



DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATION

HOW BARRIERS & ENABLERS EMERGE OVER TIME

2019



BACKGROUND

Testing developmental evaluation in the USAID context, and living to tell the tale.

Developmental evaluation (DE) was created to evaluate innovative programs that operate in complex environments and are thus expected to adapt over time. It includes having one or more evaluators integrated into the implementation team, usually on a full-time basis. These Developmental Evaluators are embedded within teams to help contribute to modifications in program design and targeted outcomes throughout implementation.

The Developmental Evaluation Pilot Activity (DEPA-MERL) under the U.S. Global Development Lab's Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, and Learning Innovations (MERLIN) program at the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is testing the effectiveness of DE in the USAID context.

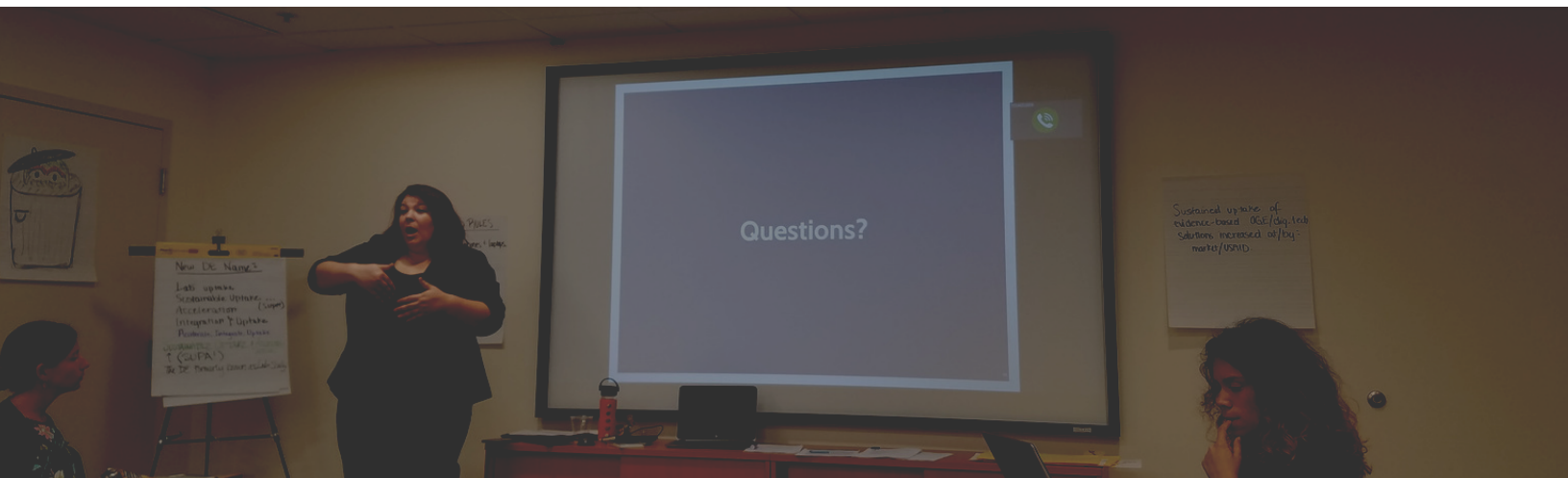
For more resources and information related to the DEPA-MERL consortium's work or the Sustained Uptake DE, see [DEPA-MERL RESOURCES](#) on page 06.

The DEPA-MERL consortium has documented lessons learned from its experience and is pleased to offer guidance for organizations, managers, and evaluators that seek to implement this approach.

While it is impossible to know exactly how a DE will evolve, the DEPA-MERL consortium has found that certain barriers and enablers may be more (or less) critical at different stages of a DE.

This document shares the results from an in-depth qualitative analysis of barriers and enablers to DE implementation. These findings surfaced during DEPA-MERL's Sustained Uptake DE, a 22-month DE with the Global Development Lab at USAID headquarters.

By sharing this data, the DEPA-MERL consortium hopes to share findings and allow for a more nuanced understanding of the factors that can influence a DE over time.



THE SIMPLE STORY

How much factors influenced DE implementation varied by stage.

