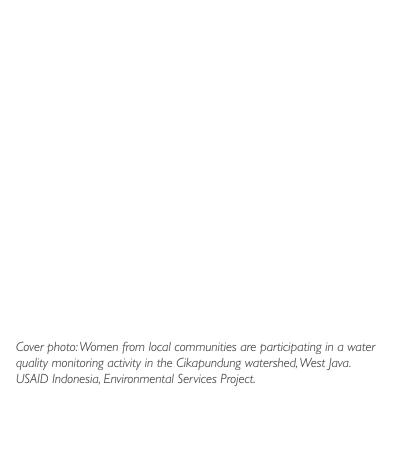**USAID EVALUATION POLICY: YEAR ONE**

FIRST ANNUAL REPORT
AND PLAN FOR 2012 AND 2013

FEBRUARY 2012

USAID EVALUATION POLICY: YEAR ONE

FIRST ANNUAL REPORT AND PLAN
FOR 2012 AND 2013

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PD-ACS-999

Prepared by the Office of Learning, Evaluation and Research of the Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning. For more information, contact evaluation@usaid.gov.

CONTENTS

ACRONYMS

3IE	The International Initiative for Impact Evaluation
ADS	Automated Directives System
BRM	Office of Budget and Resource Management, USAID
CBJ	Congressional Budget Justification
CDCS	Country Development Cooperation Strategy
DEC	Development Experience Clearinghouse
DO	Development Objective
DLI	Development Leadership Initiative
EES	Evaluation for Evaluation Specialists
EIG	Evaluation Interest Group
EPM	Evaluation for Program Managers
F	Office of U.S. Foreign Assistance Resources, Department of State
FY	Fiscal Year
IDIQ	Indefinite Delivery Indefinite Quantity
PPL/LER	Office of Learning, Evaluation and Research, in the Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning, USAID
OU	Operating Unit
POC	Point of Contact
PPL	Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning, USAID
PPR	Performance Plan and Report
SOW	Statement of Work
SBU	Sensitive But Unclassified
TDY	Temporary Duty Assignment
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Required on an annual basis by the USAID Evaluation Policy, this report summarizes evaluation requirements and practices at USAID before and after the Evaluation Policy, major accomplishments during the first year of implementation, and priority activities to support Policy implementation in the next few years. This is the first report since the Evaluation Policy was put in place in January 2011 and it documents progress in achieving Policy implementation over the course of one year.

These actions are part of USAID Forward reforms and done in concert with changes in the USAID Program Cycle: policy formulation, strategic planning, project design, project implementation, performance monitoring, evaluation, and learning.

For this first year of Policy implementation USAID has focused on establishing the norms and systems required under the Evaluation Policy. As the Policy requires that evaluation now be integrated and planned in advance during strategy and project design, there has not yet been time for an evaluation to go from start to finish under the Policy requirements, and therefore changes in evaluation quality are expected to be documented in future reports.

EVALUATION AT USAID: BEFORE THE EVALUATION POLICY

USAID's evaluation requirements and practices have varied over the history of the Agency, as have the quality of USAID evaluations. The majority of evaluations in recent years relied heavily on anecdotal information and expert opinion rather than evidence collected in a systematic way.

To address these shortcomings, a team of USAID staff started work in 2010 to articulate a new evaluation policy and USAID established the Evaluation Policy in January 2011. The Policy defines evaluation as the systematic collection and analysis of information to improve effectiveness and inform decisions about future programming. It sets ambitious standards for high quality, relevant, and transparent evaluations to demonstrate results, generate evidence to inform decisions, promote learning, and ensure accountability.

Many of the policy requirements build on past USAID evaluation practices to bring the Agency up to date with international standards. Successful implementation of the policy will require ongoing efforts to establish and extend good evaluation practice; build evaluation capacity; provide technical assistance; leverage and apply evidence and knowledge gained from evaluation; and transparently report evaluation findings.

CHALLENGES

As with any change, there are some challenges that may limit the pace and reach of implementing the Evaluation Policy. A few of these include:

- Staff experience and skill to implement evaluation requirements vary greatly across USAID missions due to years of previously low central priority placed on program evaluation and a large number of new officers recently hired.

- Some USAID business processes in the past have not always been supportive of designing and implementing relevant and timely evaluations. Implementation and Procurement reforms underway at USAID should help ease this tension between different business requirements.

- The number and fast pace of USAID reforms, in addition to those related to evaluation, challenge USAID/Washington to support the field, particularly with limited operating expenses.

- The need to balance using evaluations for learning and for accountability purposes.

YEAR ONE: KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

PPL/LER has worked closely with missions, regional bureaus and functional bureaus to support implementation of the Policy over the past year.

Key achievements during this first year include:

- Increasing the number from 89 in 2010 to 295 in 2011 of evaluation reports that are submitted to USAID's Development Experience Clearinghouse and publically accessible at www.usaid.gov/evaluation.

- Training approximately 500 USAID staff in evaluation.

- Providing expert technical advice on over 50 evaluation statements of work.

- Establishing an evaluation point of contact in every USAID field mission.

- Incentivizing quality evaluations through competitions and recognition of excellent reports.

- Building participation in the Evaluation Interest Group, a voluntary community of practice for USAID staff to share evaluation experiences and best practices.

- Establishing an internal Evaluation Registry as part of the annual Performance Plan and Report process.

- Integrating evaluation into the Program Cycle so that evaluation needs are considered during strategic and project planning and findings are used to inform decisions at each stage.

LOOKING FORWARD: PRIORITIES FOR 2012 AND 2013

PPL/LER will continue to work with others throughout the Agency to build USAID's evaluation practice so that it meets or exceeds Policy requirements. Priorities for 2012 and 2013 include:

- Supporting the production of 250 high-quality evaluations by January 2013 and providing evaluation planning and design services to USAID missions through the Program Cycle Service Center.

- Training an additional 350 staff by September 2012 and offering a voluntary evaluation certification program for USAID staff.

- Improving online access to evaluation reports and findings at www.usaid.gov/evaluation.

- Providing evaluation resources through a web-portal for USAID staff and partners.

- Creating an Agency Strategic Learning Plan and developing processes to better link evaluation and learning to ultimately improve development project outcomes and performance. This includes taking a collaborative approach to learning and adapting projects during implementation based on performance monitoring and evaluation findings (as well as other types and sources of learning).

