

DETERMINATION OF CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION

Overview: The USAID funded Iraq Civic Engagement Activity is a new five-year activity whose goal is to increase Iraqi citizens' confidence in democracy, by promoting an environment where they are more informed, engaged, and active participants in Iraq's democratic processes.

ORGANIZATIONAL DATA

Activity Name:	Civic Engagement Activity
Geographic Location(s):	Iraq
Funding Operating Unit(s):	USAID/Iraq
Other Involved Operating Unit(s):	n/a
Funding Account(s):	ESF
Life of Project Funding (ceiling):	\$30,000,000
Activity Start/End Date	December 2024 – November 2029
If Amended, New End Date:	
Solicitation/Contract/Award Number(s) :	n/a
Mechanism Type:	Cooperative Agreement
Implementing Partner(s):	n/a

DOCUMENT TRACKING

Bureau Tracking ID:	ME 24-52
Document Expiration Date:	March 30, 2030
Sector Type(s):	Democracy, Human Rights, Governance

ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE REVIEW DATA

Environmental Determination(s):	Categorical Exclusion
Activity will involve construction, as defined by ADS 201 and 303 :	No construction is planned or authorized under this activity
Potential Impact to Threatened or Endangered Species or Critical Habitat per 216.5:	No impact to Threatened or Endangered Species or Critical Habitats
Applicability of Safeguards for Activities Supporting Parks and Protected Areas :	No, this activity will not involve protected areas
Climate Risks Identified (#) in Annex 1:	Low: 7 Moderate: 0 High: 0
Climate Risks Addressed (#) in Annex 1:	Low: 0 Moderate: 0 High: 0

PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

In accordance with Title 22, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 216 ([22 CFR 216](#)), this document is to establish that all proposed activities belong to classes of actions eligible for Determination of Categorical Exclusions (DCE), as set out in Agency regulations (22 CFR 216.2(c)), and that there are no foreseeable significant direct or indirect impacts that would preclude a CE determination. Upon approval of this document, the DCEs are affirmed for this activity.

This document also captures (in Annex 1) the results of the Climate Risk Management process, in accordance with USAID policy ([ADS 201mal](#)).

1. ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

USAID's goal is to increase Iraqi citizens' confidence in democracy, by promoting an environment where they are more informed, engaged, and active participants in Iraq's democratic processes. USAID will promote the inclusion of those individuals and groups that are most underrepresented in Iraqi civic and political life.

Objective 1: Citizens' civic literacy improved¹.

Objective 2: Citizens proactively engage in political life² on issues of their choice online and offline.

The civic engagement activity is an initiative aimed at fostering a more politically engaged citizenry in Iraq, enhancing trust and participation in the country's democratic processes.

Through this activity, USAID seeks to elevate civic literacy, empower citizens to actively engage and contribute to discussions on issues of concern. By providing access to information and resources, the program aims to equip citizens with the knowledge and skills necessary to participate effectively in the democratic processes.

Localization will be central to this activity, with local leadership involved in activity design and priority setting. Sub-grants will help identify potential local partners for direct awards to USAID/Iraq. The implementing partner will integrate local capacity strengthening in line with USAID's policy throughout all activities.

TABLE 1: ILLUSTRATIVE ACTIVITIES OR INTERVENTIONS

1 — Citizens' civic literacy improved
1.1 Citizens are empowered with knowledge of their rights and responsibilities as citizens in the Iraqi democratic system
1.2 Citizens have a greater understanding of how their government is meant to work.
2 — Citizens proactively engage in political life
2.1 Citizens can have skills to locate and identify credible information sources and to engage with accurate news content to build their civic literacy.
2.2 Citizens have more opportunities to engage with government at all levels (Provincial Councils/Council of Representatives)
2.3 Citizens have improved capacity for public policy advocacy on issues they prioritize.
2.4 Citizens show improved participation in the democratic processes.
2.5 Citizens are better equipped to resist mis/disinformation and their ability to promote accurate information is improved.
3 — Flexible Activity Modifier Component - provides flexibility for identifying and seizing opportunities as an adaptive, collaborative program management tool. Actions under this component must be targeted to opportunities that emerge or may fill a gap in technical expertise or information required to achieve the objectives of the program.

¹ Civic literacy: knowledge, skills, and understanding that individuals possess about their rights, responsibilities, and the workings of their government and society.

² Illustrative examples of political life offline include civic engagement, participation in public meetings and fora, advocacy and activism, political and civic education, community involvement, political discourse, running for office, promoting access to government information and holding appointed government office. Online examples might include promoting positive narratives on civic life, countering mis and dis information and civic literacy gained in the digital space.

2. DETERMINATION OF CATEGORICAL EXCLUSIONS

A DCE is recommended for the following activities or interventions (sub-activities) that fall under the classes of actions defined in §216.2(c)(2). No further analysis is required for the activities/interventions described in Table 1 except as noted below:

1. In the event of modification to the scope of work or addition of new activities an amendment will usually be required.
2. **The AOR will consult with the MEO & REA during the co-creation phase** to ensure all activities remain covered under one or more Categorical Exclusion(s) cited below.
3. **If the Flexible Activity Modifier Component is used, the AOR will consult with the MEO & REA** to ensure all activities remain covered under one or more Categorical Exclusion(s) cited below.
4. **Grants awarded under this activity will be reviewed by the MEO & REA** to ensure the proposed activities fall under one or more Categorical Exclusion(s) cited below and do not fund any activities that may have adverse environmental impacts (such as renovation works).

