LEARNING GUIDE Daily Debrief

USAID/Armenia Field-based Learning Review

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[**Instructions**](#_4gz0ei2sxnkh)1

[Inputs to this document:](#_yxadbv24na9t) 1

[**Templates**](#_vqxfhtvuqujp)2

[Resilience to COVID-19](#_pduzfctedplj) 2

[COVID Questions to consider for your site visit:](#_l1dycqm1enu1) 2

[Resilience to Conflict in NK](#_twgkc8l87fop) 4

[NK Conflict Questions to consider for your site visit:](#_lpdkp94oryk6) 4

[Resilience to effects of sanctions against Russia/ war in Ukraine](#_a5w4xu80yr) 6

[War in Ukraine/Russian Sanction Questions to consider for your site visit:](#_b2o13l4nmva7) 6

[Differential Impacts on Gender, Youth, and other Marginalized Groups](#_v6s5aehwtuhy) 8

[Gender, Youth, and other Marginalized Groups Questions to consider for your site visit:](#_4lvdit65wsdj) 8

[Unsticking Bottlenecks](#_3w5yzlrkdfyz) 9

[Unsticking Bottlenecks Questions to consider for your site visit:](#_yl1yqzlxshke) 9

# Instructions

This note-taking template is for use during “daily debriefs”. Site visit teams (consisting of USAID technical and SPO staff, IPs, other participants) should use these to consolidate and synthesize information gleaned from the day’s site visits via discussion among their team.

Observations recorded here will be used as inputs for the final portfolio level presentation that each site visit team will present to other teams upon completion of all site visits.

#### Inputs to this document:

* Site visit guides
* Activity/site data placemats
* Notes taken by participants and/or designated note-taker during site visits
* Observations by site visit teams
* New thoughts or “aha” moments that come up during daily debrief discussions

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# Templates

## Resilience to COVID-19

**Problem statement (from CDCS):** The COVID-19 pandemic has severely impacted Armenia’s prospects for economic growth through disruptions to the global supply chain; a sharp decline in export receipts, including for primary commodities and travel and tourism; reduced consumption; lowered prospects for government revenue; and disruptions to the labor market. This is exacerbated by the economic downturn in Russia (as well as economic sanctions triggered by the war in Ukraine), which represents Armenia’s largest export market, its most significant source of remittances, and a primary destination for a sizable cohort of Armenian migrant laborers. In the USAID-assisted tourism sector, the GOAM Tourism Committee estimates a 40 percent reduction in revenues for 2020, which represents a $500 million loss from the economy and associated negative multiplier effects for suppliers.

While stimulus efforts seek to blunt economic decline, the long-term effects of COVID-19 are likely to be significant and include reduced consumption of goods and services and delayed or foregone investment.

#### COVID Questions to consider for your site visit:

*Consider the following questions and feel free to modify them to be more relevant to this site.*

In what ways did the COVID-19 pandemic impact these sites’/activites’ operations/results initially?

* In what ways does it continue to impact operations and/or results?
* What impacts are expected going forward?

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What examples are we observing of adaptations or pivots in response to COVID disruptions?

* Have these adaptations had the intended effect? How so? Why or why not?

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What challenges due to COVID are the sites/activities still grappling with?

* How are they thinking about addressing these challenges?
* What would help them to do so?

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## Resilience to Conflict in NK

**Problem Statement (from CDCS):** The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan escalated on September 27, 2020 when renewed fighting broke out at the line of contact in Nagorno-Karabakh. This escalation represents the worst fighting in the 26-year history of the conflict. This escalation may have serious repercussions on the development outcomes outlined in the strategy.

#### NK Conflict Questions to consider for your site visit:

*Consider the following questions and feel free to modify them to be more relevant to this site.*

In what ways did the conflict in NK impact these sites’/activites’ operations/results initially?

* In what ways does it continue to impact the operations and/or results?
* What impacts are expected going forward?

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What examples are we observing of adaptations or pivots in response to NK conflict disruptions?

* Have these adaptations had the intended effect? How so? Why or why not?

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What challenges due to the conflict in NK are the sites/activities still grappling with?

* How are they thinking about addressing these challenges?
* What would help them to do so?