CONCLUSION

The Evaluation Policy demonstrates USAID's reaffirmed commitment to learning from doing, basing decisions on evidence, and sharing what we learn transparently. Since releasing the Evaluation Policy in January 2011, USAID has begun to put in place systems and processes to support the Agency in meeting the ambitious requirements of the Policy and has focused on monitoring and evaluation as a key area of reform under USAID Forward.

Much has been accomplished in the first year, but there is still much more to do. USAID is committed to prioritizing evaluation so that the Agency will continuously learn, strengthen projects and programs, and achieve even greater development impact in the world.

EVALUATION AT USAID: BEFORE THE EVALUATION POLICY

Women in Uzbekistan learn about a food processing technique. Photo: USAID Central Asian Republics.

The USAID Evaluation Policy requires the Office of Learning, Evaluation and Research in the Bureau of Policy, Planning and Learning (PPL/LER) to prepare an annual report for the Administrator highlighting recent key evaluation challenges, changes, practices and findings. This is the first report since the Evaluation Policy was released in January 2011 and it documents progress in achieving Policy requirements over the course of one year.[1]

For this first year of Policy implementation USAID has focused on establishing the norms and systems required under the Evaluation Policy. As the Policy requires that evaluation now be integrated and planned in advance during strategy and project design, there has not yet been time for an evaluation to go from start to finish since the Policy was released, and therefore changes in evaluation quality are expected to be documented in future reports.

History of Evaluation at USAID

USAID's evaluation requirements and practices have varied over the history of the Agency, which has been seen as an evaluation leader in past decades.[2] In the mid-1990s, a weakened mandate for evaluation combined with a decline in the overall number of USAID professional staff took time and attention away from evaluative work. Further, the dismantling of USAID's Policy and Program Coordination Bureau and the Center for Development Information and Evaluation in 2006 left evaluation without an organizational home at USAID for several years.

Strengthening Evaluation under USAID Forward

As part of USAID Forward reforms to rebuild the Agency's policy capacity and strengthen monitoring and evaluation, the Bureau for

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[1] Quotes from USAID officers are included throughout the report. These were provided in response to LER asking members of the Agency's Evaluation Interest Group for feedback on what they thought was working well and what was more challenging in respect to Policy implementation.

[2] Information on the history of evaluation at USAID can be found in documents archived on the Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC), pulled together as a Special Collection on Evaluation. The Special Collection on Evaluation is on the USAID Development Experience Clearinghouse website at http://dec.usaid.gov. To go directly to the collection, visit http://goo.gl/hk30k.

Policy, Planning and Learning (PPL) was created in June 2010, with the LER office established to catalyze USAID's transformation into an organization that continuously learns through research, evaluation and reflection on experience.[3] A team of USAID staff started work in 2010 to articulate a new evaluation policy and the Agency released the Evaluation Policy in January 2011.[4]

The Evaluation Policy is a distinct change from evaluation guidance available prior to 2011, including:

■ New and more detailed requirements for when evaluations are to be conducted aimed at ensuring the majority of USAID program resources are subject to evaluation.

■ New emphasis on impact evaluation defined as using experimental or quasi-experimental to define a counterfactual and comparison group.

■ Explicit transparency requirements, with only limited exceptions for not sharing evaluation report findings.

■ Greater emphasis on USAID setting aside sufficient program funds for evaluation in advance, estimated at approximately 3 percent, on average, of an operating unit's total program budget.

Evaluation Policy Requirements

The Evaluation Policy defines evaluation as the systematic collection and analysis of information about the characteristics and outcomes of programs and projects to improve effectiveness and inform decisions about future programming. Evaluation has two main purposes at USAID: accountability, or measuring project effectiveness, relevance and efficiency and disclosing findings to stakeholders; and learning, or generating, capturing, sharing and applying knowledge to inform and improve project design and implementation. The Policy requires that evaluation be integrated into strategic planning and project design. It also sets high standards for using the best methods appropriate to the evaluation questions, given available resources, to produce findings based on evidence that are relevant to future decisions. It defines two types of evaluation at USAID: Performance Evaluation, or using qualitative or quantitative methods to look at program performance; and Impact Evaluation, or using experimental or quasi-experimental

methods to define a counterfactual to measure the impact of a given development intervention.

Evaluation, Monitoring and Learning

PPL/LER has recently taken leadership of program performance monitoring. The office will work with others throughout the Agency to clarify the link between monitoring and evaluation and to update performance monitoring guidance as part of updates to the Program Cycle guidance. In addition, PPL/LER is developing an Agency Strategic Learning Plan and Operational Guide that will identify approaches to facilitate learning through all stages of the Program Cycle. For evaluation, that includes engaging partners, synthesizing and sharing findings, and ultimately applying the findings to policy, strategy, project, management and resource decisions.

EVALUATION "BASELINE"

Comparison of Evaluation Requirements before and After the Evaluation Policy

Before the Evaluation Policy, evaluation at USAID was guided by Chapter 203 of the Automated Directives System (ADS).[5] The table on the next page compares Evaluation Policy requirements with ADS 203 requirements in effect just prior to the Policy.

"The Policy emphasizes the importance of evaluations in an environment that doesn't always prioritize them. It also provides clear guidance on what should be evaluated, and how."

