

Rapid Feedback MERL

Consortium Education Experience

Consortium members

Results for Development Institute (R4D)

Consortium lead

Mathematica Policy Research

Technical design lead

Abt Associates

Notre Dame Initiative for Global Development (NDIGD)

Results for Development Institute (R4D)

Whether trying to pilot a new model at small scale, adapt and scale up an existing approach, or conduct a rigorous impact evaluation, R4D's Evaluation and Learning Practice – the Learning Lab – focuses on maximizing practitioner learning, decision-making, and development impact. We work closely with implementers to iteratively design, test, and evaluate programs using a variety of methods including design thinking, structured experimentation, and rigorous quantitative and qualitative research methods. R4D has partnered with USAID as the Consortium lead on a four-year project: Rapid Feedback Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, and Learning (MERL), which will work with up to 15 USAID-funded programs to pilot similar innovative methods to improve program impact. R4D's Learning Lab is also partnering with Mobile Reading to Children (MR2C) in India to test ways to encourage reading using a mobile phone application. In Sierra Leone, R4D is engaging with Rising Academy Network (RAN) to experiment with a peer-to-peer remedial tutoring program to accelerate learning progress among their struggling readers. R4D has also refined a rapid assessment methodology and implemented it with Omega Schools in Ghana and Beautiful Tree Trust Schools in India, two innovative education models seeking feedback to improve their ongoing operations. In 2015, R4D completed an in-depth program evaluation of a multi-country effort to use citizen-led assessment to measure student learning outcomes: ASER in India and Pakistan, Uwezo in East Africa, Beekunko in Mali, and Jángandoo in Senegal.

In addition to our evaluation and learning work, R4D features an Education practice concentrated largely on levers for change in areas with high potential for impact: innovations, out-of-school children, skills for employability, financing, and early childhood. R4D runs the Center for Education Innovations (CEI) and the Center for Health Market Innovations (CHMI), publicly-available global databases of more than 2,000 innovative health and education models in developing countries. The development of these global networks means that R4D has not only engaged with hundreds of implementers and worked to understand the key challenges they face in their operations, but also built relationships with many organizations eager to receive support to increase their capacity and learn how to improve their impact through low-cost, structured learning and evaluation activities.

Mathematica Policy Research

Mathematica has proven experience in designing and implementing rigorous evaluations of educational interventions around the world. Mathematica has designed and conducted rigorous experimental and quasi-experimental impact evaluations of a broad range of education programs, including early childhood, primary, secondary, and post-secondary education, in more than 25 countries. Mathematica also has an extensive portfolio of education research in the United States. These evaluations involved interventions such as teacher training, teacher compensation, school strengthening, school infrastructure, institutional reform, children’s school readiness, quality of preschool classrooms, secondary education programs, technical and vocational educational training, and international and national assessments. The impact evaluations Mathematica have been involved with have included randomized controlled trial (RCT), regression discontinuity, matched comparison, and time-series designs, and are often complemented by qualitative studies. Throughout the developing world—in Latin America, Northern and sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and Asia—our researchers have evaluated programs by tracking students’ learning growth using a wide range of test instruments, including adaptations of the Early Grade Reading and Math Assessments (EGRA and EGMA), through classroom observation, administering rubric rating of teachers’ classroom practices, and through longitudinal surveys. We have conducted many rigorous evaluations of education programs for USAID, including RCTs involving early literacy interventions in El Salvador, Guatemala Honduras, Nicaragua, and Peru as well as school dropout prevention programs in Cambodia, India, Timor Leste and Tajikistan, and a quasi-experimental evaluation of early grade reading and math interventions in Jordan.

Abt Associates

Consistently ranked as one of the top 20 global research firms and top 40 development innovators, Abt Associates is also a leading education research firm with 50 years of experience evaluating education programs. This includes research and evaluation of early childhood education program; K-12; and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) programs. Abt's assessments of the effectiveness of national and local programs, including programs that strengthen children's numeracy and literacy skills, are aimed at preparing children to succeed in school. For example, with the University of Iowa, Abt conducted the first large-scale study of Breakthrough to Literacy, an early language and literacy curriculum. Partnering with Child Trends, Abt co-leads the National Research Center on Hispanic Children and Families, which generates new research to inform policies and programs to better serve Hispanic children and families. Abt has also been at the forefront of education research related to the effectiveness of kindergarten and elementary school curricula; literacy, mentoring and mathematics programs; and programs to expand learning time and prepare students for college and careers. Currently, Abt is working on behalf of the U.S. Department of Education, investigating the implementation and impacts of targeted strategies to promote college access among high school students participating in two federal college access initiatives, the Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Program (GEAR UP), and the Upward Bound program. Next, our work in STEM includes a recent evaluation of the effectiveness of the National Science Foundation's Partnerships in International Research and Education (PIRE) program in promoting collaboration between U.S. scientists and engineers and their international peers. Turning our attention to instructors, we are examining the Robert Noyce Teacher Scholarship Program's impact on recruiting, preparing and supporting new teachers in the STEM fields. In addition to our domestic education evaluation experience, we also have staff who have led international research and evaluation projects that included Early Grade Reading Assessments. Further, our Director for the Center for International Evaluation served as the lead trainer for a series of educational evaluation trainings for USAID education officers at Missions around the world.

Notre Dame Initiative for Global Development (NDIGD)

NDIGD has implemented education evaluations using literacy assessments in Haiti, Honduras, and Benin. For all three evaluations, NDIGD experts worked in partnerships with national government agencies or NGO's who adapted the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) to the country context. NDIGD staff programmed tablets to collect data from the EGRA, relevant questionnaires, and classroom observation tools in real-time. Currently, NDIGD is providing support to USAID's Ann Ale project in Haiti, implemented by FHi360. NDIGD is providing technical support in real-time monitoring using EGRA and classroom observation tools. NDIGD staff also implemented an RCT to evaluate an intervention in Uganda focused on hard-to-measure topics such as school culture and corporal punishment in schools. For projects such as these, NDIGD collaborates with Notre Dame's Institute for Educational Initiatives (IEI) and Center for Research Computing (CRC).