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## Resilience to effects of sanctions against Russia/ war in Ukraine

**Problem Statement:** Economic sanctions against Russia, as well as other effects of the war in Ukraine, present major shocks to Armenia’s economic growth and recovery. Russia is a key economic, security, and energy partner for Armenia. Russia maintains two military bases in

Armenia, with approximately 5,000 Russian troops stationed near its border with Turkey. Armenia’s integration with the Russian economy is substantial and broad-based, and Armenia’s participation in the Eurasian Economic Union encourages closer integration with the Russian economy. Currently, Armenia relies on Russia for over 60 percent of its net energy imports. Remittances equal about 11 percent of Armenia’s GDP, with 54 percent of that flowing from Russia. About half of Armenia’s inward foreign direct investment (FDI) stock comes from Russia, and Russian assistance to Armenia totaled $28 million in 2017. Most Armenians get news and information from television, where Russian programming dominates.

Many multinational companies, especially in the technology sector, have relocated from Russia and/or Ukraine to Armenia since the war began and sanctions were imposed. This represents an economic stimulus as companies hire local workers, and relocate some of their own employees (who often bring with them relatively progressive views). But it may also strain the absorptive capacity of urban areas, especially housing markets, primary and secondary education institutions, and the still recovering healthcare infrastructure.

Additionally, the disruption of Ukraine’s agricultural sector may have as yet unrealized impacts on the agricultural supply chain in Armenia. It is unclear at the time of writing whether this will increase demand for Armenian agricultural exports, suppress domestic agricultural production due to scarcity of inputs, or lock up export markets as Russia sells or “gifts” stolen Ukrainian outputs to countries in exchange for not opposing the war in Ukraine.

#### War in Ukraine/Russian Sanction Questions to consider for your site visit:

*Consider the following questions and feel free to modify them to be more relevant to this site.*

In what ways are sanctions against Russia/war in Ukraine impacting these sites’/activites’ operations/results initially?

* What impacts are expected going forward?

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What examples are we observing of adaptations or pivots in response to the war and/or sanctions?

* Have these adaptations had the intended effect? How so? Why or why not?

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What challenges due to the war and/or sanctions are the sites/activities still grappling with?

* How are they thinking about addressing these challenges?
* What would help them to do so?

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## Differential Impacts on Gender, Youth, and other Marginalized Groups

**Problem Statement:** Armenia experiences a significant economic gender gap in which women participate less in the formal economy, and may not earn equal pay for equal work. Women are also at higher risk for trafficking and gender-based violence. Youth also face significant economic challenges -- the youth unemployment rate was near 40% when the CDCS was drafted, and economic shocks will likely exacerbate this problem. They were a driving population for the Velvet Revolution, continued progress in this area depends upon continued political engagement of this group. Persons with disabilities, LGTBQIA+, and persons living outside of Yerevan are also expected to be impacted more severely by the first and second order impacts of COVID, the NK conflict, and the war in Ukraine/economic sanctions against Russia.

#### Gender, Youth, and other Marginalized Groups Questions to consider for your site visit:

Consider the following questions and feel free to modify them to be more relevant to this site.

To what extent are these sites/activities engaging or serving marginalized groups (women, youth, LGBTQIA+, persons with disabilities, refugees or internally displaced people)?

* Was engagement or service with these groups planned at the outset of the activities?
* How has it changed over time?
* Are the activities/sites observing urgent needs that they are struggling to meet with any of these populations?

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## Unsticking Bottlenecks

Our efforts to learn and adapt along with our partners are crucial inputs to adaptations to our activities, to our operating processes, and also to those we may make as a part of our upcoming CDCS Mid-course Stocktaking, and development of our next CDCS. In addition, what we learn will also contribute to USAID’s Agency-wide Learning Agenda, Question 1:

*How can USAID better* ***streamline systems, processes and resources*** *to meet* ***long-term needs*** *identified by Missions, while enabling the flexibility to* ***respond quickly to unexpected shifts in context?***

This topic focuses on aspects of USAID’s **operational effectiveness**; particularly ways in which the Mission can better align budget, policy, programming, staff, and systems - and **reduce unnecessary administrative burdens**, or ‘sludge’ - to achieve its mission. The question considers operational factors that affect how well long-term development and humanitarian needs identified by Missions are addressed in strategies and programming, given resource limitations, mandates, directives, or other barriers or tradeoffs. It also creates space for investigating **the way we work with our partners** and **how Agency systems and processes enable flexible and timely response to game-changing shifts in operating context**, including crises such as the global COVID-19 pandemic and other shocks.

#### Unsticking Bottlenecks Questions to consider for your site visit:

*Consider the following questions and feel free to modify them to be more relevant to this site.*

What do these sites/activities *want* to do (but cannot)? Why?

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What adaptations could USAID make (to the award, or to the way we engage with the partner) in order to remove some of these barriers?

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Finally, be sure to take note of the unexpected, what might be new information for you, your activity or your site visit team. **What surprised you? What stood out to you?**

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