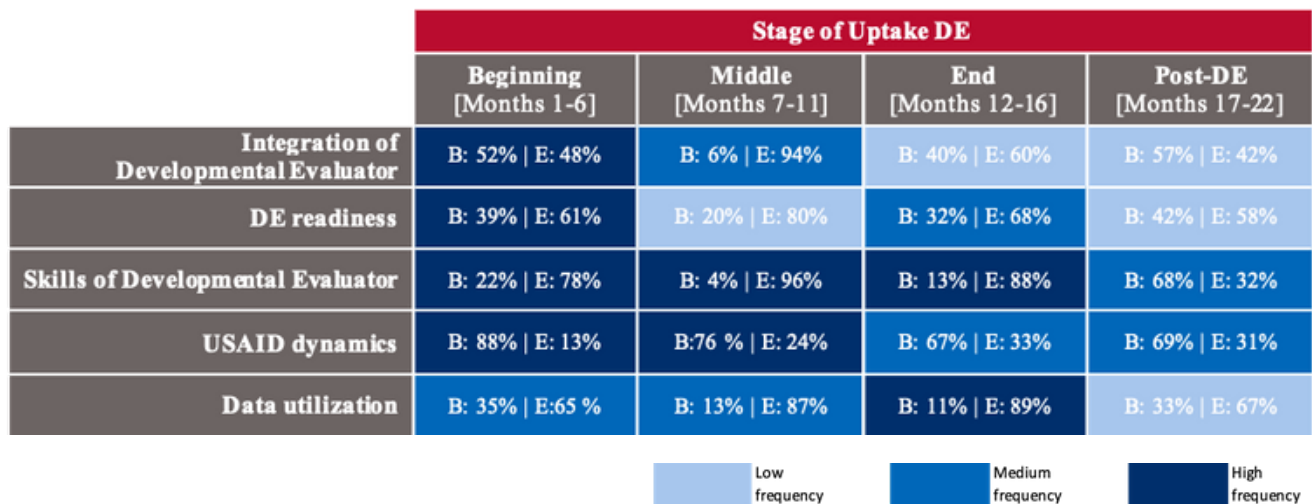


Figure 1: The frequency in which factors influenced the Uptake DE varied by the stage of the evaluation. The darker the color, the more frequent a given factor was reported as a barrier and/or enabler in that stage.

The DEPA-MERL consortium conducted monthly reflection interviews with the Developmental Evaluator. Each month, the Developmental Evaluator reported her perceptions of the factors that were positively or negatively affecting DE implementation. From this data, five priority factors were selected for further analysis because of their potential to provide lessons for future DE implementers:

- Integration of the Developmental Evaluator
- DE readiness
- Skills of the Developmental Evaluator
- USAID dynamics
- Data utilization

Data for these factors were grouped into four stages (beginning, middle, end, post-DE) to analyze how the factors changed over time.*

Figure 1 display the results. The darker the color, the more frequent a factor was reported. The percentages indicate how often a factor was referenced as a barrier or enabler. Findings indicate that the frequency in which factors influence DE implementation vary by time. During the Sustained Uptake DE, none of the factors were mentioned with the same frequency across all four stages of the DE.

The Developmental Evaluator reported on many factors during the first six months. In the middle of the DE, *skills of the Developmental Evaluator* and *USAID dynamics* were mentioned most frequently. In fact, those were the two most frequently mentioned factors. *Data utilization* was mentioned most often at the end of the DE but, interestingly, it was also perceived to be very important at the beginning of the DE.

* For this analysis, DEPA-MERL used data collected from monthly reflection interviews with the Developmental Evaluator. The only exception was that stakeholder interview data was also used to understand how the *skills of the Developmental Evaluator* changed over time.

THE DEEP-DIVE

Analysis of five priority factors showed that each included several sub-themes that emerged during the different stages of the DE.

Next, the DEPA-MERL consortium conducted a deep-dive analysis of the five priority factors to understand *what* were each factors' sub-themes and *when* did they occur in the DE.

Figure 2 lists each sub-theme and shows whether it was a barrier, enabler, or *both* a barrier and enabler to implementation of the Sustained Uptake DE. **Figure 3** (see next page) displays how each sub-theme impacted DE implementation over time. Together, this data can be used by DE implementers to help identify and manage barriers and enablers.

Take *integration of the Developmental Evaluator* as an example. Looking at **Figure 1**, it appears that *integration of the Developmental Evaluator* was most important only at the beginning of the DE. However, data from the deep-dive analysis tells a different story.

Figure 3 shows that *integration of the Developmental Evaluator* had three unique sub-themes that varied by DE stage:

- Communicating and sharing information openly
- Enabling high-quality engagement with all stakeholders
- Evolving role of the Developmental Evaluator

For example, the *evolving role of the Developmental Evaluator*, continued to be important for the Developmental Evaluator even in later stages of the DE. In fact, later in the DE, the Developmental Evaluator's role shifted focus to help stakeholders prepare to close out her integration with the teams.

More examples are shared in the "A Study of the Sustained Uptake Developmental Evaluation" report referred to on page o6.