OFFICER AT USAID INDIA

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[3] More information about the Office of Learning, Evaluation and Research is available at http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/policy_planning_and_learning/ler.html

[4] The USAID Evaluation Policy is available at http://www.usaid.gov/evaluation

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[5] ADS 203 is being revised. It is available at http://www.usaid.gov/policy/ads/200/203.pdf

Comparison of Evaluation Requirements Just Before and After the January 2011 Evaluation Policy		
Source	**USAID Automated Directives System (ADS)**	**USAID Evaluation Policy (January 2011)**
Definition: Evaluation is…	The systematic collection of information about the characteristics and outcomes of Development Objectives (DO), projects, or activities to make judgments, improve effectiveness, and/or inform decisions about programming.	The systematic collection and analysis of information about the characteristics and outcomes of programs and projects as a basis for judgments, to improve effectiveness, and/or inform decisions about programming. Distinct from assessment, which may be designed to examine a country or sector context to inform project design, or an informal review of projects. Performance evaluations focus on descriptive and normative questions and other questions pertinent to program design, management and operational decision making. Impact evaluations define a counterfactual to control for external factors and measure the change in a development outcome that is attributable to a defined intervention.
Purpose	Answer specific program management questions. Gain insights and reach conclusions about effectiveness of activities, validity of development hypothesis, utility of performance monitoring, factors in the development context that may have an impact on achieving results, and actions to be taken to improve performance.	Accountability: Measure project effectiveness, relevance and efficiency; disclose findings; and use evaluation findings to inform decisions. Learning: Systematically generate knowledge about the magnitude and determinants of project performance, permitting those who design and implement projects, and who develop programs and strategies to refine designs and introduce improvements in future efforts.
When	At least one evaluation for each assistance objective.	Large projects (at or above average dollar size) and innovative or pilot approaches.
Methods	No standardized methodology for evaluations of USAID programs. The type of evaluation should be determined by the questions to be answered.	Methods that generate the highest quality and most credible evidence corresponding to the questions being asked, given time, budget and other practical considerations. No single method privileged over others. For impact evaluations: Experimental methods generate the strongest evidence; Alternative methods should be utilized only when random assignment strategies are infeasible.
Planning	During development of Results Framework for a Development Objective, the DO Team must plan how it will monitor and evaluate progress toward those results.	Each OU: Annual inventory of evaluations and a budget estimate for the following fiscal year in the annual Performance Plan and Report. CDCS: Identify at least one opportunity for an impact evaluation per DO. Project Design: Determine whether and type of evaluation required.
Utilization	Identify actions needed, assign responsibility and timeline. Determine whether any revision necessary in the country strategic plan, DO, or project.	Integrate evaluation findings into decision making about strategies, program priorities, and project design; encourage use of evaluation findings in Mission Orders and in CDCSs.
Transparency	Share and openly discuss findings, conclusions, and recommendations with stakeholders, unless unusual and compelling reasons not to do so. In many cases, arrange the translation of the executive summary into the local written language. Evaluation reports must be provided to the Development Experience Clearinghouse.	Findings shared widely, with a commitment to full and active disclosure. Evaluation reports and summaries will include description of methods, key findings and recommendations and will be submitted to the agency's Development Experience Clearinghouse within three months of conclusion, barring principled exceptions in cases of classified or propietary material. Registration of planned evaluations in annual PPR; written disclosure of conflict of interests required for all evaluation team members; Statement of differences included when applicable.
Resources	Include sufficient resources for performance management (includes monitoring and evaluation): about 5 to 10 percent of program resources.	On average, at least 3 percent of the program budget managed by an operating unit should be dedicated to external evaluation. This is distinct from resources dedicated to monitoring.

Quality of Evaluations Prior to the Policy

To determine in the future whether the quality of evaluations improve as a result of the Evaluation Policy, it is necessary to look at the quality of reports prior to the Policy. Conventional wisdom holds that the quality of USAID evaluations steadily declined over the last two decades, with the majority of evaluations (with a few high-quality exceptions) relying too heavily on anecdotal information and expert opinion rather than on evidence collected in an unbiased and systematic way.

There have been several external studies on the quality of USAID evaluations in recent years. In a 2001 study, researchers interviewed and surveyed USAID staff and reviewed over 100 evaluations.[6] The study found that USAID was doing markedly fewer evaluations and a very limited number of in-depth, program evaluations. As part of a 2009 study, a survey of 296 recent evaluations submitted to the Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC) found that while all reported that some data was collected from individual interviews, only 39 percent used a survey, only nine percent reported on a comparison group, and only one used an experimental design involving randomized assignment.[7] Also in 2009, 48 external evaluators who conduct evaluations of U.S. Foreign Assistance programs were surveyed, and 54 percent disagreed with the statement that "Most USAID evaluations are sufficiently rigorous to be credible and convincing sources of evidence about the sustainability and impact of USAID programs," while only 17 percent agreed.[8]

More recently, an internal study in 2011 by the Office of U.S. Foreign Assistance Resources (F) at the Department of State reviewed 56 USAID-funded evaluations and assessments.[9] The report counted seven data collection methods used across the 56 evaluations, including key informant interviews, focus groups, surveys, and direct observation at project sites. Most used three or more data collection methods, and about a quarter of the 56 evaluations used statistical or quasi-experimental designs to establish comparison groups.

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[6] From "Evaluation of Recent USAID Evaluation Experience," available at http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNACG632.pdf. The 2001 study was conducted by independent consultants and former USAID employees Cynthia Clapp-Wincek and Richard Blue. Ms. Clapp-Wincek is the Director of the USAID Office of Learning, Evaluation and Research (LER) at the time of writing this publication.

[7] From the 2009 report, "Trends in International Development Evaluation Theory, Policy and Practices" by M. Hageboeck, available at http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNADQ464.pdf

[8] From the 2009 report, "Beyond Success Stories: Monitoring and Evaluation for Foreign Assistance Results," by Richard Blue, Cynthia Clapp-Wincek, and Holly Benner, available at http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PCAAB890.pdf

[9] The 2011 report "A Meta-Evaluation of Foreign Assistance Evaluations" is available at http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PCAAC273.pdf

Transparency and Accessibility of Evaluations

USAID requires that all program documents, including evaluation reports, be submitted to the Agency's online document archive, the DEC. The Evaluation Policy reinforces this requirement and adds that evaluation reports be submitted within three months of completion. If there exist any principled and rare exceptions to public disclosure such as national security interests or proprietary information that make the document Sensitive But Unclassified (SBU), it should still be sent to the DEC along with a request to make the document SBU and indication of an expected release date for the document. Documents that are SBU are available only to USAID personnel.

Submitting reports to the DEC represents the minimum requirement for USAID staff and partners to ensure that evaluation reports and other documents are available to other staff and to the public. Unfortunately many documents have not been sent to the DEC. According to reporting by USAID missions for FY 2009 and FY 2010, only about 20 percent of evaluation reports had been submitted to the DEC.

CHALLENGES

As with any change, there are several constraints that limit the pace and reach of implementing the Evaluation Policy. A few of the challenges encountered are described below.

