results of pre-test and post-test evaluations, the ability to do shopping and communicate with other people in the community.	Refugees have low proficiency in English.	Refugees communicate effectively in English.	Certificates of English, reports of ESL teachers, self-reporting of refugees	Refugees know that English is the key to land a job. They attend English classes regularly.
Output 05: Refugees received specialty in a specific field and qualify for related jobs.				
Grades and certifications achieved, the duration of the program,	Refugees do not have any certifications from the U.S. in their fields of interest	100% of refugees who asked for advanced training receive reskilling assistance.	Result sheets of training, copies of certificates, payment receipts for the training, grades.	Certification helps refugees secure a job. Refugees are motivated and attend advanced training classes.

The indicators for the outputs, outcomes, and impact of the program are determined based on the nature of the program and services offered. IRRS provides rental, reskilling and emergency assistance. Henceforth, the indicators are mostly quantitative. For instance, improved access of the refugee families to health services, social services, education, transportation, grocery shops, the percentage of the total refugees in NC that was covered in this program and percentage of the total refugees that are employed are the indicators for the impact of the program. However, the type of indicator does not entail the monitoring and impact evaluation be merely quantitative.

The monitoring will be focused on the process as well as the progress of the program. To save time and budget, the program will be monitored every six months internally. The IRRS development plan designed for each refugee family eases monitoring because it includes the necessary baseline data for each family. The responsible person (the M&E officer) together with the program team in NC will collect the data on the activities and outputs of the program using a checklist.

The monitoring questions are on the number of plans that were developed, achieved targets within the plans, number of counseling sessions held per month, the frequency of referrals to partners, number of refugees received monthly rents, the amount they received monthly, improved English proficiency of the refugees and advanced training courses the refugees attended. Online survey websites and software will be used to collect and manage the data. The M&E officer, after data analysis and interpretation, will produce a report and share the findings with the team in NC, the program manager and the director of programs at IRUSA headquarters. Later on, the team in NC will share the report with the relevant stakeholders. The data from monitoring can be used for the impact evaluation as it provides the baseline data on the process and the progress of the program. Please see the monitoring checklist as follows:

Instruction: The following is a checklist for the monitoring of the IRRS program. The M&E Officer should develop indicators for each monitoring activity s/he will undertake. S/he should determine the information sources for each indicator, and who will be responsible for collecting and recording the data. Please utilize the indicators in the M&IE plan.

The Monitoring Checklist

Activity	Indicators	Info Sources	Responsible
1. How many intakes have been made monthly? 2. Does each refugee family have a development plan?			
3. How many counseling sessions were made for each refugee family per month? 4. Are the case manager and case officer providing accurate information? 5. What type of information are they providing for beneficiaries?			
6. How many refugee families receive rental assistance at the moments? 7. How is it different from or the same as the operational plan?			
8. How many refugees have enrolled in ESL training? 9. How many are currently attending training? 10. Have the ESL classes increased the English proficiency of the refugees? 11. How many refugees benefitted from reskilling training? 12. How many are currently enrolled? 13. Has the reskilling training increased the refugees' employability?			
14. Have the program's recipients got to know the facilities in their communities?			

As for evaluation, I will design a summative evaluation. Gunther-Grey, Wolitski, and Reitmeijer (2013) specified the scope of the summative evaluation and noted, "Summative evaluations should be completed once your programs are well established and will tell you to what extent the program is achieving its goals". (p. 2) Summative evaluation assesses programs or projects at the end of the execution phase. The assessment findings will be used to decide whether a program should be embraced, continued, or modified for improvement. Therefore, I will do a summative evaluation focused on the impact of the program. The evaluation can be done either internally or externally depending on the policy and budget of IRUSA.