	Enabler	Barrier
Integration of Developmental Evaluator		
Communicating and sharing information openly	✓	
Enabling high-quality engagement with all stakeholders	✓	
Evolving role of the Developmental Evaluator	✓	✓
DE Readiness		
Promoting understanding and buy-in	✓	
Being willing and prepared to adapt	✓	✓
Skills of Developmental Evaluator		
Maintaining objectivity as an external, objective member of the team	✓	
Being "evaluatively minded"	✓	
Recognizing "big picture" trends and patterns	✓	
Communicating effectively	✓	
Providing strategic council and social support	✓	
Staying focused and managing competing priorities	✓	✓
Facilitating action and adaptation	✓	
USAID Dynamics		
Navigating bureaucratic processes		✓
Strengthening USAID evaluation capabilities	✓	✓
Enabling complex, strategic thinking within USAID "go go go" culture	✓	✓
Operating in an ambiguous political climate		✓
Data Utilization		
Sharing data effectively to promote utilization	✓	
Pausing and reflecting on data and recommendations	✓	
Providing implementation support	✓	✓

Figure 2: Each factor had sub-themes that served as a barrier and/or enabler to DE implementation.

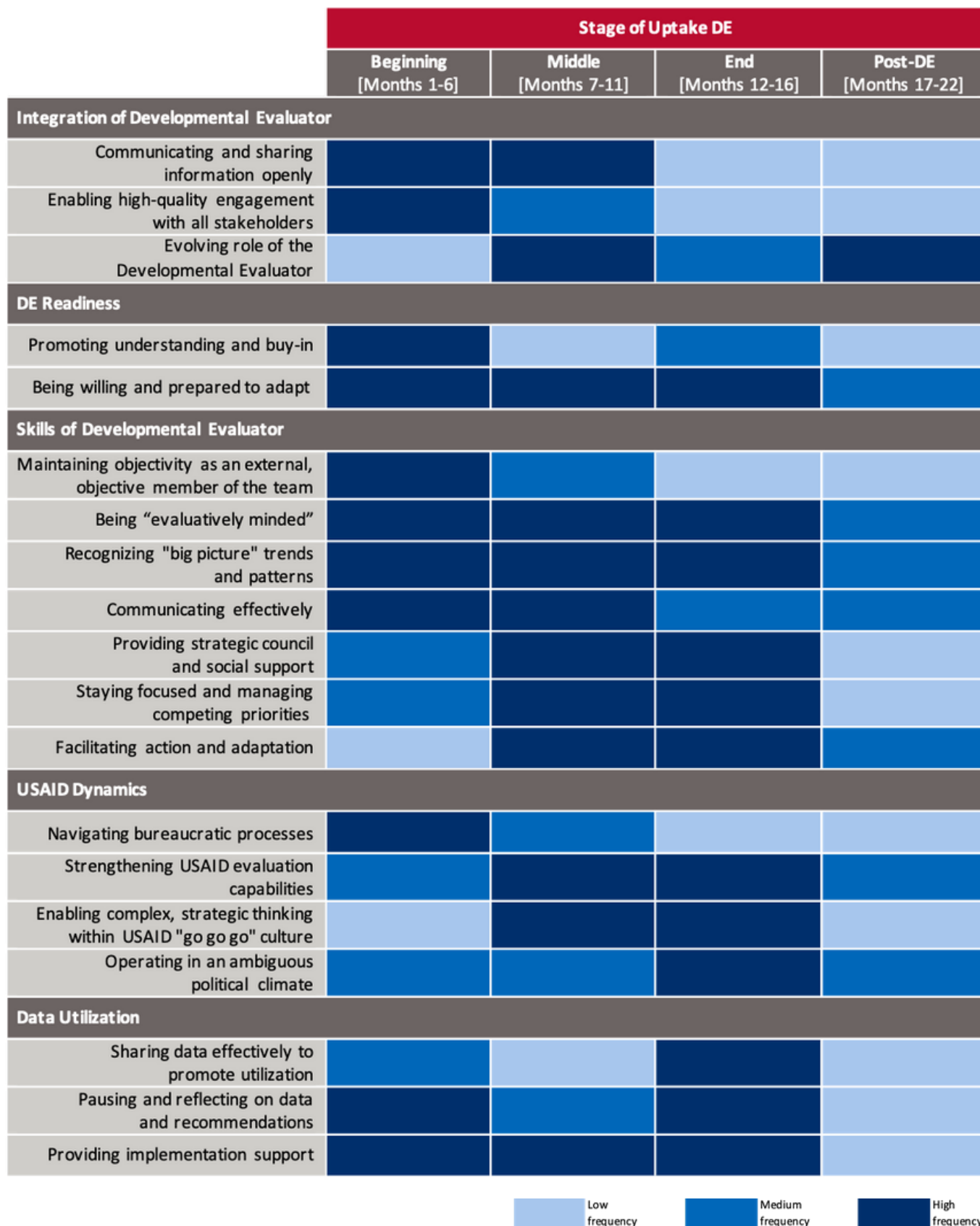


Figure 3: At different stages of the DE, the Developmental Evaluator increased (or decreased) how often she reported on certain sub-themes that influenced implementation of the evaluation. Developmental Evaluators and DE implementers can use these results to help manage barriers and promote enablers during their own DE.