Staff Capacity

Due to the number of new staff recently hired, and to years of low priority for evaluation, USAID staff have varying levels of experience and skills in evaluation planning and management. Though new evaluation training courses are part of the solution, they are not sufficient to ensure all USAID staff have the tools they need to meet the requirements of the Evaluation Policy, Country Development Cooperation Strategy guidance, and new Project Design guidance. USAID is responding by hiring more people with monitoring and evaluation experience, and providing training to existing staff with evaluation responsibilities.

Business Processes

USAID business processes in the past have not always been supportive of designing and implementing relevant and timely evaluations. Procurement requirements can make contracting for an external evaluation burdensome and time-consuming, and it may be difficult to find the specific evaluation expertise needed among available partners. One option has been to contract with a partner to take on the

evaluation function for an entire sector or mission portfolio, rather than doing it project by project, but this approach also has its down-sides. Contract timelines may not be long enough to be able to do this effectively. The relationship between performance monitoring and evaluation will be better clarified and coordinated to be mutually supportive and used together for adaptive learning and management to improve the effectiveness of projects and programs. Implementation and Procurement reforms underway at USAID should help ease this tension between different business requirements, including by building evaluation capacity at the local level and relying more on local partners for external evaluation.

Fast Pace of Reform

USAID has undergone a series of reforms over the last few years and field staff are challenged to keep up with the pace of change. The decentralized nature of USAID, with most staff located in over 80 field offices around the world, can complicate communication and implementation of reforms. USAID headquarters is working to improve how we communicate how the reforms are linked, and the difference the reforms should make. In addition, the Program Cycle Service Center has been created to support mission capacity to implement these reforms.

Learning and Accountability

The Evaluation Policy sets out two primary purposes for evaluation: accountability to stakeholders and learning to improve effectiveness. While ideally these two purposes can be achieved simultaneously and span all evaluations, it complicates choices of evaluation methods. Implementing partners, project managers and Agency leadership must be willing to design and allow for independent evaluations that meet both of these purposes, and to then transparently share findings, whether negative or positive, to ensure organizational learning. This requires intentional actions by senior management to provide appro-priate incentives (and minimize disincentives) for staff at all levels and to foster a culture of accountability and learning.

> *"The Policy places a renewed value on evaluation and the use of rigorous methods for evidence based decision making."*
>
> OFFICER AT USAID ETHIOPIA

EVALUATION POLICY: YEAR ONE

Representatives from a civil society organization in Papua learn to plan and budget their activities.
Photo from USAID Indonesia project Scaling Up for Most-at-Risk Population (SUM)

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Over the course of 2011, the Agency has achieved progress in implementing many of the requirements of the Evaluation Policy. This has been a team effort that includes all USAID missions and bureaus.

This report focuses on actions and priorities of PPL/LER, as it works closely with evaluation champions in field missions, independent offices, and regional and pillar bureaus to support the Agency in strengthening evaluation practice. PPL/LER's role includes:

■ Establishing norms and communicating expectations for good evaluation practice.

■ Developing training and tools to build USAID staff capacity to design and manage evaluations.

■ Providing direct technical advice on evaluation planning and design.

■ Working to improve the transparent reporting of evaluation findings.

■ Ensuring evidence and knowledge from evaluations are used to inform decisions.

These actions are taken in concert with other USAID Forward reforms and as part of the Program Cycle of strategic planning, project design, project implementation, performance monitoring, evaluation, and learning.

USAID's efforts to build staff evaluation capacity and stand up evaluation systems are aimed at improving the number and quality of evaluations so that they are used to improve development outcomes. Recent examples of how USAID is using evaluations in the field include:

■ Based on the recommendations from the final evaluation of an education project, USAID Liberia chose to adopt an innovative, experimental approach for a subsequent youth-oriented job-training project.

■ USAID Armenia is adjusting objectives and curtailing part of an anti-corruption project based on learning from an evaluation.

■ USAID Colombia used findings from an evaluation to design three targeted regional projects which help expand state presence.

Implementing standards and systems in support of the Evaluation Policy is part of ensuring the Agency can learn from our experience. The table on the next page summarizes the status of Evaluation Policy requirements.

Status of Evaluation Policy Requirements as of January 2012				
Evaluation Policy Action/Requirement	**Status as of January 2012**	**Not Started**	**Ongoing**	**Complete**
Missions and bureaus identify Evaluation POCs.	All OUs have named Evaluation POCs.			✓
Missions and bureaus invest in evaluation training and staff.	70 USAID missions have sent staff to evaluation training developed by PPL/LER. Over 80 staff based in Washington have also attended PPL/LER training. This totals nearly 500 USAID staff receiving training.		✓	
All USAID staff are encouraged to participate in evaluation communities of practice.	EIG has grown in membership. Regularly 40-50 staff participate in meetings.		✓	
Missions put in place or revise Mission Orders on evaluation.	At least 31 missions have Mission Orders on Evaluation in place. The remaining missions have a draft in process.		✓	
Missions and bureaus identify evaluations completed in a previous fiscal year, and list those planned for the coming fiscal year in the Evaluation Registry in the annual PPR.	FY 2011 is the first year after Evaluation Policy in place. Data has been submitted, but not yet available for analysis.		✓	
Missions develop an annual budget for external evaluation in the next fiscal year; at least 3 percent of an OU program budget, on average, should be dedicated to external evaluation.	The USAID Office of Budget and Resource Management (BRM) has asked missions and bureaus to provide an attribution for Evaluation and is reporting it in the FY 2013 Congressional Budget Justification (CBJ).		✓	
Missions and bureaus review draft Evaluation statements of work to ensure they meet the Evaluation Policy requirements.	Process in place at most missions; expanded review in place for USAID Forward Evaluations.		✓	
Mission and bureau Program Offices manage evaluation contracts in most cases.	Practice in place at most missions and documented in Mission Orders.		✓	
Missions and bureaus assess draft Evaluation Reports for quality through in-house peer technical review.	Process in place at most missions and documented in Mission Orders.		✓	
Missions and bureaus submit Evaluation Reports within three months of completion to the USAID Development Experience Clearinghouse.	DEC has experienced a significant increase in report submission. DEC received 89 evaluations in 2010 and 295 evaluations in 2011.		✓	
Missions and bureaus warehouse evaluation data for future use.	USAID headquarters working out how best to store data centrally.		✓	
Missions and bureaus integrate Evaluation findings into strategic planning and project design decisions.	CDCS and Project design guidance require that evidence from evaluations and how it informed decisions be documented.		✓	
PPL/LER develops training curricula and evaluation tools and identifies external training opportunities.	Two training programs and many tools developed and launched. More tools in development and the training curricula are under review.		✓	
PPL/LER leads the Evaluation Interest Group and other cross-Agency evaluation-related knowledge networks.	EIG has grown and continues to meet regularly.		✓	