To measure the impact of the program, I developed a questionnaire utilizing The Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria. DAC criteria (2006) include relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. Relevance is essentially the extent to which the intervention meets the priorities of the recipients and the donor. It analyzes whether the selected activities and outputs are consistent with the intended outcomes and impact of the project. Effectiveness is the second criterion that measures the extent to which objectives are achieved or likely to be achieved. It also deals with factors that influence achievement and non-achievement of the objectives. The next criterion is efficiency. It examines whether the activities are cost-efficient. Alternatives will be identified to test whether the program is implemented in the most efficient way in comparison with alternatives. Another criterion is the impact which shows any positive or negative changes, intended or unintended, that occurred as a result of the intervention. It discusses any social, economic, environmental and other changes that occurred as a result of an intervention. It also identifies if any external factor might have brought changes. Finally, sustainability is concerned with measuring whether the benefits of a program continue in case funding is ceased. It also identifies the factors which caused the sustainability or unsustainability of an intervention (Development Assistance Committee, 2006).

For the impact evaluation, I utilized DAC criteria and designed a mixed-method evaluation. Bamberger, Rugh, and Mabry (2012) defined a mixed method as “Normally, the term [mixed method] is used to refer the designs that combine elements of both QUANT and QUAL approaches”. (p. 319) Survey, interview, and observation are the three methods used for data collection. Both the survey and the semi-structured interview are concentrated on the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability of the program. The survey produces quantitative while the interview and observation offer qualitative data. The data from the development plan and the designed monitoring will be used as the baseline data for the evaluation. The participants are the program team, the beneficiaries, and the line partner organizations. To manage and analyze the data, survey, Dedoose software will be used. Afterward, the evaluator will interpret the data, produce a report and submit it to the director of programs and the program manager at IRUSA. Considering the credible findings of the M&IE, the line department and the CEO will make a decision on the continuation, duplication or cancellation of the program. Please see the survey and the semi-structured interview questionnaire as follows:

Impact Evaluation – Survey Questionnaire on DAC Criteria

	Read the following statements and indicate whether you strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree.	DAC Criteria	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	Desperation, economic problems, and unemployment are the main challenges of the refugees.	R					
2	Counseling, rental assistance, reskilling assistance, and ESL classes are the exact needs of the refugees.	R					
3	The development plan is a helpful tool to follow up the progress of refugee families with regard to employment and economic status.	R					
4	*The demand for such programs is high in NC.	R					
5	Counseling, rental assistance, reskilling assistance, and ESL classes make refugees financially stable and help them get a job.	E					
6	The assistance and services of the program are NOT the only needs of refugee families.	E					
7	The amount considered for rent and reskilling is sufficient.	Eff					
8	*In my opinion, nobody else but the refugee families is benefiting from the project.	Eff					
9	There are too many administrative obstacles which delay the timely delivery of services.	Eff					
10	*The financing framework and the resource allocation in the project should be revised and modified.	Eff					
11	The program has a social, psychological and economic impact on refugees.	I					
12	Refugees become self-sufficient after 6-month the IRRS.	I					
13	*Other factors other than the program's services can contribute to the self-sufficiency of the refugee families.	I					
14	*The program asks for support and cooperation from the community and the religious and volunteer-based institutions in NC.	S					
15	*The program is developing a successful model of refugee integration and self-sufficiency in NC where the local stakeholders take part in the process.	S					
16	*The exit strategy for the program is to convey the lessons learned to the partner agencies and build the capacity of the local partners to run the program on behalf of IRUSA in the long run.	S					

*Only asked from the program team and stakeholders in NC.
R=Relevance, E=Effectiveness, Eff=Efficiency, I=Impact, S=Sustainability

Semi-Structured Interview Questionnaire

A. Beneficiaries

1. How was your experience with the IRRS program?
2. Were the counseling sessions and the development plan helpful? How?
3. Did the program help you get a job and become financially stable? How?
4. Was the advanced training certification helpful for employment? If yes, please explain.
5. Were ESL classes beneficial to your integration into the community?
6. What other factors were involved for the employability and English proficiency?
7. How fast was the delivery of the services and assistance?
8. What other agencies and local organization help you during the program?
9. What type of assistance did they offer?
10. What is your recommendation for the betterment of the program?

Socio-demographic information

Age:
Country of origin:
Residence status in the U.S:
Employment Status:

B. Employees:

1. How high is the need for the services you offer?
2. How many referral cases do you get from your partner agencies in NC per year?
3. Are refugees still coming to NC considering the new barriers on immigration imposed by the current administration?
4. What real difference has the intervention made to the beneficiaries?
5. How fast is the delivery of services?
6. What other factors can contribute to the self-sufficiency of the refugee?
7. How many refugee families did you cover last year?
8. Is there any exit strategy for the program? (Capacity building of local partners, delegation of tasks, referral and…)
9. What program challenges are you currently experiencing in NC?
10. How can we increase the impact and sustainability of the program?

