STRENGTHENING TECHNICAL PRACTICE

A DISCOVERY REPORT ON LEARNING IN USAID/WASHINGTON

DECEMBER 2012

CONTENTS

ACRONYMS

CAF   Conflict Assessment Framework

CILSS   Comité permanent inter-État de lutte contre la sécheresse au Sahel

DCA   Development Credit Authority

DLI   Development Leadership Initiative

DRG   Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance (USAID Office)

EG   Economic Growth

GLEE   Global Learning Exchanges and Evaluation

LER   Learning, Evaluation, and Research (USAID Office)

M&E   Monitoring and Evaluation

PPL   Policy, Planning, and Learning (USAID Bureau)

SILK   Sharing Insights, Learning, and Knowledge (USAID Community of Practice)

STP   Strengthening Technical Practice

TDY   Temporary Duty

USAID   United States Agency for International Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

"The development professionals who apply their best thinking to solve hard problems know that we can learn more systematically from our work, and that we can more rigorously and credibly document our programs' effectiveness...We can do this only with evidence and data to inform our decisions, and with unprecedented transparency about what we have learned and where."

– Rajiv Shah, USAID Administrator

In 2011, USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah recognized the importance of strengthening learning within the Agency by supporting a revised evaluation policy as part of broader reforms set out in USAID Forward. The Evaluation Policy aims to build the Agency's evidence base, increase the Agency's influence in the development community, and promote local institutional strengthening in the developing world.

To improve program impact and ultimately development outcomes, USAID has established organizational learning as a priority. The Learning, Evaluation, and Research (LER) Office in USAID's Bureau for Policy, Planning, and Learning (PPL) is responsible for carrying out a comprehensive approach to strengthen learning throughout the Agency's headquarters in Washington, DC and its missions around the world. The LER Office defines this undertaking as improving decision-making at all levels within the Agency by obtaining, analyzing, using, and sharing meaningful information about program performance and impact. This process entails robust engagement not only within USAID headquarters and its missions, but also with other donors, host governments, and implementing partners.

USAID's learning approach aims to improve decision-making at all levels within the Agency by obtaining, analyzing, using, and sharing meaningful information about program performance and impact.

Creating a culture of learning involves changing the way staff conducts its work. To gain a better sense of how learning is already happening at USAID, the LER Office recently completed an in-depth study on the state of learning in USAID's Washington headquarters, which focused on the following key research questions: What processes/systems already work? Who are the leaders in learning? What are the biggest barriers to learning? And how might successful solutions be scaled up?

While LER's larger learning initiative covers all parts of USAID, this report shares findings specific to how USAID/Washington

employees currently integrate learning into their technical practice. The findings begin to explain how employees generate knowledge within regional and technical bureaus, how this knowledge is organized across the Agency, how it is shared, and finally, how knowledge is applied to improve future work.

This report includes documentation of both research findings and the process by which the study was conducted. It also provides a snapshot of how the LER Office will begin to develop a long-term strategy for strengthening technical practice supported by a robust learning culture.

APPROACH

The LER Office has set out to build a stronger learning organization, which according to organizational learning expert Peter Senge, is "one in which people at all levels, individually and collectively, excel at creating, acquiring, and transferring knowledge in order to increase their capacity to produce results they really care about."[1]

In designing its approach to organizational learning within USAID/Washington, the LER Office made several underlying assumptions:

- Technical units are sources of rich data and want to share lessons learned
- Knowledge management specialists at USAID have explicit learning processes that are standard
- Current knowledge sharing and learning practices vary considerably from office to office in terms of efficacy
- Some staff members are already engaged in effective knowledge management practices that could be shared and replicated

> "The Office of Learning, Evaluation, and Research is charged with catalyzing the Agency's evolution into a more effective learning organization."
>
> – Cynthia Clapp-Wincek, Office Director, Learning, Evaluation and Research

The strategy relies on the principle that USAID does not have to start from scratch. Future activities should learn from both past and current experience. As an organizational framework, the LER Office is pursuing work in five priority areas:

➢ **Discover**. This area of work is already underway. It includes mapping current learning practices and processes, identifying what works and who is doing it, and documenting USAID-supported communities of practice.

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[1] Senge, Peter. *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook: Strategies and Tools for Building a Learning Organization*. New York, NY: Currency Doubleday, 1994.

➢ **Discuss**. The process of learning needs to be made more explicit. The LER Office is planning activities to help staff members to better understand what learning is, what best practices exist, and how learning can be integrated into their own work. These opportunities will also provide a chance for staff to talk openly about the challenges they face and projects they want to pursue.

➢ **Design/Deliver**. Leveraging the expertise of a small group of learning champions into a community of practice, members will provide extended support and analysis to a small number of select learning models. The LER Office will assist the implementation of small-scale projects that support learning and that have the potential to be applied Agency-wide.

➢ **Disseminate**. The LER Office recognizes the importance of communicating messages about learning at every level. A comprehensive communications strategy will supplement the learning strategy to share information about what the Office is learning.

➢ **Determine**. Part of creating a learning culture is understanding what success looks like. The LER Office will begin to explore this area through a formal evaluation plan. The plan will determine how to monitor and evaluate outcomes and impacts among pilot projects and the learning strategy more broadly.

These five areas broadly characterize the LER Office's direction of work. In recognition that culture change is sometimes an unpredictable process, the strategy will be iterative. While some activities have already been defined, others will be designed according to future needs.

DISCOVER

This area of work included an inventory of existing USAID learning tools and communities of practice, an in-depth series of interviews with USAID staff, and a formal synthesis exercise to analyze the data collected from the interviews.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Through interviews with representatives at every USAID office, the LER team sought to find out:

- What each office is doing to support learning
- The external factors that make existing systems work
- Core pieces of knowledge that all staff should know
- The most effective incentives for learning
- The best models for engaging with missions
- What has failed in the past
- What offices wish they could do to learn more effectively

In addition to these objectives, the LER Office specifically looked for individuals within USAID who could be identified as "learning champions." These are recognized leaders doing innovative learning who also share and reinforce useful learning practices. The LER Office is working to facilitate a community of practice among these learning champions that will help push a learning agenda forward and serve as an invaluable resource in helping to inform future strategic decisions.

RESEARCH PROCESS

From May to September 2012, the LER Office conducted 80 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with USAID employees from 49 separate offices across 10 bureaus. Interviews were conducted both in person and over the phone. A team of 8 interviewers, paired with 6 note-takers, began with a short list of employees already known for being learning champions. The list expanded as interviewers asked respondents who else they would recommend to be interviewed. The team also looked for broad participation, ensuring interview respondents were equally represented across bureaus and offices. Inter-generational balance was sought by identifying staff across levels of responsibility. Senior leaders within the LER Office also briefed other office directors about the learning initiative and that their staff may be contacted for an interview.

The interview questions were standardized beforehand using an Appreciative Inquiry approach.[2] All interviewers were trained to ensure consistent information was being conveyed and that questions were asked in a standard format. Before the interview began, the interviewer explained the objectives of the LER Office and introduced basic concepts in organizational learning, such as the Learning Cycle and the Knowledge Pyramid.[3] Respondents were encouraged to use these models as frameworks for talking about their own experiences.