Evaluation Policy Action/Requirement	Status as of January 2012	Not Started	Ongoing	Complete
PPL/LER develops with the Office of Human Resources capabilities statements for evaluation specialists.	PPL/LER has worked with HR to identify evaluation competencies required for different backstops.		✓	
PPL/LER organizes technical resources for evaluation that can be accessed through a flexible mechanism.	Program Cycle Service Center. Evaluation IDIQ. Additional mechanisms will be created as need.		✓	
PPL/LER provides technical input for evaluation design and implementation, particularly for Presidential Initiatives and large country programs.	PPL/LER staff provide technical input on evaluation statements of work, designs, reports, and evaluation planning and implementation issues.		✓	
PPL/LER undertakes or requires an evaluation of any USAID project at any time, particularly when requested by the Administrator.	Planned for FY 2012.	✓		
PPL/LER undertakes thematic or meta-evaluations to generate recommendations regarding Agency priorities, policies and practices.	PPL/LER is working with the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3IE) to commission systematic thematic reviews. Plans for other meta-evaluations are underway.		✓	
PPL/LER undertakes occasional post-implementation evaluations, to examine long term effects of projects.	PPL/LER is considering opportunities for future ex-post evaluations. Planned for FY 2013.	✓		
PPL/LER organizes occasional external technical audits of compliance with the evaluation policy through random checks of the technical quality of evaluation staements of work, evaluation reports and use of findings.	PPL/LER has done internal technical checks of evaluation statements of work, evaluation reports and use of findings. An external technical audit has not yet been organized.	✓		
PPL/LER provides clearance on exceptions to the requirement of public disclosure of evaluation findings.	PPL/LER was asked once in 2011 to review a request to strike certain evaluation findings. The request was not approved.		✓	
PPL/LER leads the preparation of a biannual Agency-wide evaluation agenda with input from across the Agency and external stakeholders.	Some initial steps taken to gather suggestions. A more comprehensive effort will be undertaken in 2012.	✓		
PPL/LER prepares an annual report for the Administrator highlighting recent key evaluation practices and findings, changes and challenges.	The first annual report will be completed in February 2012.			✓
PPL/LER participate with the Department of State's Office of U.S. Foreign Assistance Resources in the conduct of whole of government evaluations and in joint cross-cutting evaluations.	Planned for FY 2013.	✓		

ESTABLISH AND EXTEND GOOD PRACTICE

PPL/LER is working to communicate Evaluation Policy standards and increase the understanding and awareness of USAID staff and partners of what makes for good practice in development program evaluation.

Integrate Evaluation into the Program Cycle

The PPL Bureau is producing additional guidance to improve the entire Program Cycle: policy formulation and implementation; strategic planning at the sector and country levels; project design; project implementation; monitoring; evaluation; and learning. Producing high quality work under these components represents the "discipline of development." Evaluation is both a part of the USAID Program Cycle and an important basis of evidence for the other components. Evidence and knowledge from evaluations should inform Agency policies, Country Development Cooperation Strategies, project design, and annual budget and resource management processes. In addition, evaluation (and monitoring) should be planned for at each of these stages in the Program Cycle.

Revise Agency Guidance

In conjunction with other PPL offices and regional and pillar bureau staff, PPL/LER has updated several key chapters of the Automated Directives System (ADS) 200 series on programming policy. This update institu-
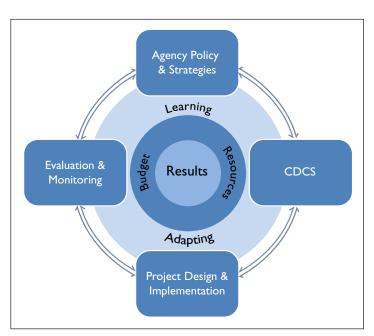
tionalizes core components of agency-wide reforms from the past year by incorporating into the ADS recent policy and guidance documents, such as USAID's Policy Framework and the Evaluation Policy as well as CDCS and Project Design guidance. A second phase of ADS update will focus on performance management.

Communication and Outreach

PPL/LER staff give frequent presentations to Agency staff and partners, meet with individual offices and missions, develop written materials to communicate Evaluation Policy requirements, and gather feedback on how implementation is proceeding. Some examples of communication and outreach over the past year include: USAID Mission Director Conference; meetings and individual briefings with USAID regional and pillar bureau Program Officers and Evaluation POCs; and presentations at the American Evaluation Association Annual Conference in Anaheim, California, the USAID Procurement and Financial Professionals Worldwide Conference, USAID Education Officers Worldwide Conference, the USAID Africa Program Officers Conference, USAID Global Health Cooperating Agencies Meeting, Society for International Development Monitoring and Evaluation Working Group, and InterAction's Evaluation and Performance Effectiveness Working Group.

Mission Orders

The Evaluation Policy requires all USAID missions to put in place or revise an existing Mission Order on Evaluation. An Evaluation Mission Order documents how missions will apply the Evaluation Policy requirements in their context. It defines staff roles and responsibilities and clarifies procedures for planning and managing evaluations so that they are timed to be used for decisions. It should also identify who will be responsible for making and documenting any exceptions. This requirement serves two purposes: it ensures that missions document their context-specific approaches to meet the standards in the Evaluation Policy, and it provides a process and opportunity for mission staff to become aware of evaluation standards. As of January 2012 all USAID missions have drafted Mission Orders on Evaluation, and approximately 31 missions out of 79 have an approved Evaluation Mission Order in place.

