

DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATION

CASE OVERVIEW: IMPROVING MATERNAL AND NEWBORN HEALTH IN INDONESIA

 **Funder:**
USAID

 **Purpose**

To reduce maternal and neonatal mortality from preventable death through co-created, local solutions.

Jalin
Indonesia

 **Timeline:**
September 2017 - September 2022

 **Implementing Partner:**
DAI Global

What is Developmental Evaluation?

Developmental evaluation (DE) is an approach that supports continuous adaptation in complex environments, and differs from typical evaluations in a few ways: (1) DEs have a Developmental Evaluator embedded alongside the implementation team; (2) DEs emphasize iterative, real-time data collection and regular reflection to support adaptation; (3) DEs are methodologically agnostic and adjust analytical techniques and evaluation questions as the project changes. For more information on DEs, consider reading *Developmental Evaluation* from Better Evaluation.

Jalin, which means "intertwined" in Bahasa, comprises three components:

1. Facilitating co-creation processes to create local solutions
2. Supporting Indonesia's Ministry of Health in support of national Maternal and Newborn Health (MNH) strategies
3. Financing the incubation of local solutions

The project maintains a central office in Jakarta where the majority of program management and leadership staff are located, and six regional offices throughout the country.

DAI faced several challenges from the outset that delayed programming. Jalin experienced significant staff turnover in its senior leadership as well as mid-level program staff, having had six separate Chiefs of Party or acting Chiefs of Party since the project's start. Furthermore, ongoing coordination issues between various regional offices, external stakeholders, and the Jakarta headquarters constituted a management challenge that stymied the project's work. Additional external factors such as Jalin's non-traditional programming, a co-creation strategy requiring a longer timeline, and leadership turnover within the Indonesia Ministry of Health (MOH) resulted in implementation delays.

“ One of the major lessons for the USAID team has been realizing that DE can provide a flexible mechanism to improve a project, beyond the expectations of the formal evaluation question reports.

– USAID ”

Why Developmental Evaluation?

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has a rich history of partnering with the Government of Indonesia (GOI) and other stakeholders to contribute to improvements in MNH, including the Expanding Maternal and Newborn Survival program from 2011 to 2017. Despite such major investments, Indonesia is experiencing a worrying rise in maternal deaths. Consequently, Jalin pilots a number of local, innovative interventions, tests their efficacy, and then scales them if evidence is found that they save lives and improve health outcomes. This approach necessitates an adaptive management structure where the project's staff can modify their approach as new data that supports or challenges the design emerge. In addition, Jalin's contract structure of three base years and two one-year option periods incentivizes timely and evidence-based adjustments to maximize impact. DE is well-placed to give iterative, demand-driven feedback to support these needs.

Design and Implementation

The team conducting the DE of USAID Jalin are trained evaluators who are independent from the contractor implementing USAID Jalin. The DE of USAID Jalin is implemented by SI, while USAID Jalin is implemented by Development Alternatives Inc. Global, LLC (DAI). This separation maintains objectivity for the DE through clear lines of communication and specifically designated roles, while the DE team is co-located with USAID Jalin to integrate the evaluation process with program management.

Social Impact began conducting an external DE of Jalin in June of 2018 with a two-year period of performance beginning approximately one year after project launch. Given Jalin's size and geographic reach, the DE team consists of a Chief of Party, Evaluation Specialist, MNH Specialist, Research Associate, and Finance and Administration Manager.

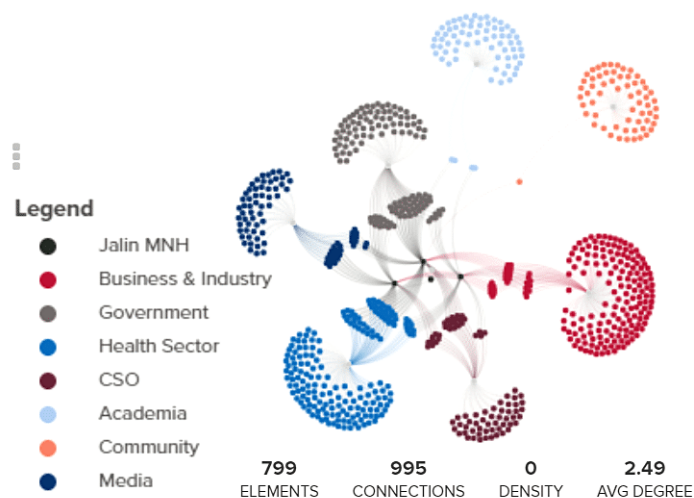
The DE did not hold a traditional acculturation workshop during project kickoff after USAID advised by that it would not be possible to convene all stakeholders simultaneously. Relationship challenges between the MOH and Jalin made it impossible for all stakeholders to join in one coordinated meeting.