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[2] "Appreciative inquiry seeks, fundamentally, to build a constructive union between [people's] past and present capacities: achievements, assets, unexplored potentials, innovations, strengths, elevated thoughts, opportunities, benchmarks, high point moments, lived values, traditions, strategic competencies, stories, expressions of wisdom, insights into the deeper corporate spirit or soul – and visions of valued and possible futures."
Cooperrider, David L. and Whitney, Diana. *Appreciative Inquiry: A Positive Revolution in Change*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2005.

[3] Adapted from the McKinsey Growth Pyramid.
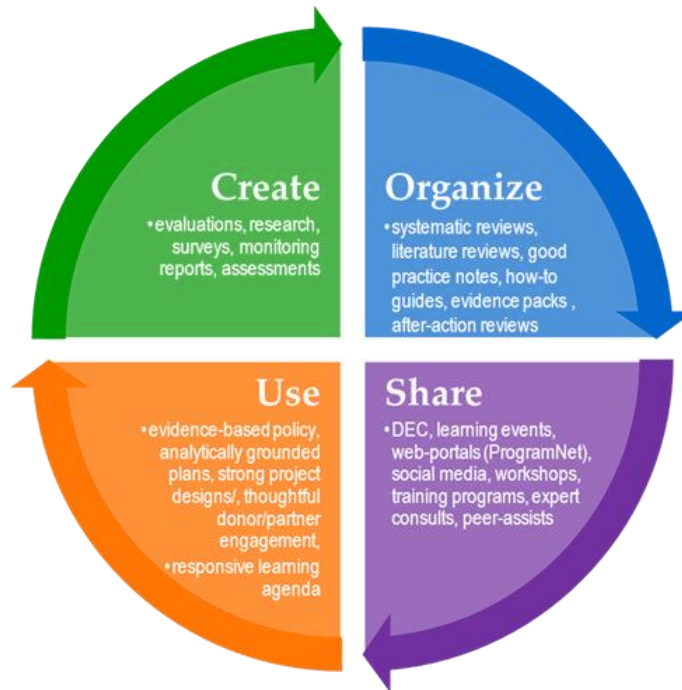
Figure 1: Learning Cycle

Create
- evaluations, research, surveys, monitoring reports, assessments

Organize
- systematic reviews, literature reviews, good practice notes, how-to guides, evidence packs, after-action reviews

Use
- evidence-based policy, analytically grounded plans, strong project designs/, thoughtful donor/partner engagement,
- responsive learning agenda

Share
- DEC, learning events, web-portals (ProgramNet), social media, workshops, training programs, expert consults, peer-assists

Figure 2: Knowledge Pyramid

Emergent → Research questions and learning developed to address new problems, fill gaps, and further thought leadership

Core → Substantive content within each development practice area, distilled learning from existing content

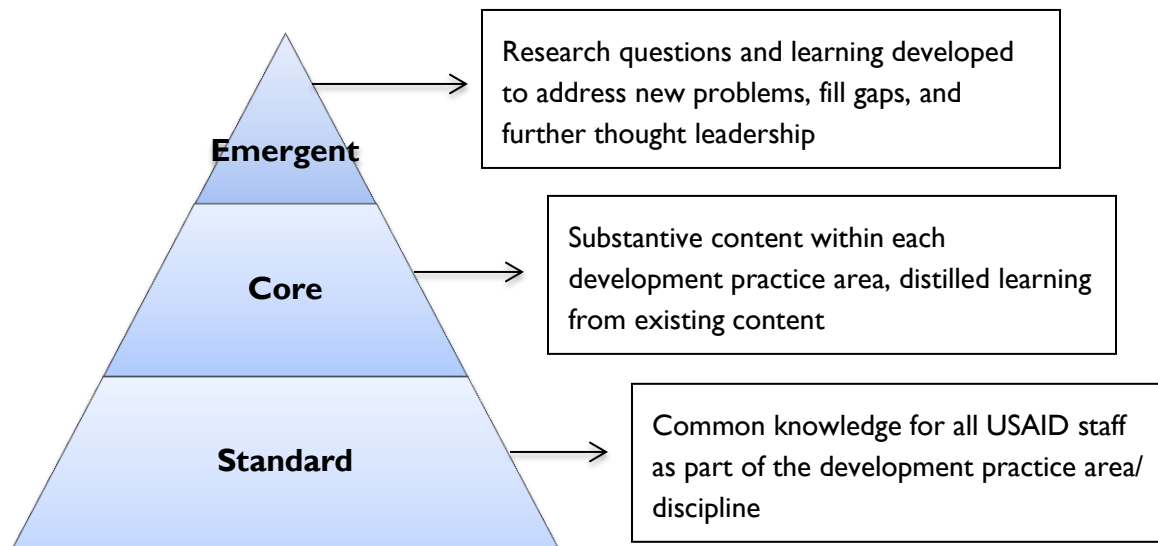**Standard** → Common knowledge for all USAID staff as part of the development practice area/ discipline

Adapted from the McKinsey Growth Pyramid

The questionnaire included a total of 17 questions. Note-takers were instructed to record in detail the interviewee's responses, including any significant quotes. After the interview, the note-taker stored the raw data in a shared Google document and summarized the data in a standardized form that was also shared with the team.

Once all the interviews were completed, the team conducted a formal synthesis exercise. The research team organized themselves in groups of four. The team leader instructed each team member to write a "headline" on an index card which captured a key takeaway from the interviews they participated in. The headlines were intended to be short, pithy phrases that highlighted a central idea. Team members wrote as many they could think of in roughly 45 minutes. Then, the small groups consolidated their headlines into small groupings of topics and ideas. Finally, the entire team came together to share and discuss their headlines. The index cards were posted to the wall in clusters as themes emerged. Decisions about what headlines to add and how to organize them were made by group consensus.

All of the headlines, organized by theme, were recorded, and the index cards were transferred to a large foam board. This display of data was showcased inside the PPL Bureau's main offices to show the breadth of knowledge uncovered and to generate discussion.

Interview Data Synthesis Exercise

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The research team was pleased to find how much respondents were willing to talk about their experiences around learning. Some respondents expressed grievances over the many barriers that prevented them from learning and sharing, but others were able to point to successes, either in their

office or another office, where effective learning was taking place. From the 80 interviews conducted, the research team synthesized quotes or recurring concepts that arose and organized the data across different themes and sub-themes.

Table 1: Research Themes

ENABLING ENVIRONMENT
Includes elements within the Agency's operations that can either support or hinder learning
Senior Management Support/Celebration
Incentives and Time
Staffing
Systems
Organizational and Generational Silos
PRINCIPLES AND STRATEGIES FOR LEARNING
Includes best practices that were referenced as effective ways to conceptualize learning
Learning Cycle
Knowledge Pyramid
Promoting Learning
Piloting Models of Learning
OUTREACH
Includes topics on how information is, or should be, shared throughout the Agency
Collaboration and Partnerships
Mission Sharing
Personal Connections

Many of these themes coincide with Peter Senge's theory that learning organizations rely on:

1. A supportive learning environment
2. Concrete learning processes and practices
3. Leadership behavior that reinforces learning

The responses from the interviews reinforced the importance of senior leadership supporting a learning culture. Without the explicit or tacit support of their supervisors and senior leaders, existing learning champions might not have the support they need to continue. Fortunately, such managers do exist and

deserve to be recognized. The LER Office will continue more intensive outreach to senior leadership as USAID's learning initiative moves forward.