Evaluation Points of Contact

As of October 2011, all USAID operating units had identified evaluation POCs. The primary evaluation POC should be a senior Foreign Service Program Officer or a senior Foreign Service National. Evaluation POCs facilitate Evaluation Policy implementation within and across their unit, including setting up an in-house peer review process for draft evaluation statements of work and reports, ensuring program funds are

Diagram: Graphic Representation of the USAID Program Cycle

designated for external evaluations, and ensuring evaluation questions and design are considered during strategic planning and project design. The POC will stay up-to-date on the guidance, tools and mechanisms available for Evaluation Policy implementation and support and provide advice to other staff in their unit. The POC also serves as a primary channel for communication to and from USAID headquarters on evaluation issues.

Excellence in Evaluation

To gather and showcase some of the best recent evaluation reports, PPL/LER asked USAID staff to submit reports completed between January 2009 and August 2011. PPL/LER selected five to serve as examples of high-quality evaluations. These reports are featured online at www.usaid.gov/evaluation. The strongest reports shared similar characteristics: a detailed explanation of methodology, data and limitations; findings that were linked to quality evidence; and well-written presentation of the results.

BUILD USAID CAPACITY

Hiring of Monitoring and Evaluation Specialists

Since the Evaluation Policy was put into place, several USAID missions have hired dedicated monitoring and evaluation specialists that sit in a mission's Program Office, and in some cases are hired as members of mission sector teams. Some USAID bureaus are also in the process of hiring monitoring and evaluation specialists. PPL/LER has also expanded since January 2011 to support evaluation needs, as well as performance monitoring, learning, and research.

Partner with Bureaus

PPL/LER works closely with regional and pillar bureau staff to support evaluation capacity throughout the Agency and track evaluation efforts. For example, PPL/LER and regional bureau evaluation POCs have been working with missions to finalize USAID Forward[10] targets for the number of high quality evaluations each mission will complete by January 2013 and to develop an expanded peer review process to support the quality of these evaluations. In another example, PPL/LER is tracking the number of centrally-funded impact evaluations being conducted by USAID Bureaus as a result of the Evaluation Policy. As of December 2011, 44 impact evaluations in technical areas spanning democracy and governance, food security and health had been planned for 2012.

Evaluation Training

PPL/LER developed and launched two new competency-based training courses in 2011: Evaluation for Program Managers (EPM) and the more in depth Evaluation for Evaluation Specialists (EES). After each course was piloted in January and February, the EPM was offered fifteen times and the EES was offered eight times in 2011, reaching close to 500 USAID staff.[11] Course participants have included staff from about 70 bilateral and regional missions located in all five geographic regions where USAID works, as well as those working at USAID headquarters. About half of the participants were direct hire staff, including new Foreign Service officers hired under the Development Leadership Initiative (DLI). The DLI program now requires that all new officers take one of the two evaluation courses. The training is currently being revised to integrate it with the suite of Program Cycle training modules under development by PPL for both in-person and online training opportunities.

Evaluation Contract

PPL/LER holds the Evaluation Services Indefinite Delivery Indefinite Quantity Contract (IDIQ), which provides USAID missions with access to professional monitoring and evaluation services from one of five small businesses: AMEX International; Development and Training Services, Inc.; International Business and Technical Consultants, Inc.; Mendez, England, and Assoc.; and Social Impact. About $71.8 million was obligated under the Evaluation IDIQ as of January 2012, of which $11 million was dedicated to discrete evaluations, $3.7 million to training, and $57.2 million to support mission-wide monitoring and evaluation services. Evaluation task orders have been awarded in every region where USAID works, with over half of the activity in the Africa and Europe and Eurasia regions. Over half of the evaluation task orders under the IDIQ have focused on the economic growth sector and the democracy and governance sector. In addition, several task orders were awarded to establish comprehensive systems for monitoring, evaluation, and performance management at USAID missions around the world, including in Lebanon, Yemen, Kenya, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Incentives to Strengthen Evaluation

To further strengthen the practice of evaluation within the Agency, PPL/LER announced a competition in July 2011 to support missions

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[11]This number includes about 210 direct hire staff (Civil and Foreign Service), 150 Foreign Service Nationals hired in their country of citizenship, and another 130 staff brought on through other mechanisms that together may include fellows, third country nationals, eligible family members, and Personal Services Contractors.

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[10] For more information on USAID Forward, visit
http://forward.usaid.gov/

and operating units in meeting the requirements of the Policy. Missions and bureaus submitted proposals for evaluation needs beyond available mission resources. A total of 36 proposals were received from missions around the world. The proposals were judged on the strength of their evaluation questions, with higher priority given to evaluation proposals for large projects and programs, for priority Agency programs, or for pilot projects that test innovations. Fourteen proposals were selected for a total of $4 million in funding, including six were from the Africa region, two from Asia and Middle East, three from Europe and Eurasia, and two from Latin America. The evaluations selected were in the following program areas: youth, health, economic growth, anti-corruption reform, stabilization operations and security sector reform, and protection of vulnerable populations.

Support Local Capacity

At the same time as we focus on building USAID staff capacity in evaluation, USAID is also supporting capacity building of local partners. The Evaluation Policy requires that the conduct of evaluations be consistent with USAID goals of local capacity building and engagement of partners, and in particular calls for priority within sectoral programming on supporting partner government and civil society capacity to undertake evaluations and use the results. As part of this effort, PPL/LER has provided support to professional evaluation associations to create linkages with USAID missions, and build a network of local evaluators that could participate in USAID supported evaluations. Most recently, USAID was one of the sponsors of the African Evaluation Association conference, held in Accra, Ghana in January 2012.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Support to USAID Missions

In addition to evaluation related technical assistance provided by USAID Regional and Technical Bureaus, PPL/LER staff provided ongoing support at various stages of the evaluation process, for example, advising on draft evaluation statements of work. In addition, PPL/LER provided direct in-person technical support to several missions, including Bangladesh, South Africa, Mozambique, and Nepal. In Bangladesh, this included support in implementing the Evaluation Policy, as well as providing technical support on the development of the monitoring and evaluation section of their Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS). In South Africa, the assistance focused primarily on providing technical input to statements of work (SOW) for evaluations that aimed to engage local evaluation firms. In

Mozambique, PPL/LER staff provided technical support to the evaluation team at the mission on evaluations that were at different stages of the planning process. In addition to TDY support, mission and regional bureau staff requested technical input by PPL/LER staff to review over 50 evaluation SOWs, several draft Mission Orders for evaluation, and other evaluation related tasks.