Socio-demographic information

Nationality:
Job Title at IRUSA:
Year(s) of experience:
Age:

Challenges and Recommendations

One of the main concentration areas of my paper was to find out the monitoring and evaluation issues, general challenges of the program, and how to improve them. I interviewed four people at IRUSA headquarters, the director of programs, the program manager, the case manager and the M&E officer. After data analysis and utilization of my observation and experience at IRUSA, I classified the challenges into two categories: the M&E challenges and the IRRS program challenges.

The M&E Challenges

Budget. Nonprofits face different challenges in monitoring and evaluation of programs as discussed earlier in the literature review. These challenges range from budget, time and data, to political, administrative and technical constraints, which each can influence the M&E process. At IRUSA, the M&E challenge is budget. In spite of tens of domestic and international projects, IRUSA has only one M&E officer who has to monitor and evaluate projects from time to time. Due to a big number of projects, the M&E officer has to prioritize and select projects with remarkable budgets that are mostly international projects/programs. Despite that, sometimes major projects cannot be evaluated once per year.

M&E plan. With regard to the IRRS program, the M&E challenge is different. Across my interviewees, all unanimously confirmed that the IRRS program has no M&E plan and logical framework. This is a new challenge that I did not encounter while doing the literature review. It is a fact that some projects and programs might not have an M&E system. To evaluate this project, my supervisor and I designed a questionnaire after a thorough analysis of the available program documents. We went to North Carolina in July 2018 and visited some beneficiaries to know how this program works out. Since the start of the pilot program in early 2017, it was the first time that the program was evaluated.

The IRRS program team in NC with the support of the IRUSA Information Technology team developed a comprehensive PDF file for their intake process in which all the data about the beneficiaries can be inserted. For instance, the file includes monthly gross income and assets, monthly expenses, and a development plan for each beneficiary family. It shows the balance of each family on monthly basis; it gives the details of what has been the income as well as the total expenses. The third section is the monthly development plan that consists of four activities: job, ESL, transportation, and others (medical, agency, etc). Each activity has separate columns where the status and the progress of beneficiaries are listed. The first two sections of the plan provide comprehensive quantitative baseline data, and the last section indicates the updates on job search, ESL courses, transportation and etc.

The information in the file significantly contributes to the monitoring and evaluation of the program because it provides the baseline data and shows the status of the beneficiaries before and after the intervention. In addition, it addresses the data constraint for monitoring and evaluation. I hope that my thesis addresses this challenge as I share it with the director of programs and my supervisor at IRUSA headquarters and the IRRS team in North Carolina.

The IRRS Challenges

Homogeneousness of the beneficiaries, bureaucratic procedures, insufficient staff, and lack of a fixed office and reporting mechanism as well as the duration of the program are among the major challenges that were identified. I will discuss each challenge in detail.

Type of beneficiaries. Most of the beneficiaries of the IRRS program are Muslim refugees mainly from the Middle East and Afghanistan. It is hard to find a non-Muslim among them. The program has covered one or two non-Muslim families so far. The program is inclusive and open to receive all documented refugees and asylees regardless of their race, religion, region, language, and ethnicity and the team in NC repeatedly talked about the inclusiveness of the program to the resettlement agencies; however, the cooperating partners only introduced and referred non-Muslim refugees. My understanding is that resettlement agencies consider cultural competency of the organizations and only refer refugees when they find a cultural match between the service-providing agency and the beneficiaries. All my interviewees also confirmed this issue.

The other reason might be the availability of sufficient churches and community-based organizations that offer similar services in different communities. Considering cultural competency, the refugee resettlement agencies may take non-Muslim refugees or refer them to churches and community-based organizations where the refugees may feel more comfortable. Nonetheless, if IRUSA intends to turn into a refugee resettlement agency in the long run, the IRRS program should take non-Muslim refugees in the program.