An additional finding revealed that most respondents feel USAID has much more "core knowledge" related to their technical area of expertise than "standard knowledge," which could easily be transferred to new staff (see Figure 2). This discovery is particularly concerning given the recent onboarding of nearly 800 officers under the Development Leadership Initiative (DLI), along with significant reforms taking place around the Program Cycle. Now more than ever, USAID needs to effectively share as much standard knowledge as possible within and across technical areas.

During the interviews, a number of issues were raised repeatedly that employees felt were significant barriers to learning. Below are some illustrative responses.

"Learning is a long-term issue but the amount of paperwork required to [do our work] is so much – we need to streamline this. There is so little time to discuss technical learning!"

"Knowledge needs to be curated."

"Google Docs is constrained by connectivity, which is a huge handicap for mission learning and TDYs [temporary duty]. Also, most USAID Washington systems completely ignore missions."

"A lot of learning is happening outside of formal learning – through connections and unexpected linkages. If you maximize an environment where linkages are managed, then you are succeeding…but you need time to invest in discovery. When I looked at attendees at the Program Officer's conference – they were so exhausted that they didn't have the intellectual capacity left to learn."

"PPL needs senior leadership support – if learning is not mandated, there is no traction forcing this to happen."

"The Agency is so single-indicator driven, yet indicators are so stove-piped. We need to report across different disciplines."

At the same time, the interviews shed light on many innovative learning processes and systems already in place. Below are some examples that respondents shared.

➢ The **Global Health Bureau's** mini university is an annual conference with 70 different sessions that highlight evidence-based best practices.

➢ The **Economic Growth, Education, and Environment Bureau** does trainings based on how they think their technical areas should be integrated in practice.

➢ Over 1,000 people participated last year in the **Bureau for Food Security**-sponsored knowledge sharing events.

➢ The **Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance Bureau** uses the Democracy Fellows program to fill gaps in junior and mid-level officer positions.

➢ Staff in an **Africa Bureau** office created a Strategic Learning Project Appraisal Document to institutionalize learning in their division with resources to push a learning agenda.

➢ The **Europe and Eurasia Bureau's** Strategic Planning Analysis Division is responsible for justifying programming with evidence, uses a Country Monitoring Progress tool, and created an NGO Sustainability Index.

➢ The **Bureau for Food Security** has Global Learning Exchanges and Evaluation (GLEE) events on topics such as agriculture, gender, and youth that includes a strong communications component. It is a chance for a mission to share what it is doing and why it is doing it.

➢ The **Office of Transition Initiatives'** multi-year learning transformation highlights the need to develop a learning strategy that includes consistently participating in strategy sessions.

From the interviews conducted, the LER Office identified 35 staff members as learning champions within the Agency. Represented bureaus include the Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance Bureau; the Global Health Bureau; the Economic Growth, Education, and Environment Bureau; the Africa Bureau; and the Bureau for Policy, Planning, and Learning.

LEARNING EXAMPLES

Through the discovery process, there emerged a number of high-quality examples of learning. Four examples are highlighted below, with additional cases included in Appendix D.

Case Study #1: Crowdsourcing

In June 2012, USAID publicly launched the Agency's first-ever crowd-sourcing initiative to pinpoint the location of USAID's Development Credit Authority (DCA) loan data. Crowdsourcing is a distributed, problem-solving process whereby tasks are outsourced to a network of people known as the "crowd."

The crowdsourcing program allows for better data processing with a much higher accuracy rate than a computer script. The GeoCenter in USAID's Office of Science and Technology co-led the project and conducted a case study, which was shared in meetings with 40 government agencies and at five conferences. Visualizing where USAID enhances the capacity of the private sector can signal new areas for potential collaboration with host countries, researchers, and development organizations. Based on DCA's success, USAID's Office of Innovation and Development Alliances plans to build on open-source development, and the Local Planning Authority is creating advisory groups using social media.

Case Study #2: Organizational Alignment

In an effort to strengthen evidence-based decision-making in designing interventions, USAID's Office of Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance (DRG) piloted a system for building learning agendas around accountability and service delivery. Through internal deliberations, the DRG Office decided to organize themselves into existing teams and sub-sectors that already had considerable USAID funding and interest from missions. Allowing staff to voluntarily decide the sub-groups they wanted to participate in helped increase staff buy-in. The formal learning team in the DRG Office is responsible for managing and performing research, surveys, and evaluations based on rigorous protocols. The team creates knowledge in the context of learning with each other. Findings are discovered less from the evaluations themselves and more through the process of conducting them. They are testing new systems for information sharing such as Dropbox and Google Drive.

Case Study #3: Host-Country Expertise

In the 1980s, USAID funded the West African organization Comité permanent inter-État de lutte contre la sécheresse au Sahel (CILSS) to do primary research on food security in the Sahel, which was then shared with USAID and other partners. While USAID benefited from the findings, the investment also fostered in-country learning. For example, reports on at-scale agroforestry in Niger and water harvesting in Burkina Faso were paid for by USAID with local Nigeriens as the researchers. This method of generating knowledge was particularly appropriate as the primary data collection and internalization of learning reinforced ownership in problem solving and built capacity for learning into the future.

DISCUSS

The formative research conducted by the LER Office demonstrated a high level of enthusiasm for talking about how USAID staff can learn from each other and outside partners. To encourage further thought and discussion, the LER Office is creating opportunities for staff to engage in conversations around learning. In September 2012, the LER Office began holding internal brown bag meetings to share the work the office is undertaking and to present its ideas on a long-term learning strategy. During these brown bag meetings, senior leaders were encouraged to attend, and participants were encouraged to provide feedback.

SPEAKERS SERIES

On November 1, 2012, the LER Office officially launched the "Thought Leaders in Learning" speakers series. The series will feature prominent thought leaders from outside USAID who will share their cutting-edge ideas for encouraging collaboration, knowledge sharing, behavior change, innovation, and other topics around learning. The series is designed as a platform where alternative approaches are presented and cross-pollination of innovative ideas can further ignite learning throughout the Agency. The series is also meant to give USAID staff the opportunity to engage with leading thinkers to understand how their ideas can advance the work of the Agency. Seminars will be held once a month at USAID and are simultaneously broadcast via webinar.

COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

The LER Office recently convened the Sharing Insights, Learning, and Knowledge (SILK) community of practice. This community is developed for the 35 learning champions identified during the interview process. SILK is meant to create a space for leaders to share how their learning initiatives work and what their impact is. In an effort to adapt and replicate learning practices more broadly across USAID, SILK is meant to create a space for members to share how their learning practices work and what their impact has been. In recognition that senior management buy-in is critical to ongoing commitment, the LER Office sent emails to each employee's supervisor to recognize the person for his or her stand-out work in advancing organizational learning at USAID.