Developmental Evaluation in Practice: Tips, Tools, and Templates



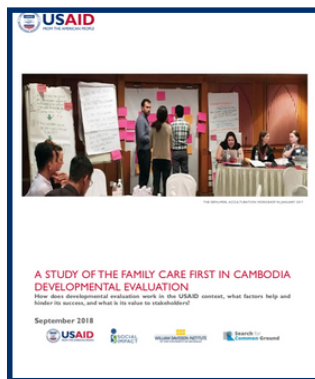
Developmental Evaluation Pilot Report: Sustained Uptake DE



A Study of the Sustained Uptake Developmental Evaluation



Developmental Evaluation Pilot Report: Family Care First in Cambodia



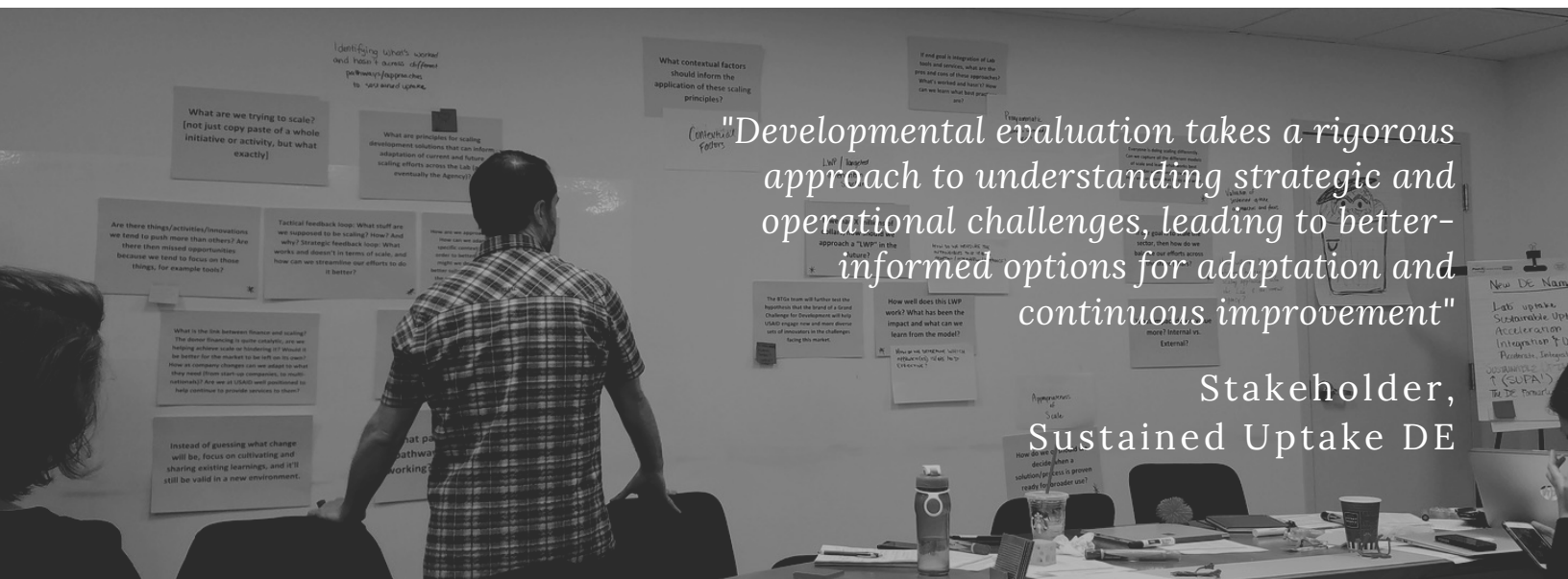
A Study of the Family Care First in Cambodia Developmental Evaluation



Click on a report to redirect to that resource!

SUGGESTED CITATION

Baylor, R., Fatehi, Y. K., Esper, H. (2019). *Developmental Evaluation: How Barriers and Enablers Emerge Over Time.*



"Developmental evaluation takes a rigorous approach to understanding strategic and operational challenges, leading to better-informed options for adaptation and continuous improvement"

Stakeholder, Sustained Uptake DE