Bureaucratic process. In order to process the rental and reskilling payment for beneficiaries, the program manager has to approve each payment case by case. This slows down the payment procedure because the program manager deals with a lot of domestic projects, meetings, and paperwork. Therefore, he cannot check and confirm every payment on time. His busy schedule causes a delay in communication with the team in NC.

The case manager, who also works as a local director, should be given this authority to approve and finalize rental and reskilling payments himself. Task delegation together with authority will enhance the motivation and interest of the local team to their job and employer. It will also save time, money and in the meantime will facilitate on-time delivery of services to beneficiaries. From a human resources perspective, managers should work on major tasks; the hours that the program manager spends on the processing and approval of rental and reskilling bills can be used more efficiently and effectively on other important developmental and strategic issues. Above all, it is the beneficiaries' right to get services on time.

Staffing. Insufficient human resources is another challenge. It is pretty difficult for a full-time and a half-time staff to offer case-management services to 65 families per year. The case manager does not do case management alone; as a local director he attends meetings and represents IRUSA in NC. I observed how busy his schedule is and how he deals with all the workload. At the least, the case manager needs a full-time colleague. In addition, in coordination with the IRUSA National Volunteers Unit, he can recruit and train some case management volunteers from the communities where beneficiaries are living to help the team with day-to-day activities. The other alternative would be a case management software. It will make the program more systematic and reduce paperwork remarkably. The software should be in consultation with the team and the IT unit of the IRUSA.

Narrative report. The program has no narrative report. I asked for narrative reports about the program for front-end-analysis, but the response was negative. I realized that the accomplishment of the program is mostly presented visually and numerically. A narrative report describes the operation of a program or operation with regard to the promises made in the proposal like outputs, outcomes, and impacts. It can be a monthly, midterm or final report. Therefore, I highly recommend the program team to produce a narrative report for the project as it is appealing for the program's donors and stakeholders.

Fixed office. IRUSA in NC has no fixed office. The team mostly uses their cars and a room in their houses for their routines. For instance, during my stay in NC, I witnessed that the case manager called beneficiaries, coordinated meetings with stakeholders and did some paperwork inside the car. When I went to his house, I noticed that he has a specific room inside his house for office work. The program manager and the director of programs identified expressed not having a fixed office as a challenge; however, it was not the case for the team in NC. If IRUSA plans to extend the program, having a fixed office is a need that should be addressed. Considering the established connections and rapport, it would not be difficult for the team in NC to find a fixed office.

Duration of the program. The IRRS program is for six months. Some beneficiaries ask for the extension of IRUSA's support beyond six months as they claimed that six months would not be adequate to achieve self-sufficiency. In fact, this is predictable because the program serves the most vulnerable beneficiaries. As an observer, I also realized that six months might not be sufficient for some beneficiaries. This issue has already been taken into consideration; the program team had some exceptional cases beyond six months. Therefore, it is a great idea to extend the program to some beneficiaries. However, the extension of the program triggers dependency.

In sum, I found the program impressive as the program targets the most vulnerable refugees who are hopeless and desperately need a helping hand. The quality counseling and the reskilling and rental assistance greatly contribute to the overall goal of the program. The findings of the latest evaluation that I was part of showed that the program has a great impact on the integration and self-sufficiency of the beneficiaries who were interviewed. I hope to see the extension and the expansion of the program in the future.

Reflections on Learnings

Experience of Developing the M&IE Plan

Development of the M&IE plan was amazing and at the same time challenging practice for me. It was an amazing practice because I did not have the experience to develop such an important document for an international organization in the U.S, something that I felt proud and accomplished about. This credit also goes to my colleagues at IRUSA, in particular, the programs team, who was supportive and encouraging. They valued my efforts, shared the relevant document and always expressed their appreciation. They told me that IRRS is a pilot program and my efforts would enrich and consequently improve the program. In spite of their busy schedule, they also gave me a time slot to interview them. I learned a lot from my colleagues. For instance, the Director of Programs reviewed the logical framework I developed and gave me her comments. It is always a blessing to work with experienced and educated practitioners. I learned a lot from their professionalism and mannerism and