Regular SILK meetings will be dedicated to in-depth discussions on current learning models, as well as more strategic meetings to identify which projects are worth further investment. To the greatest extent possible, SILK members will determine how to collaborate, govern, and organize themselves. The LER Office will experiment with different virtual participation methods for members to continue engagement even while on travel. Each meeting will have a dedicated facilitator and a formal process for documenting what information is shared and what decisions were made. The Office intends to track their learning and knowledge sharing progress through a transparent process that will be folded into a larger monitoring and evaluation plan. SILK is poised to collectively decide what the priorities for strengthening USAID's organizational learning should be and the feasibility of widespread implementation.

DESIGN/DELIVER

An important lesson highlighted during the interview process is that the most successful communities of practice meet regularly and work toward a common goal. Therefore, the purpose of the SILK community of practice is not only for members to share common interests and learn more about best practices, but ultimately to design, implement, and evaluate pilot projects that support learning. Many

employees expressed the desire to institute new processes, improve existing systems, or investigate new tools that would help their offices strengthen learning. However, employees also cite that there is always a lack of time and resources to devote to "side projects." SILK's purpose is to provide members with a support mechanism dedicated to complex learning challenges. The LER Office recognizes organizational change is a significant undertaking and often moves slowly. The Office envisions that this small group of learning champions will serve as a catalyst to sustain long-term change throughout the Agency and can act as a sounding board for shaping next steps.

DISSEMINATE

Recognizing the need to foster a culture of learning through widespread participation, the LER Office developed a comprehensive communications strategy targeting key audiences. Communications about the LER Office's learning strategy for strengthening technical practice will originate in the PPL Bureau.

The hub for information about the LER Office's learning initiatives is the USAID Learning Lab website. Visitors are able to access the latest information on the learning strategy, foundational resources, best practice documents, and details about upcoming events, trainings, and other activities. Post-event resources are available on the site after the close of a "Thought Leaders in Learning" seminar. Members of the SILK community of practice will have a virtual working group space to engage in discussion, share documents, and store important resources. Meeting documentation and evaluation data will also be stored here.

External partners will also be able to find information on how they can engage in USAID learning activities. All information related to LER's work to strengthen technical practice can be found at www.usaidlearninglab.org or by emailing learning@usaid.gov for additional information.

DETERMINE

To determine the outcomes and impact of LER's efforts to strengthen technical practice, the Office has developed a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan comprising multiple tools and components. The M&E plan seeks to investigate how USAID is growing as a learning organization over time and how LER Office activities have contributed to these developments. In addition, the plan will work with SILK members to identify specific learning initiatives that have demonstrated particular success, with the goal of replicating such learning improvement models across the Agency.

METHODS

The M&E plan will deploy the following evaluation methods to gauge the strength of organizational learning across USAID technical units and the outcomes of learning activities:

- A **baseline and follow-up index** constitutes the bulk of the M&E plan. The index aggregates behavior-based indicators through an in-depth survey (focusing on aspects of the learning cycle and the culture of organizational learning) to quantify the strength of learning and technical practice for each USAID office. The previously conducted USAID staff interviews will complement data collected in this baseline survey. The LER Office will repeat the index and the semi-structured interviews at future dates to follow the Agency's progress in improving organizational learning.
- **Activity assessments** of all learning activities will monitor participant perception of how well the events achieve their learning objectives, in addition to collecting suggestions for improvement that will allow the LER Office to engage in iterative course correction over the life of the activities.
- **Learning improvement model assessments** will analyze the projects identified in the Design and Deliver phase through in-depth qualitative interviews with participants and organizers.
- A **time-use study** of select offices will investigate how USAID employees allocate their time in an average workday in order to understand the degree to which bureaucratic tasks detract from accomplishing technical goals. The results of this study will give the LER Office leverage for initiating change in USAID's operational policies.

The results of these monitoring and evaluation activities will give LER, and USAID leadership, a deeper sense of the quality of organizational learning in different technical units and the specific aspects in which offices succeed or could use improvement. The findings will provide evidence for targeted interventions to improve the Agency's learning practices. Furthermore, the data collected from these activities will help elucidate learning best practices and the types of assistance that are most effective in strengthening technical practice. Collectively, the M&E plan will allow the LER Office to track, target, and measure the impact of learning investments, helping to establish USAID as a leader in organizational learning.

INTENDED OUTCOMES

By following the approach described in this report, the LER Office hopes to accomplish:

1. The creation of a strong enabling environment that supports learning through improved senior management support and revised systems and staffing practices to better integrate learning into every day work
2. The identification and celebration of internal learning champions in regional and technical bureaus
3. A map of organizational learning practices/processes within technical units and identification of elements of standard and core knowledge
4. Wide dissemination of lessons learned both internally and externally

5. Pilot projects to test concepts and tools which could have Agency-wide impact
6. Capacity-building to bolster learning experts at all levels of USAID

The LER Office is committed to working in partnerships throughout the Agency to capitalize on good ideas and provide support where needed. By fostering a robust learning culture, USAID can better achieve its mission to improve development outcomes.

"In the end, we're all engaged in this business of development because we believe that we can actually have a better world. And we are only going to achieve that if we actually invest in analyzing what works and what doesn't work. So, as we are all involved in the implementation of programs around the world, and your days are long and your days are busy, taking that time to actually share the experiences, the knowledge, the data, and the analysis that you're gathering in the field is absolutely critical not only to the Agency and to the work that you're doing, but to the people that we ultimately serve. And so, with this effort, I am very confident that we as an Agency will be achieving much more in the years to come."

– Susan Reichle, Assistant to the Administrator

APPENDIX A:
INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Date: Interviewer:

Name: Title:

Bureau/ Team:

1. What is your Office doing to support learning in each quadrant of the Learning Cycle?

2. What are the best practices that make this (these) systems stand out?

3. What factors are present that make this (these) models successful?

4. What would you describe as your Office's development practice area(s)?

5. *Development practice areas are the substantive, programmatic content USAID engages in*
    Do you think there are pieces of core knowledge from your development practice area(s) that everyone in the Agency should know? Does your Office do anything to reach this broader audience?

6. What learning systems does your Office use to address 'knowledge gaps' where additional research is needed for unique USAID thought leadership?

7. *Ask only if no previous mention made in interview towards communities of practice.*
    Does your Office support any Communities of Practice?

8. Let's Dream: IF YOU HAD $1M… how would you promote learning and knowledge sharing?

9. *We are hoping to create SILK – a community of practice for SHARING INSIGHTS, LEARNING AND KNOWLEDGE. It would be a community of practice of no more than 25 people from across the Agency who are learning and knowledge sharing champions. SILK would act foremost as an advocate and governing institution for learning within USAID.*
    Is a group Community of Practice like SILK of value? Would you have an interest in participating?

10. What are the offices within USAID who are leaders in learning?

11. What are the most effective incentives for institutionalizing learning? What are the incentives for staff? What are the incentives for leadership?

