



**Knowledge-Driven Microenterprise Development (KDMD)**

**Contract No. EEM-C-00-08-00004-00**

## **Learning and Impact Report**

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## ACRONYMS

|                          |  |                |  |
|--------------------------|--|----------------|--|
| <b>AMAP</b>              | Accelerated Microenterprise Advancement Project  | <b>HSS</b>     | Health Strengthening Systems                         |
| <b>APLU</b>              | Association of Public Land Grant Universities  | <b>IDEA</b>    | USAID Office of Innovation and Development Alliances |
| <b>ARLI</b>              | Assessment Report for Learning and Impact  | <b>IFPRI</b>   | International Food Policy Research Institute         |
| <b>ATAI</b>              | Agricultural Technology Adoption Initiative  | <b>IT</b>      | Information Technology                               |
| <b>BEE</b>               | Business Enabling Environment  | <b>K&amp;L</b> | Knowledge & Learning                                 |
| <b>BFS</b>               | USAID Bureau for Food Security   | <b>KDID</b>    | Knowledge-Driven International Development Portal    |
| <b>CDCS</b>              | Country Development Cooperation Strategy   | <b>KDMD</b>    | Knowledge-Driven Microenterprise Development Project |
| <b>CI</b>                | Conservation International   | <b>KM</b>      | Knowledge Management                                 |
| <b>CLA</b>               | Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting  | <b>KM4Dev</b>  | Knowledge Management for Development                 |
| <b>CoP</b>               | Community of Practice  | <b>KMIC</b>    | Knowledge Management Impact Challenge                |
| <b>COTR</b>              | Contracting Officer's Technical Representative   | <b>LER</b>     | Learning, Evaluation, and Research                   |
| <b>CRSP</b>              | Collaborative Research Support Program   | <b>LMS</b>     | Learning Management System                           |
| <b>DG</b>                | Democracy and Governance   | <b>LOE</b>     | Level of Effort                                      |
| <b>DLI</b>               | Development Leadership Initiative  | <b>M&amp;E</b> | Monitoring & Evaluation                              |
| <b>E&amp;E</b>           | Europe & Eurasia   | <b>MaFI</b>    | Market Facilitation Initiative                       |
| <b>EG</b>                | Economic Growth  | <b>MCH</b>     | Maternal and Child Health                            |
| <b>EGAT</b>              | USAID Economic Growth, Agriculture & Trade Bureau  | <b>MD</b>      | Microenterprise Development                          |
| <b>EGLC</b>              | Economic Growth Learning Center  | <b>MFS</b>     | Mobile Financial Services                            |
| <b>EIG</b>               | Evaluation Interest Group  | <b>MSU</b>     | Michigan State University                            |
| <b>EPS</b>               | Emerging Payment Systems   | <b>NRM</b>     | Natural Resources Management                         |
| <b>FIELD-Support LWA</b> | Financial Integration, Economic Leveraging, Broad-Based Dissemination and Support Leader with Associates Award | <b>PPL</b>     | USAID Bureau of Policy, Planning, and Learning       |
| <b>FS/Ag</b>             | Food Security/Agriculture  | <b>SEEP</b>    | Small Enterprise Education and Promotion             |
| <b>FSN</b>               | Foreign Service National   | <b>SME</b>     | Small and Medium Enterprise                          |
| <b>FTF</b>               | Feed the Future  | <b>SPP</b>     | USAID Office of Strategic and Program Planning       |
| <b>GA</b>                | Google Analytics   | <b>ST</b>      | Social Transitions                                   |
| <b>GLS</b>               | Global Learning Systems  | <b>USDA</b>    | United States Department of Agriculture              |
| <b>GROOVE</b>            | Growing Organization Value Chain Excellence Learning Network   | <b>VC</b>      | Value Chain  |
| <b>GUC</b>               | Grants Under Contract  | <b>WEAI</b>    | Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index             |

## Executive Summary

This *Learning and Impact Report* presents the activities of the different programs of the KDMD project for the period of May 2011 to May 2012. The report focuses on 1) the lessons learned in the process of planning and implementing activities, 2) how the KDMD team applied such insights, and 3) the impacts that resulted from these changes over time.

For the Microenterprise Development (MD) seminar series, the Food Security/Agriculture (FS/Ag) Program trainings, and the Economic Growth (EG) Program trainings, the KDMD team used surveys and interviews to reach out to past participants to find out whether they used any of the techniques and materials shared in the events and trainings in their work. This report includes the survey and interview results in order to present the long-term outcomes of KDMD activities.