On the other hand, the development of such a document was also challenging. As a graduate student who has worked and specialized in the M&E field, I thought it would be easy to develop an M&IE plan for the IRRS program. When I started my CLC paper, I realized that I have insufficient knowledge of case management programs. To overcome this challenge, I started reading some papers on case management to know the nature of it. I read a document, *A comprehensive grid to evaluate case management's expected effectiveness for community-dwelling frail older people,* by Van Durme et al. 2015. Although the guideline was about frail older people, it was a helpful source for case management programs. In addition, I studied OECD standards of evaluation, standards of ethics in the evalu ation, DAC criteria and a few chapters on the evaluation of complex programs, mixed methods and impact evaluation from the Real World of Evaluation.

Earning trust and knowledge gap in a nonprofit organization would be two major challenges that one can face in developing an M&IE plan. When I started my practicum at IRUSA, I knew a little about the organization, its staff, mission, vision, and scope of work. The more I worked there, the more I got involved with the staff and the more learned about the organization and my colleagues. My work at IRUSA helped me establish rapport with my colleagues and earn their trust. My experience, skills, and knowledge in the nonprofit world were also helpful.

A practitioner should closely study the organization, the existing culture, the nature of the program/project, key stakeholders and the program/project team. I even had no clue about the IRRS program at all. Considering the trust I earned, my supervisor asked me about my thesis. I told him that I want to do a CLC capstone. Then he proposed the IRRS program. Since then, I started collecting information about the program. Document analysis greatly contributed to bridging the information gap. To collect specific information about the program, I utilized the established rapport with key staff of the program, the M&E officer/team, the case manager, the program manager and the director of programs. I talked to them in person about my capstone paper and convinced them that my capstone paper will be a complementary document to their program. They trusted and provided me with the required documents.

Development of such an M&IE plan is key to successful implementation of a development initiative for three reasons. First, an M&IE plan provides a roadmap and explains the program's impact, outcome(s), outputs, and activities. The implementing agency only needs to follow up the guidelines to implement the project. Second, it is a useful tool that measures the progress of a program towards achieving the targets. The implementing agency can always examine whether the activities lead to outputs, outputs lead to the outcome(s) and outcome lead to impact. Hereby, they make sure that they are on the right track and whether the mandates of the program can be fulfilled on time. In case of any issue, one can identify the challenge and seek alternatives. Third, it easily helps nonprofits to report to their donors and stakeholders about their activities. It simplifies reporting and indicates transparency and accountability of a nonprofit towards its stakeholders.

Afghanistan is a developing country and the need for monitoring and evaluation experts is increasing due to the presence of international donors and nonprofits in the country. After graduation, I plan to work as an M&E consultant and a researcher in nonprofits in Afghanistan and teach project management, M&E and research in government or private universities. At whatever position I work, I will incorporate developing and applying similar M&IE plans in my career. In the long run, I plan to establish a research and M&E firm in my city, Herat. My experience and higher education degree qualify me to open my own consultancy firm and provide consultancy for the related government departments on how to monitor and evaluate projects implemented by international and national NGOs. Such projects would greatly contribute to the establishment and running of my M&E and Research Firm.

Thoughts to M&IE Professionals

Working in a nonprofit provides the opportunity to know the organization structure, culture, and staff. This helps M&IE professionals to establish rapport with the key staff and understand the nature of the program they want to develop an M&IE plan for. After establishing rapport, one can interview the program staff, ask about the nature of the program and the key stakeholders, and request all the relevant documents. The more M&IE professionals know about the program, the more accurate, cost-efficient and effective plan they can develop. Therefore, involvement in the organization is key.

Front-end analysis comes next. M&IE professionals are highly recommended to study the organization they want to develop M&IE for. Therefore, they should study all the relevant documents about the project, such as program/project proposal, concept note, reports, and any other relevant documents to the program. They should also ensure whether a monitoring and evaluation plan in place. After a thorough analysis of the information, they can come up with a functional M&IE plan.

Finally, M&IE professionals should remain independent and impartial in the development process of the plan. Stakeholders might influence M&IE professionals by presenting some recommendations on how to design. Their concerns and opinions should be noted, but at the end of the day, the decision on how to design and develop the plan should be made independently.

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