12. What are the best models you've seen for engaging Missions with Washington on Learning and Knowledge Sharing?

13. Who do you think are leaders in Learning, outside of USAID?

14. To what extent do you rely on outside assistance (i.e. contractors/consultants/ partners) for your learning needs?

15. What is one thing that's been tried that we should not repeat?

16. What else do we need to know?

17. Finally, who else should we interview on Learning/ Knowledge Sharing:

    Name:

    Title:

    Bureau:

    Why recommended:

APPENDIX B:
REPORTED LEARNING BARRIERS

Selected Examples from Interviews

ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

WHY LEARN-TO-DESIGN, NEED TO GET THE $$ OUT ISSUE
Many projects at AID are really focused on results and justification on funding for programs, but not so much in learning from past evaluations to inform future research and project designs. USAID should focus more on learning and not entirely on results and funding justifications.

NO TIME FOR LEARNING ISSUE
They have felt pressure operational political imperatives and deadlines to skip rigor of Impact Evaluation that DRG requires. Often bad practice in Impact Evaluations occur because of protocol of FSOs changing posts and wanting to rush a IE design before they ship off to their next post.

TOO MANY COPs
There are too many Communities of Practice (COPs) that people are members of. People have a limited amount of time and COPs, to be successful, have to be timely and relevant, or else people will forget about them.

MISSION (NOT) ACCOMPLISHED
Agency does not institutionalize lessons learned. Had to reinvent the reconstruction process in Iraq and Afghanistan without drawing upon any of the lessons learned from Vietnam or the Marshall Plan despite both being very similar.

TACIT INSTITUTIONAL KNOWLEDGE IS DISAPPEARING
Retirees take an entire career's worth of knowledge with them and do not share it with newer generation of officers. Often retirees are reluctant to engage in mentoring type programs because they go into consulting jobs after leaving the agency.

OUTREACH

LACK OF INFORMATION SHARING BETWEEN MISSIONS & HQ
Missions do not often report out on the progress of their programs. Sometimes it happens by chance, but a streamlined process should be created.

NEED TO CREATE SUSTAINABILITY PLANS

Sustainability plans should be created, along with local partners, on the first day of the program/project.

DLI LEARNING FOR NAUGHT?

The DLI program created a vast infrastructure for sharing standard knowledge, how are we capturing the lessons learned from that process and ensuring those practices are maintained for new employees to come?

APPENDIX C: REPORTED ASPIRATIONS

Selected Examples from Interviews

ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

ALLOCATE RESOURCES BY LEARNING AND RESULTS

We can't repeat mistakes of the past, like assuming that supervisors and senior leaders are interested in allowing staff to do what's in their staffs' best interests, e.g. learning. We must formalize/ Mandate it by resourcing them with funds to train their staff as they think its valuable – conferences, school via competitive scholarships - and have office budgets linked to learning agendas and performance [of portfolio].

WHAT"S BEST - WHO LEARNS- MANDATE AND REWARD

Need quality control for learning: A frustration with KM is a lack of synthesis. Need an experts advisory panel to vet what's best knowledge for USAID to put out there. Then articulate that Learning is key, define it as an institutional mandate and priority – make sure that all supervisors understand and link helping staff learn to evaluation of staff's performance including the supervisor enabling it. Budgets need to be provided linked to performance!

WHERE ARE THE EXPERTS?

E3's expert locator system is a great model that works without requiring a lot of resources. They could be emulated in other offices as a way to connect people and establish an Agency-wide database of who does what.

RECOGNIZE AND INCENTIVIZE

Encourage people to share knowledge frequently and consistently through small awards and recognition. Doesn't need to be monetary, but people like to be recognized for their contributions.

OUTREACH

WHO'S WORKING ON WHAT WHERE

We don't even know who is doing what within our own Bureaus, much less outside of our Bureaus which could help us. USAID can really benefit from a central portal for listing all internal events and learning opportunities akin to LinkTank (listing of Thinktank meetings/ discussions) which would connect our silos. We can get an e-intern to sift through, compile and package posting by categories, starting with brown-bags.

ASK THE WORLD

We need to more closely collaborate with implementing partners who use internal Facebook portal to

communicate together. These organizations also have a Director of Learning who oversees and facilitates communicating experiential knowledge… They post questions on Facebook, and answers move around globe as folks answer on their time zone.

DO WE HAVE ALL THE ANSWERS?
What are the state-of-the-art examples of improved learning from other large organizations, both public and private? We should be looking at other organization's similar endeavors to improve learning.

LEARNING FROM OURSELVES
There is a disconnect whereby HQ does not learn from the tacit knowledge of missions, especially FSNs. USAID should invest in having more rotations between DC and missions for FSNs, civil and FSOs.

MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR TRAINING
Need to give officers more chances to participate in training, both online and in person. Training should have an interactive format through which lessons learned from the field/missions could be shared.

PRINCIPLES & STRATEGIES FOR LEARNING

OUR LEARNING SHAPES WHOLE INDUSTRIES
What we need are time and funding for staff training and learning including learning from retrospective analysis. One such three-country African study of 30 years' USAID-funded biodiversity work led to a seminal paper "Nature Wealth and Power" which has shaped Natural Resource Management-as-an-industry's work for three decades.

MAKE LEARNING LOCAL
USAID funded an African regional organization, CILSS, to do retrospective learning/ stocktaking on spontaneous scaling up of agroforestry in Niger and water harvesting in Burkina Faso. USAID staff commissioned Nigeriens as the researchers, believing that the learners need to be country-nationals; having host country and regional experts to go out rather than U.S. consultants to take stock and share impacts' improved proof of concept and making the case sustainably in-country.

MOVE US AS AN ARMY
We can deploy KM staff as an internal force from Bureau to Bureau, cross-pollinating best practices, helping where it is needed most at any time. They can also develop KM training plan with potential tools and train on tools e.g., blogs, LinkedIn, Facebook etc., to scale up.

APPENDIX D:
COMPLETE LIST OF HEADLINES

ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

- **Better to succeed at few than fail at many**
  - Teams should avoid setting too many goals—focus on what they can realistically accomplish
- **Chief Information Office (CIO) blocks learning**
  - No flash drives
  - Firewalls
  - Format requirements (e.g. multiple blogs)
- **Learning takes place when experimentation is in your face**
  - A common element of successful learning environments is a culture of experimentation, promoted by leadership
- **All natural, 100% organic**
  - Ultimate goal should be that knowledge sharing happens naturally and isn't mandated
- **Learning for the sake of learning**
  - Create a culture in which people want to learn and have opportunities to do so—don't force people to learn
- **It's the environment, stupid!**
  - Need a strong culture of learning to be successful—can't enforce learning for the sake of it
- **Local man sets learning agenda, wins IE world record**
  - DRG & FTF have established learning agendas to guide/steer all IEs towards answering pre-determined key questions
- **Supply-side + demand-side = success**
  - HQ DC and mission driven demand for youth cross cutting led to new policy
- **Learning agendas take form**
  - Have found learning agendas take forms on multiple levels: project, office, etc.
- **Cool things are happening!**
  - DCHA CVE
  - GH & E3 trainings
  - Africa systematic learning/ knowledge sharing
  - MCIO apps and automation
- **Learning is political**

- o Emphasis on technical practice strengthens technical experts (GS) vs. generalists (FS/program officers)
- **How do you define practice area?**
- **Huh? Learning via self-evaluation?**
  - o Very few evaluate their own work/learning/impact
  - o Culture of evaluations informing new design is dead but getting rejuvenated
- **Tell me why**
  - o Showing concrete examples of why something is useful is the best way to get people to adopt it
- **Staff dedicated to pushing learning is priceless**
  - o Example of DG Fellows
- **USAID needs military doctrine**
  - o Train staff, feed lessons back to learning doctrine

