

RAPID FEEDBACK MONITORING, EVALUATION, RESEARCH AND LEARNING (RAPID FEEDBACK MERL)

Rapid Feedback MERL is a collaborative approach to learning and adapting. Improved data capture and compressed feedback loops provide decision-makers with timely, actionable evidence. Design and implementation decisions can be optimized to maximize chances of impact and improve prospects for long-term success.

THE CHALLENGE

Few programs build systematic feedback loops into early stages of project implementation. Even projects with a strong evidence based design include assumptions that need to be pressure-tested in reality. M&E systems are often considered tools for accountability and therefore, learning often occurs too late in the project cycle to influence change. Many M&E activities rely on a limited, inappropriate, and inadequate set of methods.

THE INNOVATION

Rapid Feedback MERL brings learning to the early stages of project implementation in a rigorous, empowering, and flexible way. It applies proven monitoring, evaluation, and analytic techniques to increase effectiveness systematically. Rapid Feedback guides programs in testing key program adaptations to inform how best to achieve desired results – potentially at lower cost. This includes focusing feedback loops on specific aspects of the project, and may also include using advanced statistical methods to reduce required sample sizes and the use of tools that can support rapid data collection – cell phones and tablets for survey implementation, SMS and IVR technology for remote data collection, and geospatial imagery from satellites.

THE APPROACH

- » The RF MERL team works with partners to help them articulate their Theory of Change and identify learning questions and untested assumptions.
- » Focuses on evidence and feedback to guide decision-making and adaptation.
- » Employs MERL methods in a smart way. RF MERL seeks to identify and rapidly test assumptions within the Theory of Change as early as possible, increasing the likelihood of a well-conceived activity from the beginning.
- » Takes a participatory approach to evidence-based learning. The RF MERL Consortium works closely with USAID Operating Units and Implementing Partners to: 1) understand their challenges and determine what evidence will be most useful for decision-making; 2) design and implement adaptive learning activities, ranging from formative research to rapid randomized control trials (RCTs); 3) analyze results with partners; and 4) work with them to adapt their activities based on the evidence generated.



Tools: Tools will match the design questions to support timely decision making, but may include focus groups, RCTs, quasiexperimental designs, and in some cases factorial orthogonal design



Partners: Results for Development Institute (prime), Abt Associates Inc., Mathematica Policy Research, Notre Dame Initiative for Global Development



Funding mechanism: Cooperative Agreement (buy-in option for USAID operating units)



Period of performance:
10/01/2015 – 9/30/2024

COMPLETED PILOTS

Prevention of family-child separation

in Cambodia: This project tested two behavior change campaigns, ultimately allowing for our in-country partners to improve their messaging to stakeholders who play a role in preventing unnecessary child separations.

Community engagement in childhood

education in Tanzania: This study is focused on understanding which Tusome Pamoja activities are most effective at increasing parent and community engagement. R4D and partners are examining how different program activities contribute to increased parental and community engagement, and how these can ultimately contribute to changes in learning outcomes.

Medication adherence for tuberculosis

patients in India: This study is focused on understanding tuberculosis patient engagement across various medication adherence technology models. The aim of this research is to produce learnings that will help improve the targeting and deployment of current and future adherence technology models for TB patients.

Improving parental and community

engagement in early-grade reading in Senegal: This study is testing interventions related to family and community engagement in book use in Senegal. The mixed methods research will be used to inform teacher coaching and community engagement activities for Lecture Pour Tous programming.

Regional health integration to enhance

services in East Central Uganda: This engagement is focused on developing the capacity of local teams to use adaptive learning methods for improved prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV treatment of HIV in Uganda.

Improving health service delivery in

Guinea: This activity aims to increase the access to, quality of, and utilization of primary care in health facilities and surrounding communities, while restoring and rebuilding community confidence



Lab contact: Sophia van der Bijl, svanderbijl@usaid.gov