In response, the DE held a series of 18 smaller individual meetings with key stakeholders, including Jalin, the MOH, and USAID. Over the course of four months, the DE provided tailored presentations to each audience on the purpose of the DE, stakeholder roles and responsibilities, and to solicit feedback on initial evaluation questions (EQ). While this iterative process took time, the DE team eventually developed a series of questions designed to provide usable feedback to all stakeholders.

Figure 1: Map of Jalin Target Districts



Figure 2: Jalin Network Mapping



During the DE's initial stages, members of Jalin leadership were skeptical of the DE's purpose and value, concerned that an ongoing evaluation may poorly represent their work. This was compounded by regular staff turnover in the Jalin program, making it difficult for DE team members to build a strong personal relationship. As a result, early project leadership was much less likely to adopt a collaborative approach or utilize the DE's recommendations. With project staff turnover and the DE's demonstration of useful, actionable contributions (see next section), the DE was later able to secure project buy-in.

The DE team is now fully embedded in the Jalin offices in Jakarta, interacting with members of the Jalin team on a daily basis. This integration has allowed the DE team to build strong working and informal relationships with the Jalin staff and engage in candid conversations regarding the project. The close proximity to Jalin staff also allows the DE to observe implementation of recommendations and provide additional feedback as needed. The DE team also conducts significant in-country travel to Jalin regional offices.

Value of DE

The outcomes that stakeholders found the most useful didn't come from the planned evaluation questions. Rather, stakeholders commented that the most useful adaptations were outside the initial scope, emerging from the DE's adaptive, collaborative process. This finding emphasizes the value of DE in maintaining the flexibility to adapt in scope and focus to better meet program needs. Specific useful outcomes and adaptations included:

Identifying Jalin Innovations

The DE team identified 71 solutions to improve MNH outcomes that had been co-created by USAID Jalin and local partners. At the time, the DE found that USAID Jalin was implementing 17 of these, designing another 17, and had discarded 37 ideas. These findings were the first indications for USAID that Jalin had engaged a variety of stakeholders to co-define problems, co-create local solutions, and leverage public and private resources to improve health outcomes and reduce maternal and neonatal mortality. USAID and Jalin then revised their work plan to focus on implementing, replicating, scaling, and sustaining these local solutions.

Developing Learning Products

The DE informed USAID's review and subsequent contract modification of USAID Jalin in 2019 by synthesizing its findings to date into learning products, including infographic reports, online maps, and diagrams. These learning products helped USAID staff to quickly understand Jalin's challenges and value and to make informed management decisions to adapt the project.

Mapping Stakeholders and Database Tracking

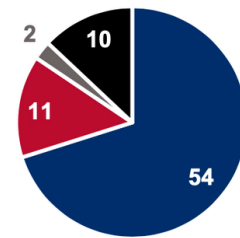
The DE team prepared an Excel database of local stakeholders in Jalin's six provinces, generated network maps of all regions, and created an online GIS map with the data. Jalin then used these tools to conduct and track stakeholder outreach.

Tracking Sustainable Programming

Through the DE, Jalin found that local governments in Central and West Java are allocating funds to replicate and sustain USAID's previous Expanding Maternal and Newborn Survival (EMAS, 2011-2017) program, especially its mentoring program, in 24 districts. These findings offer evidence that USAID/Indonesia is advancing the Agency's Journey to Self-Reliance and assisting Indonesia to achieve locally-sustained results. Due to the DE's findings, the Ministry of Health (MOH) commenced designing a clinical and managerial mentoring program based on EMAS's mentoring program, and USAID adapted Jalin to support this national MOH mentoring program.

As of November 2019, Jalin has accepted and implemented or begun implementing 54 of the DE's 77 recommendations (Figure 3), or 70 percent.