LEVERAGE EVIDENCE AND KNOWLEDGE

Communities of Practice

PPL/LER hosts the Evaluation Interest Group (EIG), which provides a broad forum for USAID staff to share evaluation experiences, best practices, and opportunities related to evaluation and learning. Membership is voluntary and open to any staff person, including from the Department of State. The group manages an internal website that archives evaluation resources available to all USAID staff. PPL/LER has also hosted a short-term group called the Evaluation Policy Learning Group, a subset of the EIG, with about 80 staff across five working groups to address issues related to Performance Evaluation, Impact Evaluation, Transparency and Outreach, Professional Growth in Evaluation, and Evaluation in Complex Environments. Future working groups will be set up as needed under the EIG.

Complexity Event

PPL/LER hosted an event on Complexity Theory in October 2011 to respond to the considerable interest across the Agency to better understand the central ideas of complexity thinking and its implications for development practice, particularly in crisis and transitional countries. The Evaluation Policy acknowledges that standard evaluation approaches may not be applicable or even possible in some environments. Speakers at this event offered options for program evaluation, as well as approaches for other components of the program cycle for USAID to consider in complex environments.

REPORT TRANSPARENTLY

Increase Access to Evaluations on the Development Experience Clearinghouse

DEC staff have independently estimated the number of newly completed evaluation reports submitted to the DEC for 2010 and 2011. A comparison of each month year-to-year shows that significantly more evaluations were submitted in 2011 after the Evaluation Policy requirement went into effect. Except for January and February, every
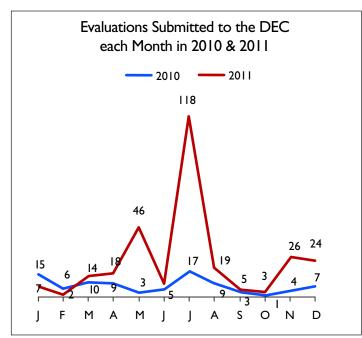
Evaluations Submitted to the DEC each Month in 2010 & 2011

—— 2010   —— 2011

118

46

26 24

15   14   18   17   19   5 3   4 7
   6
7   10   9   3
   2   5   9   3
                                 1

J   F   M   A   M   J   J   A   S   O   N   D

Chart: Number of evaluations submitted to the DEC each month in 2010 and 2011.

make information from the Evaluation Registry accessible to the public. PPL/LER will work to make information from the Evaluation Registry accessible to the public.

Statement of Differences

USAID mission staff, implementing partners, and members of an external evaluation team who disagree with the interpretation of findings or conclusions in an evaluation report are encouraged under the Evaluation Policy to provide a Statement of Differences as an annex to the report when appropriate. This provides a transparent means to express different points of view, thus reducing pressure on independent evaluation teams to change or redact findings that in their opinion should be included even when USAID or other direct stakeholders disagree. While not yet common, some USAID Evaluations are including Statements of Differences.

Disclosure of Conflicts of Interest

As required by the Evaluation Policy, all members of an evaluation team must provide a written disclosure of any perceived or real conflict of interest to the USAID mission commissioning the evaluation. PPL/LER has worked with the Office of the General Counsel at USAID to develop a template that can be used for this purpose. Some recent USAID Evaluation statements of work have included the template as a requirement for evaluation experts responding to evaluation solicitations.

other month in 2011 showed an increase in submissions compared to the same month in 2010. The month with the largest increase when compared to the previous year was July 2010, most likely due to the competition for evaluation funding sponsored by the PPL/LER office that month that reminded staff to send evaluations to the DEC. The approximate number of evaluations submitted to the DEC in 2011 was 295, more than a threefold increase over the only 89 reports submitted in 2010.

Evaluation Registry

Though the Evaluation Registry is a new requirement of the Evaluation Policy, USAID missions began reporting planned evaluations for each future fiscal year in the FY 2009 Evaluation Annex of the PPR. USAID has worked with F to revamp the Evaluation Annex so that it can serve as the Evaluation Registry. This includes clearly defining what types of analytical reports count as evaluations for a more accurate count, and using the Evaluation Policy definitions of impact and performance evaluations for reporting purposes. Once a year, missions report in the Registry the evaluations that have been funded with the previous fiscal year's funds, and the evaluations planned for funding in the coming fiscal year. PPL/LER will analyze this information and use it to cross-check that reported evaluations are being shared on the DEC. Unless it is deemed classified, PPL/LER will work to

LOOKING FORWARD: EVALUATION SUPPORT PRIORITIES FOR 2012 AND 2013

Women in Turkmenistan have a planning meeting. Photo: USAID Central Asian Republics

In 2012 and 2013, PPL/LER will focus on key areas under the Evaluation Policy to consolidate efforts to date, continue to build staff evaluation capacity, and improve change management related to Evaluation Policy requirements. We will prioritize actions that help integrate evaluation throughout the Program Cycle, improve the Agency's ability to communicate and report on what we are learning through evaluation, and support the capacity of USAID staff and partners to meet the Evaluation Policy standards.

ESTABLISH AND EXTEND GOOD PRACTICE

Improve the Link between Evaluation and Learning

Learning is one of the primary purposes of program evaluation at USAID. To improve the relevance and use of evaluation findings for better project outcomes, PPL/LER is working to support learning processes throughout the program cycle, including during evaluation planning and management. This includes: designing evaluations to fill gaps in knowledge in time to inform decisions; engaging partners in

evaluation planning and later in the review and use of findings; synthesizing findings from individual evaluations to glean common lessons that could be applicable in a variety of contexts; ensuring evaluation findings inform mission strategic planning and project design; tracking the use of evaluation findings in project adaptation, management, and other decisions; and sharing findings transparently with stakeholders and the public.

Connect Evaluation and Performance Monitoring

The establishment of the PPL/LER office in June 2010 created a bureaucratic split of evaluation from performance monitoring which at the time remained within the Management Bureau. To address this, the PPL Bureau has taken on program performance monitoring in early 2012 and will be working to better integrate it with all elements of the program cycle. New guidance on performance monitoring is being developed.

