U.S. GLOBAL
DEVELOPMENT
LAB

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MONITORING, EVALUATION RESEARCH AND LEARING INNOVATIONS PROGRAM (MERLIN)

MERLIN is a USAID endeavor led by the U.S. Global Development Lab and in partnership with the Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning and the Bureau for Global Health. It aims to source, co-create and co-design development solutions that innovate on traditional approaches to monitoring, evaluation, research and learning (MERL). The MERLIN Program was announced on March 27, 2015 and is structured to allow USAID to work with partners to collaboratively identify, design, and test cutting-edge solutions to more effectively understand and measure the impacts of development programs. This is a radically different approach to program design for USAID and its partners

THE CHALLENGE

While standard approaches to MERL work well for many USAID projects, when specific outputs and outcomes are not as easily identifiable up front, and where change might happen in a non-linear manner, these standard tools can fall short. This is especially true for projects operating in highly complex environments, where the best approach to the development problem is not well recognized, and project managers must adapt the project design over the course of the project.

THROUGH MERLIN,THE LAB AND ITS PARTNERS AIM TO ADDRESS THE FOLLOWING CHALLENGES:

- How might we foster increased development impact through improved and innovative tools for monitoring, evaluation, research, and learning?
- What are the cutting edge approaches to measuring impact, understanding complex development challenges and solutions, and using evidence to drive smart decision-making and policy?
- How might we test and provide evidence to demonstrate the value add of this new STIP model of development, given that the impacts of many such programs are only discernible over the long term?

USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

THE PARTNERS

The MERLIN partner consortium is growing. Over 30 implementing partners have contributed to the design of concepts and to date, 17 organizations are taking part in implementing the first set of activities under MERLIN. These partners include domestic and international universities, private sector, institutes, innovation Labs, and non-governmental organizations.

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