Figure 3: Overall Recommendations Uptake



■ Accepted ■ Declined ■ Modified ■ Pending

“The single biggest outcome has been that the DE did not produce the outcomes the USAID team expected.”
– USAID

Lessons Learned

1 Demonstrate Value to Secure Buy-In

Early in the DE, members of Jalin leadership were concerned that the DE was focused on accountability rather than learning. While the recent arrival of a new Chief of Party and Technical Director who better appreciated the role of the DE was undoubtedly essential to eventually building the relationship, the DE's continued production of valuable tools and actionable recommendations was an important factor in ultimately securing buy-in.

2 Commit to Being Flexible

The DE team's commitment to flexibility and adaptability allowed them to address emergent learning needs that have been previously acknowledged as some of the most important outcomes of the DE. Many of these needs were outside the scope of the initial EQs, and the ability to address them was essential to securing buy-in from key stakeholders both within and outside the Jalin project.

3 Diversify the DE Team

The unusually large DE team of five staff possessed a diversity in both seniority, gender, and technical experience. The demographic diversity of the team was useful during data collection, while the diverse technical background of personnel was essential to facilitating adaptations and emergent learning needs. The MNH evaluation specialist dedicated their time to applying their knowledge of public health issues to Jalin interventions, while the research associate utilized their skills in GIS mapping, data visualization, and SNA to develop accessible learning products.

4 Involve the Donor Strategically

USAID staff were involved in all stages of the DE, from the formulation of individual EQs to supervising data collection. USAID set clear expectations for the DE and Jalin to maintain a positive relationship. USAID was also able to secure meetings with important stakeholders (such as the MOH) and encourage buy-in that would otherwise be difficult for an evaluator to achieve alone.

5 Provide Negative Findings Thoughtfully

The DE requires delicate relationship maintenance and a sensitive approach to sharing critical findings with a partner. Providing an informal briefing of a report's findings before delivering a written product allowed the DE team to contextualize the findings and ensure no one was surprised by the results. However, a written report was viewed as essential to communicating findings.

6 Maintain a Collaborative Approach

Trust-building and relationship maintenance with the Jalin team was at the core of the DE team's later success. The DE team worked to establish their status as a resource for the Jalin team and stakeholders, reinforcing that the DE was not intended as an accountability mechanism. The DE also facilitated collaboration between other stakeholders, notable the Jalin team and USAID.

DE Case Studies

This case study is part of a series on how developmental evaluation is being conducted within the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and other projects. The case studies were written by the Developmental Pilot Activity (DEPA-MERL) consortium— part of the USAID Global Development Lab's Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, and Learning Innovations Program. DEPA-MERL seeks to pilot the use of DE, assess its feasibility and effectiveness in the USAID context, and share learnings globally. These case studies and other resources on DE, including [A Practical Guide for Evaluators and Administrators](#), are available on the [DEPA-MERL website](#). The consortium is led by Social Impact, with partners Search for Common Ground and the William Davidson Institute at the University of Michigan.

“ Sometimes, [if] there [was] an issue ... the DE was able to help act as a go-between to defuse tensions or facilitate discussions in several cases. This was not an expected role of the DE but has turned out to be an important one that may be useful in other projects. ”

-USAID

7 Engage all Stakeholders

The DE team's commitment to engaging all stakeholders, not just Jalin leadership, resulted in benefits for both the DE and Jalin. The DE serves as a resource for all stakeholders, including USAID, the MAB, Jalin staff, and local partners. DE team members regularly engage in informal conversation and share knowledge with staff. The DE provided inputs to USAID during the Jalin re-scoping, and continues to serve as a resource when USAID requires information. The DE team's preparation of mapping resource for the MOH built a relationship that allowed the DE to serve as a convener for Jalin and the MOH.

“ DE is an evaluator's answer to complexity-aware monitoring. ”

- DE Team Member

Conclusions

Jalin will soon enter its third and final year of its base period following a re-assessment and modification by USAID, with new leadership bringing a revitalized sense of purpose to the project. Ultimately, the flexibility of the DE approach lends itself well to addressing Jalin's complex environment and the complexity inherent in implementing a project that relies on small-scale, untested interventions. To continue to support Jalin, the DE received a 16-month costed extension and will continue through September 2022. Respondents shared the view that the DE offers an efficient and innovative new approach to ensure project effectiveness and adaptability.