Address Evaluation during Project Implementation

In addition to Policy requirements to consider evaluation issues during strategic planning and project design, evaluation is essential while project implementation is ongoing. This includes: initiating unplanned evaluations when problems emerge; making changes in project implementation based on learning from evaluation findings; reviewing evaluation plans and tracking the use of previous evaluation findings during project and program portfolio reviews at USAID missions; and removing any unnecessary constraints to allow for adaptive project management based on learning from evaluations and other sources by encouraging design of more flexible contracts and grants.

BUILD USAID CAPACITY

Support for High-Quality Evaluations

Working with Evaluation Specialists throughout the Agency, PPL/LER will actively respond to USAID missions' requests to support them in designing and producing 250 high-quality evaluations by January 2013. This is in support of USAID Forward reforms and targets related to evaluation. In addition, by developing creative incentives, PPL/LER will help motivate and catalyze an Agency culture that values producing high-quality evaluations and using evaluation findings to inform decisions.

Promote Voluntary Certification in Evaluation

USAID staff who complete the two-week Evaluation for Evaluation Specialist course are eligible to participate in the Evaluation Practicum — an interactive online mentoring program designed to reinforce and further develop the evaluation competencies presented in the EES course with 'hands-on' experience in evaluation. Practicum participants are required to participate in a field-based evaluation for at least one week during the data collection phase and create at least one evaluation product such as a complete statement of work or an evaluation capacity building plan for their operating unit. Those who complete both the EES course and the Practicum become certified as USAID Evaluation Specialists. Although certification is voluntary, becoming certified represents the attainment of key evaluation competencies that will help strengthen the quality of the design, implementation and management of USAID-sponsored evaluations.

Expand Evaluation Training

PPL/LER will continue to provide training in evaluation and will focus on promoting the 'hands-on' learning opportunities available to USAID staff through the Evaluation Practicum and voluntary Certification in Evaluation. Between January 1, 2012, and the end of FY 2012, the Evaluation for Program Managers course will be offered at least seven times and the Evaluation for Evaluation Specialists will be offered at least six times in Washington DC and mostly regional missions. In addition, opportunities for web-based learning will be expanded.

Partner with Evaluation Leaders

USAID, through PPL/LER and other offices, will collaborate with leaders in evaluation of international development programs to draw on the experience and learning of these organizations to extend USAID capacity and support learning around development issues. As an example, USAID is a member of the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3IE) and will be working with 3IE to commission systematic reviews that analyze and synthesize findings from rigorous evaluations in specific program areas.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Provide Direct Technical Assistance

PPL/LER staff will continue to provide direct technical assistance on Evaluation Policy application, evaluation planning, design, management, quality control, and use with a particular focus on integrating evaluation with the other elements of the program cycle, such as policy development, Country Development Cooperation Strategy development and

implementation, project design, project implementation, performance management, and learning. This will include support for improving the design and management of Impact and Performance Evaluations.

Extend Evaluation Support with the Program Cycle Service Center

Established at the end of 2011, the Program Cycle Service Center will help USAID missions understand the various components of the Program Cycle and how they fit together, and it will help missions in the areas of strategic planning, project design, performance monitoring, evaluation, and adaptive learning. The Program Cycle Service Center has a number of specific functions. It will serve as a help desk, where mission staff can receive answers to questions, obtain clarification on processes and procedures, and seek advice or discuss problems through phone and quick-turnaround email support. It will also assemble and maintain a virtual library of resources, including sample documents, tool kits, templates, and screencasts to support the exchange of ideas and best practice across the agency. Finally, the Program Cycle Service Center will provide field support as appropriate to missions through short- and medium-term TDYs, which will include mentoring and learning opportunities for DLIs and provide informal workshops on the Program Cycle. USAID missions can send requests for support to the Program Cycle Service Center at: ProgramCycleServiceCenter@usaid.gov.

LEVERAGE EVIDENCE AND KNOWLEDGE

Develop a One-Stop Evaluation Toolkit

PPL/LER is developing an online platform to be launched in 2012 that will collect evaluation and performance monitoring resources in one easy to access location.

Lead the Creation of an Agency Evaluation Agenda

In 2012, PPL/LER will lead a process to develop an Agency Evaluation Agenda to help guide central evaluation efforts and fill gaps in knowledge. This will be done in a participatory manner and will be based on the expertise and suggestions of Agency staff and partners. It will be coordinated with learning or research priorities identified by other operating units in the Agency.

Energize Evaluation Communities of Practice

Plans for the EIG in 2012 include hosting evaluation experts, tapping into member expertise to support evaluation across the Agency, and

developing other learning opportunities to keep the members up to date on advances in the field. Small working groups may be established as needed under the EIG to work on specific tasks related to promoting evaluation standards and quality and building evaluation capacity and knowledge throughout USAID.

TRANSPARENTLY REPORT FINDINGS

Make Evaluation Findings More Accessible

USAID is launching a user-friendly evaluation web page at http://www.usaid.gov/evaluation to highlight the best evaluations produced by the Agency and to provide an easy interface for members of the public and USAID staff to find evaluation resources and browse evaluations by country and sector.

Create a Central Location for Data Warehousing

The Evaluation Policy requires that all quantitative data collected by USAID or one of the Agency's contractors or grantees for the purposes of an evaluation must be uploaded and stored in a central database. The data should be organized and fully documented for use by those not fully familiar with the project or evaluation. The purpose is to allow anyone access to the data for re-analysis or new research. USAID is working to determine how best to meet the requirement for a central database. In the meantime, USAID missions should require that evaluation teams provide their data, and that the data is safeguarded by the mission for future submission to a central repository.

CONCLUSION

Community members use a satellite image to understand local climate change effects. Photo by USAID/EGAT.

The Evaluation Policy demonstrates USAID's reaffirmed commitment to learning from doing, basing decisions on evidence, and sharing what we learn transparently. Since releasing the Evaluation Policy in January 2011, USAID has begun to put in place systems and processes to support the Agency in meeting the ambitious requirements of the Policy and has focused on monitoring and evaluation as a key area of reform under USAID Forward.

Much has been accomplished in the first year, but there is still much more to do. USAID is committed to prioritizing evaluation to strengthen projects and programs and achieve even greater development impact in the world.