HR Subset

- **Celebrate me!**
  - o HR doesn't track or celebrate my KS or learning
  - o Supportive superiors help
- **But why can't I...**
  - o ...attend conferences?
  - o ...be interviewed?
  - o ...do a technical TDY?
  - o ...get additional resources to learn from partners?
  - o ...get training?
- **Recognize, reward, respect collaboration**
  - o If senior leadership encourages and rewards collaboration there will be more incentive for staff to share knowledge

KNOWLEDGE CYCLE

- **Conveying information ≠ true learning**
  - o Training needs to bring a spirit of engagement and discovery
- **Creating overtakes organizing of knowledge**
  - o USAID is better at creating knowledge and creates a lot, but organizing and making it useful is lagging
- **Reflection leads to better tracking**
  - o How can reflection be built into offices more systematically? FFD anniversary planning led to reflection and better progress tracking
- **Where oh where? Where do all the findings go?**
  - o Where have the knowledge and data gone? Little retention, haphazard sharing from projects and evaluations

- USAID doesn't usually have time/resources to feed findings back into guidance or conduct follow-up studies

- **Internal learning takes a back seat**
  - USAID is better at sharing learning externally (e.g. COPs outside the firewall)
  - Internally, some bureaus don't share or are bad at sharing
  - Do not market within agency

- **It's still working, right?**
  - Creating sustainability components for programs on day one helps with continuous learning

- **Perfect the art of application**
  - USAID is better at sharing than synthesis and applying

- **Knowledge creation is a many splendored thing**
  - Tendency to see IE as best/only/preferred creation choice but there are others

- **Sharing is good, but how about doing something about it?**
  - USAID is good at sharing, but not applying best practices and lessons learned into policy and planning

- **Mission (not) accomplished!**
  - Agency bad at institutionalizing lessons learned (such as reconstruction approaches in Iraq and Afghanistan)

- **Trainings need clear link to career progression**
  - USAID University trainings are good, but unclear how they help me on a career path

- **Understanding process of development on the ground is key**

- **It's all about field training!**
  - PDMS offers regional trainings on demand

- **Get everyone on the same page**
  - E3/ED-CMM-OFDA all have on-boarding training designed to get staff on same page of technical knowledge and to some extent values

- **Learning catalyst**
  - TA/TDY to missions and back to HQ as conduits
  - People see them as "upgrading your knowledge"

- **Help country nationals learn**
  - Fund local/regional research organizations
  - Learn and tell us, not the opposite

ORGANIZATIONAL AND GENERATIONAL SILOS

- **Tell me more…**
  - Stove piping: few want to live there but many too overwhelmed to peer over except staff with cross-cutting issues by nature

- **You can't fix what you don't know**
  - Too much stove piping with bureaus and across agency

- **Who are you?**
  - Staff don't know who else in agency are working on similar things
- **USAID creates unlikely duo**
  - Need for cross-silo learning to include field
  - Need program involved with budget people/interdisciplinary
  - Learning comes from missions – must connect with them
- **Got legacy?**
  - "Legacy" may be a useful concept to inspire sharing of tacit knowledge but may reinforce personal rather than group contribution
- **Millennium+ generation**
  - 800 DLIs: how do they learn/share differently?
  - Any interest in sharing learning from retirees?
  - How to get experience from new staff?
  - Different generations don't share
- **Don't be afraid, get out front**
  - SILK needs to be well marketed and regular outreach is critical
- **Younger generation of USAID staff expect learning**
  - We have a primed audience—make use of it!

COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

- **Think big!**
  - USAID has the opportunity to influence the learning agenda of the entire industry but can't be insular
  - Have to get involved with external events such as conferences
- **External praise skyrockets**
  - Jointly created, external platforms enjoyed by all
  - External COP website has 20,000 visitors/month
  - Support for widely used indices
- **In their language and meet their needs**
  - FSNs need it in French, Spanish, etc, as do host country government partners

Partners subset

- **The power of partners**
  - Don't forget about implementing partners – they are the ones on the ground in-country
- **Million dollar question**
  - How do we incorporate learning with partners? This was identified as a challenge for the future
- **Freedom of expression**
  - Internet enables sharing that helps multitudes including national governments, citizens, non-USG or within USG

- o   Democracy of information
- **Partners are our friends**
  - o   NRM collaboration on ABCG COP and Frame are really successful
  - o   GH huge success with WHO and UNFPA
  - o   Collaboration and PVO implementation

STAFFING

- **HR: short for 'hindering requests'**
  - o   HR seems to be a barrier to hiring local technical expertise at USAID (mandates for desk space – office budget for space)
  - o   Work around this by relying more on partners (e.g. FANTA)
- **Interns found on mars!**
  - o   Many offices want interns and identify them as critical tools for operationalizing learning but not all can find them
- **AAAS Fellows identified in local learning spree**
  - o   AAAS Fellows are common elements of successful or prioritized learning
- **FSNs ticket to improved learning?**
  - o   Several interviewees wanted more mechanisms for bringing FSNs to DC or for allowing them to do TDYs to other missions
- **Think outside USAID**
  - o   AAAS Fellows
  - o   PSCs
  - o   Consultants
  - o   Contractors
- **Hire me some KM/KS!**
  - o   Technical folks need help sharing – rely on consultants and interns to analyze and share given time constraints
  - o   Many requested more staff help

SYSTEMS

- **Technology and knowledge sharing – how to do?**
  - o   Excited wariness of using social media and even basic webinars
  - o   Not all USAID systems are user friendly (e.g. COP technical barriers outside of building)
  - o   Basic KM and technical knowledge lacking
- **Another tool?**
  - o   Knowledge sharing and learning has to be more than just another tool
- **Quality control/curation**
  - o   Need dictator to pick system (e.g. 1 blog-creation system)
  - o   Need experts groups to curate what knowledge is important
  - o   Must vet and prioritize not just tag but needs to be part of culture

- **Another COP in the wall**
  - One more online place to go to won't work without the right messaging and no in-person component
  - People are too busy and not recognized for collaborating so don't
- **Two newsletters passing in the night**
  - Communications specialists working with missions don't always find out information from other missions
  - Knowledge sharing is ad hoc
- **At your service**
  - The DEC is a "great resource" (if someone does all of the research for you)

Simplify Technology subset

- **Make it easy**
  - Learning platforms should be effortless to access and use
  - Don't make people register with a new ID and password
- **Put it in 1 place!**
  - Centralize learning in 1 portal
  - Make knowledge appear on desktop/customized
- **Sharing ≠ DEC**
  - Data is hard to find so learning doesn't really occur
  - People don't want another DEC-like system
- **Automate**
  - Better systems – only electronic
  - Not hidden in shared drives or on email
  - It limits who can learn from it if post in blog accessible to the world
- **Get a record of it**
  - So much knowledge is being lost
  - Switching from email communication to an online collaborative space around a program would create a legacy of documents and correspondence
- **More does not mean better**
  - Need streamlined and strategic
- **Stop reinventing the wheel**
  - Important to have good solid processes and SOPs in place – need to be more streamlined and efficient
- **Dueling systems**
  - Offices create duplicate systems because USAID systems and libraries are "broken"
  - Systems are overlapping
  - Use knowledge sharing platforms
- **Keep it simple, stupid**