Activity or Intervention #	Recommended Determination for Categorical Exclusion
2.1 Citizens can have skills to locate and identify credible information sources and to engage with accurate news content to build their civic literacy. 2.5 Citizens are better equipped to resist mis/disinformation and their ability to promote accurate information is improved.	§216.2(c)(2)(i) Education, technical assistance, or training programs except to the extent such programs include activities directly affecting the environment (such as construction of facilities, etc.)
1.2 Citizens have a greater understanding of how their government is meant to work. (§216.2(c)(2)(iii) Analyses, studies, academic or research workshops and meetings
2.2 Citizens have more opportunities to engage with government at all levels (Provincial Councils/Council of Representatives)	§216.2(c)(2)(v) Document and information transfers
2.2 Citizens have more opportunities to engage with government at all levels (Provincial Councils/Council of Representatives)	§216.2(c)(2)(xiv) Studies, projects or programs intended to develop the capability of recipient countries to engage in development planning, except to the extent designed to result in activities directly affecting the environment (such as construction of facilities, etc.)
3 – Flexible Activity Modifier Component	§216.2(c)(2)(i) Education, technical assistance, or training programs except to the extent such programs include activities directly affecting the environment (such as construction of facilities, etc.) §216.2(c)(2)(v) Document and information transfers

3. MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

3.1. USAID IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING REQUIREMENTS FOR AWARDS

The DCE is contingent upon full implementation of the following requirements.

Changes to scope of awards require a determination be made as to whether such change may have an environmental impact not previously assessed (per §216.3(a)(9)). Per ADS 204, it is the responsibility of

the AOR to keep the MEO/REA and BEO informed of any new information or changes in the activity(ies) subject to this DCE.

- 3.1.1.** Provide briefings for implementing partner(s) on environmental compliance responsibilities relevant to the award (justification for DCE and limitations - such as no physical works, ensure activities remain within the scope of the DCE, monitoring to ensure activities do not result in unintended environmental impacts, etc.);
- 3.1.2.** Ensure integration of DCE limitations in prime and sub-awards and grant agreements;
- 3.1.3.** Ensure compliance with applicable partner country requirements;
- 3.1.4.** Annual review of activities to ensure that scope is consistent with the DCE;
- 3.1.5.** Records Management: The AOR will maintain environmental compliance documents in the official activity file and upload records to the [USAID Environmental Compliance Database](#);
- 3.1.6.** Corrective Action: When noncompliance or unforeseen impacts are identified, the AOR will initiate the corrective action process, in consultation with the cognizant environmental officer(s) (e.g., MEO, REA, or BEO). The Corrective Action Plan is used to document findings, recommendations, and a timeline for making the corrections.

ATTACHMENTS: Annex 1: Climate Risk Management Summary and Table

ANNEX 1. CLIMATE RISK MANAGEMENT SUMMARY AND TABLE

CLIMATE RISK MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

This section summarizes the methodology used and findings of the CRM Screening, in accordance with [ADS 201ma](#). The design team, in consultation with the CIL, considered the potential effect of climate risks/stressors on the sustainability of the activity in the table below (changing precipitation patterns, rising temperature, floods, droughts, fires, landslides, etc.) in addition to the impact of activities on the climate (increased greenhouse gas emissions, land use changes, etc.).

In a conflict-affected society like Iraq, changes in climate exacerbate a range of existing vulnerabilities such as land insecurity, migration and displacement, poverty, and low employment. These are all potentially affected by current and projected climate stressors, including rising temperatures, water insecurity, and extreme weather events like sandstorms and floods.

CLIMATE RISK MANAGEMENT SUMMARY TABLE

Activity or Intervention #	Climate Risks ³	Risk Rating ⁴	How Risks are Addressed ⁵	Opportunities to Strengthen Climate Resilience or Climate Mitigation ⁶
1.1 Citizens are empowered with knowledge of their rights and responsibilities as citizens in the Iraqi democratic system (Objective 1)	None	-Low	Given the nature of the planned activity, climate risks to USAID investment are not likely. Though there are opportunities to be explored to strengthen development outcomes. USAID AOR will review activities to ensure compliance with USAID policies and regulations.	Climate change is a driver of conflict. The IP will explore opportunities to engage and educate citizens about climate resiliency (i.e. community heat action plans) and mitigation (i.e. improved building codes, greening public transportation, energy efficiency) and fight mis - dis information to empower informed discourse and engagement on the issue.
1.2 Citizens have a greater understanding of how their government is meant to work. (Objective 1)	None	-Low		
2.1 Citizens can have skills to locate and identify credible information sources and to engage with accurate news content to build their civic literacy. (Objective 2)	None	-Low		
2.2 Citizens have more opportunities to engage with government at all levels (Provincial Councils/Council of Representatives) (Objective 2)	None	-Low		

³ List key risks related to the defined/illustrative interventions identified in the screen and additional assessment..

⁴ Low/Moderate/ High

⁵ Describe how risks have been addressed in activity design and/or additional steps that will be taken in implementation. If a decision has been made to accept the risk, briefly explain why.

⁶ Describe opportunities to achieve development objectives by integrating climate resilience or mitigation measures.

Activity or Intervention #	Climate Risks ³	Risk Rating ⁴	How Risks are Addressed ⁵	Opportunities to Strengthen Climate Resilience or Climate Mitigation ⁶
2.3 Citizens have improved capacity for public policy advocacy on issues they prioritize. (Objective 2)	None	-Low		
2.4 Citizens show improved participation in the democratic processes. (Objective 2)	None	--Low		
2.5 Citizens are better equipped to resist mis/disinformation and their ability to promote accurate information is improved. (Objective 2)	None	-Low		