- People won't share unless you make it easy

PRINCIPLES AND STRATEGIES FOR LEARNING

- **Resolve two issues with one stone…**
  - Finding a way to correct an issue in one country and sharing the lesson elsewhere means it could resolve the same issue in another country (e.g. partner works across other countries and learns a new way of doing something at one and shares within)
- **What's your goal?**
  - Concrete goals should be in place to ensure an effective learning system
- **Knowledge systems' chicken and egg problem**
  - People won't use them if they aren't useful but they aren't useful if people don't use them
- **Know your strengths**
  - Build on existing systems like "expert locator" to identify areas of expertise
- **If you build the system, they won't always come**
  - People are skeptical of new systems
  - Focus should be on making them streamlined and strategic
- **The great connector**
  - Instead of solving all problems, HR should adopt systems that help people find what exists

PERSONAL CONNECTIONS

- **It's all about who you know**
  - Knowledge sharing inside USAID and with other donors is completely dependent on personal relationships
- **No substitute for the real thing**
  - 1-on-1 learning and particularly TDYs are how we do most learning
- **Don't underestimate the power of the water cooler**
  - The physical and virtual environment must support organic sharing
- **Face time over Facebook**
  - In-person contact more effective than virtual
- **Traffic goes both ways!**
  - USAID needs to improve knowledge pulling from missions
- **Need the personal connection**
  - Importance of SOTA conference
  - TDYs to understand context
  - Share knowledge from TDYs to DC
- **Have a SOTA to satisfy your thirst for learning**
  - GH-AFR identified SOTAs as most popular tool for learning with missions, keeping up to date with technical knowledge

- **E-learning: don't leave home without it**
  - E-learning being utilized by numerous offices to enhance or replace face to face learning
  - It offers opportunities for new audiences
  - But has limits

KNOWLEDGE PYRAMID

- **All aboard?**
  - On-boarding training highly fractured
  - No common training to set values or nuts and bolts of how to get things done
  - Identified as weakest point of knowledge pyramid
- **Will USAID's core values please stand up?**
  - Absence or hard to find core values identified as a priority for standard knowledge
- **Standard, even core, knowledge is dead**
  - Few have a grasp of development practice areas, a handful (GH, E3, BFS) train staff on standard and core knowledge
  - Too often the focus is only on what is funded
- **M&E most interested in emergent knowledge**

MISSION SHARING (PHASE 1 & 2)

- **Missing middle**
  - Desk officers as conduits of information to/from missions and relationships to technical office regional teams
- **Mission to help missions**
  - Whether they like it or not, missions rely on DC since they don't have the time or technical expertise
  - Need to connect better
  - What level of integration?
- **Technical knowledge lives where?**
  - Regions have their own technical staff – sometimes aligned with pillars, sometimes not
  - Sometimes they fight over resources
  - Pillars have own geographic staff and focus

INCENTIVES AND TIME

- **New incentives at USAID**
  - Organizing learning will streamline processes and that in itself is a huge incentive
  - Incentives should include self-satisfaction and being better equipped
- **It has to help me**
  - If knowledge and learning don't help them save time or do their work better, there is little bandwidth
  - Collaboration can't be without goals

- **Give me a problem to latch on to**
  - Meet people's needs!
  - Solve real problems
- **What's the point?**
  - People join COPs not for the sake of collaboration but because it helps them with something
- **What have you done for me lately?**
  - A COP needs to make staff's life easier
  - Participation will only be sustainable if the outcomes help people do their jobs
- **It's the incentives, stupid**
  - Learning is long term but rewards are short term
  - Leadership as incentive
- **Burning platform forces USAID to learn**
  - Catalyst for learning: businesses can't go on as usual- changes must happen – learning is the way forward
- **Incentives drive innovation**
  - People need a reason to do things differently and be recognized
- **What's in it for me?**
  - Incentivize learning
- **Show me the opportunity!**
  - Learning that is connected to livelihoods (career growth) draws in and keeps people connected and continually sharing
- **Perception is key**
  - Coordination between offices (FFP and BFS) can be hindered due to perceptions that they don't have similar indicators, challenges, etc., around food security
  - Need help making connections
- **I'm late, so late, so tired**
  - Over 50% of interviewees mentioned lack of time to learn
  - People are overwhelmed by bureaucracy and meetings
  - "Learning is a luxury"
- **Time keeps on ticking**
  - We often have to cut corners on learning because we don't have the time
- **And we are out of time**
  - No time to learn, to interact, to reflect
  - Everyone is on information overload
- **OTI FedEx days**
  - Staff can do whatever they want for one day
  - What were the lessons learned?
- **A time to reflect**

- o OAPA has "reading days" and Sharepoint with articles that staff come together to discuss
- **Make Time**
  - o Giving people time for experimentation can lead to innovation (example of Google, where 10% of employee time is dedicated to pet projects and innovation has emerged, such as Gmail)

PILOTING MODELS OF LEARNING

- **Army of KMers**
  - o Agile redeploy of KM staff almost like DART team?
  - o CIO staff everywhere
- **Learning as a way to overcome the development/humanitarian divide**
- **How to use COPs**
  - o Standard format for all USAID COPs
  - o Leadership tells staff to spend half-hour each day engaging with COPs
  - o Offices compete/judged on level of engagement
- **What is a COP?**
  - o People use these platforms, but not everyone familiar with the terminology
- **SILK composition**
  - o Be cognizant of generational gap
  - o Be aware of dominant personalities with specific vision (suggest "red team" training)

SENIOR MANAGEMENT SUPPORT/CELEBRATION

- **Op-ed: How to tell our leaders they can do better**
  - o Many messages for importance of leadership, also suggestions
  - o Including acknowledgement that many leaders not management experts but technical experts
- **We need backup**
  - o Senior leadership to embrace SILK to be part of culture
- **Give me the green light**
  - o Senior leadership support (not mandated)
  - o Celebration is key to getting learning and knowledge sharing going, from kudos to money, from (HR) time to open doors from missions to HQ
- **Top buy-in reduces bottom failures**
  - o Management buy-in is critical to success
  - o Leaders need to openly encourage it
- **Getting serious buy-in from senior leadership**
  - o Senior management buy-in makes a huge difference
- **Incentive**
  - o If my boss uses it so will I

- New tools or processes will be adopted if leadership uses them
- **Leaders say "go!"**
    - Senior management must mandate and highlight
    - Learning = policy
- **Management learning champions**
    - Promote those who excel at learning
    - Senior leaders need to spotlight learning
- **Supervisors, let them learn**
    - Put enabling learning in supervisors' POR and give them money and evaluate them on it

PPL ROLE

- **PPL grabs torch**
    - Look to PPL for learning leadership
- **Learning wins gold**
    - Our assumption that USAID staff want to learn and share learning practices validated
- **Kudos to PPL**
    - Staff seem pleased that PPL is working on this initiative but they recognize that it is a big task
- **Get the word out**
    - Need PPL/bureau leaders to reinforce importance of learning
- **Go tell it on the mountain**
    - USAID has many successes but doesn't share them well: lets other agencies "beat them up" when it is just a matter of sharing success better

APPENDIX E:
MODEL LEARNING PRACTICES ALREADY HAPPENING

ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR THE LEARNING CYCLE

- **Mission-driven and technical teams at HQ's demand plus Youth COP led to agency's new Youth Policy**
- **GH mini university is an annual conference with 70 different sessions** that highlights evidence-based best practices
- **Gender 101 and 102 courses** are organized around the program cycle and are r**equired for all staff**
- **GH's PDMS e-learning site offers PHUN** (fundamentals), which every health officer takes to **establish fundamental knowledge** across sub-sectors.
- **GH's PDMS** provides a wide range of activities in the areas of **training** (**orientation,** increasing **technical knowledge**, management & leadership, personal effectiveness, team effectiveness). GH's PDMS also have a **mentor program just for health**, an extensive **e-Learning curriculum** linked directly to the LMS, **SOTAs** at the regional missions, **exchanges/fellowships for FSOs, field based training on demand**, health managers **workshops** to focus on management training, and support for team **retreats**.
- **E3** does **trainings** based on how they feel their **technical areas should be integrated in practice, Cost-Benefit Analysis for** example
- **BFS trains people on good agricultural practices** through its core course and also give **seminars/webinars to share with partners**
- **Asia/ME Regional trainings** to **help understand/link people with development practice and field needs**. Try not to isolate staff in research only.

COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

- **External Partners in KM with USAID**: **ABCG** group, **FRAMEweb**, **K4Health** have many resources including vibrant Communities of Practice
- **E3/DCA uses social media and crowd-sourcing** to take data from various sources and posted online, **using volunteers to clean up data**
- **GH has links to research and organizations** on its site in addition to a handbook that has **standard clinical training materials** on family planning, **designed with WHO and UNFPA**

- **BFS/Agrilinks** have many **knowledge sharing and learning events** and had **over 1,000 people participated last year in KDMD webinars and events**, across USAID/W and Mission, Partners, Host Countries, and Researchers/ Universities
- **GH** coordinated with **HR** and **Mission based health officers** to develop a **mentoring system to foster institutional learning**
- Examples of **inter-sectoral collaboration**: Food Animal Systems Team (**FAST) work across agency (OFDA, E3, AFR**), so does **Climate Smart Agricultural Working Group**
- **AFR (combined with DG)** has counterterrorism money that is used to do different **workshops including State Dept and implementing partners** where they present analytical guides, new policies, programming examples, etc
- **E3/MPEP funded and facilitated its implementing partners to learn and share,** through interactive opportunities on the **Microlinks** website and via innovative assistance models such as **learning networks**

STAFFING

- **AAAS and Global Health Fellows** programs have **learning** built **in**to their hiring **contracts** and have a training advantage over direct hires
- **ME/TS has an e-internship program** that connects interns to DC virtually, increasing flexibility and reducing costs
- **DCHA uses Democracy Fellows program** to fill the gap of junior and mid-level officers
- **Policy Program and Management**: The **Fellows Program** is effective in advancing knowledge in terms of their shared learning, values and technical skills
- **E3, BFS** and others have hired **knowledge management advisors**

SYSTEMS

- **AFR/SD/CPG** created a **Strategic Learning Project Appraisal Document (PAD)** to institutionalize learning in their division with resources **to push learning agenda**
- **M/CIO** Making channels of communications user friendly. For example **AIDMAP**, **developing Mission Trackers** that can be translated into different languages to help users see a mission profile including the budget and what is left to be expended, putting this into iPhone apps, etc.

KNOWLEDGE PYRAMID – WHAT IS STANDARD, CORE AND EMERGENT LEARNING

- **DCHA/DRG** is **integrating learning into the organizational structure** of the office:
  - Has **good internal information sharing systems**
  - Works with **missions to create a coordinated impact evaluation agenda**
  - **Pairs analysts with academic experts**
- Three **DCHA/OTI mechanisms** support learning:
  - **OTI multi-year learning transformation** highlights the need to develop a learning strategy including consistently doing **strategy sessions**

- o **Program performance reviews** – this involves a **peer review** process; includes OTI from another country; access assumptions and findings, and what they are learning; the outside OTI person makes recommendations
- o **Management reviews** – this involves a peer review process done as needed
- **AFR** has organized a **Learning Plan** including Working Groups on:
  - o **KM analytic agenda**
  - o **Cross-sectoral**
  - o **Inventory** to see what analytics are in progress
  - o **Thought Leadership** working group
- **E&E's Strategic Planning Analysis Division:**
  - o **Justifies programming with evidence**
  - o Uses **Country Monitoring Progress tool**
  - o Has **NGO sustainability index**
- **FTF** reviewed all mission strategies and identified (**ID**) the most **common theories of change** and related themes, which they use to **guide their impact evaluation agendas**
- **DCHA/FFP Food Aid Security Assessment (FASA)** – a system to **assess the quality of programming** (which activities had long-term impact, context in specific countries and how they can be replicated, etc.). They **learn from programs** they have done to figure out **how to have better impact** the communities they serve.
- **EGAT senior management allowed scientist permission to study** cocoa tree disease in the 1990s, **which led to a partnership with private industry and a transformation of the cocoa economy**
- **30-year retrospective research by EGAT/NRM on biodiversity of USAID-funded projects** led to the Nature-Wealth-Power paradigm and **influenced the NRM community**
- **E3/ED** has developed **three specific educational development goals in their strategy**, which specifically has learning built in
- **AFR** organized a **development practice areas guide** that provides **guidance to missions on different interventions**
- **GH created EPIC (Evaluation Process Improvement Committee)**, which is a **peer review committee for evaluations** coming out of GH, but also a KM leader for evaluation resources that has its own websites

MISSION SHARING

- State of the Art (**SOTA) conferences** are some of the best learning tools **for mission staff.**
- Many bureaus and offices **bring FSNs to DC** to share their knowledge and expertise
- **2012 Program Officers Conference** brought many **FSO staff to DC** for training
- **BFS** has **Global Learning Exchanges and Evaluation (GLEE)** on topics such as Agriculture, Gender, Youth. They also have a very strong communications aspect that makes it effective. (Global Learning Exchanges: a mission saying this is what we're doing; this is why we're doing it this way, really what the causal pathway is at this point and then discuss)

INCENTIVES AND TIME

- **OAPA has [paid] "reading days"**
- **Graduate-level** (and other) **interns** help **take on research projects** and free up valuable staff time

PILOTING MODELS OF LEARNING

- There is a **widespread hunger to learn, collaborate, and share knowledge** among the knowledge champions interviewed – **many interested in joining SILK (Sharing Insights, Learning and Knowledge) Community of Practice being launched 10/12.**
- **PPL/LER** management asked **staff** to suggest how they would like to **organize themselves** – and implemented the best integrated suggestions

APPENDIX F:
USAID COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

This resource can be found online and is updated periodically. To access this document, please visit
www.usaidlearninglab.org/library