The MD Program continued its suite of seminar series and other events. Seminar content continued to receive high approval ratings from participants and the KDMD team started to include Google analytics to gauge the effectiveness of the project's use of social media tools for outreach. The GROOVE Learning Network expanded its collaborative learning activities and continued to yield very useful lessons in leveraging small grants through collaboration.

The Food Security/Agriculture Program continued to develop the Agrilinks platform, which consistently received positive user feedback. The program used social media and blogs to engage practitioners, increase the membership of Agrilinks, and promote its seminars and training courses. The primary lessons learned from the FS/Ag activities include using blogs and other tools to enhance participant experience in social media driven events and the judicious balance of technology use in trainings to ensure that it does not distract from participation in group work.

The Economic Growth (EG) Program continued to apply the lessons learned from previous course implementations to online and in-person training courses and provided ongoing support to the creation of a certification program. The lessons learned during this reporting period resulted in, among other things, the development of a Facilitator's Guide for course facilitators and day leads, revised course evaluations, and changes in the pre-course work requirements.

The Policy, Planning, and Learning (PPL) Program is a newer buy-in for the KDMD project that, due to the nature of the work of the PPL Bureau, conducts many one-time activities designed to support USAID's evolution as a learning organization. These one-time activities have generated a variety of lessons including the recognition that some activities aimed at technical issues may be more effective if organized at the regional level.

During the reporting period, the KDMD project also supported smaller programs such as the Europe and Eurasia Program and the Jamaica Program, both of which, due to the nature of the activities, yielded lessons primarily linked to logistics and planning.

This report follows a consistent organization as each section covers the activities and products undertaken by a single KDMD program during the May 2011-May 2012 reporting period. The first sub-section of each section introduces the activities and products for each program and includes background information on their purposes and objectives. The second sub-section presents the results of any survey or assessment that KDMD may have used to evaluate participant satisfaction, achievement of learning objectives, and so on. The following sub-section discusses the internal lessons that KDMD learned in the planning and implementation of the events and products and the consequent changes the programs may have made. Finally, this report discusses the long-term outcomes and impacts of each section. This final section relies in part on follow-up with participants and users of KDMD knowledge sharing endeavors to see how well they have been able to use and apply what they have learned. These sub-sections do not necessarily include every activity or product as not all activities had evaluations; some one-off activities may not

have generated applicable lessons, and long-term impacts may not have been apparent or measurable in each case.

## Portfolio Improvements

This report covers the impacts and lessons learned of KDMD programming according to buy-in or program, but there have been improvements at the portfolio level as well over the last year. These widespread changes in KDMD's communications, assessing & learning, and knowledge & learning practices have impact across all programs. This section will highlight some of these portfolio-wide improvements.

### A. Communications Portfolio

In the last year, the Communications Portfolio started promoting the use of social media throughout most project activities in order to:

- Increase visibility and build online presence
- Reach a broader audience
- Build relationships, engage with site users, and create a dialogue
- Create another venue to share knowledge
- Interact with users in the online spaces where they are comfortable
- Provide users with a reason to engage regularly
- Personalize KDMD
- Engage with partner organizations
- Fill functionality gaps (i.e. mobile availability)
- Encourage new users to participate in site activities

One of the most successful efforts of using social media to promote activities and products for the MD and FS/Ag Programs involved LinkedIn. KDMD determined that targeting users in pre-existing, topic-based groups would best fit its goal of promoting activities and knowledge products. By tapping into the existing groups, KDMD is reaching users that have already identified a specific interest and are therefore more likely to engage in activities pertaining to those interests. Traffic from LinkedIn to KDMD sites has steadily increased under this engagement strategy from an average of 61 visits per month in the last six months of 2011 to an average of 302 visits per month in the first five months of 2012 for Microlinks and from an average of 9 visits per month in the last three months of 2011 to an average of 39 visits per month in the first three months of 2012 for Agrilinks. KDMD has learned that the social media strategy for each program needs to be tailored specifically for that office's needs, capacity, and goals.

Social media also represented an important new addition to the seminar process during this reporting period. Engagement through blogging, Twitter, and Facebook provided participants the opportunity to post questions and continue conversations on Microlinks and Agrilinks.

As part of KDMD's knowledge approach, the Communications team creates content in a multitude of formats to accommodate the varied learning styles of KDMD's broad development audience. User feedback from various A&L activities has emphasized the influx of information and limited time to consume content. Based on success seen in the previous year, the KDMD project continued to ramp up efforts on multimedia and video production. KDMD videos provide users with a succinct and informative summary of technical content. In addition to the standard Greenroom Interview videos following seminars, in this past year the Food Security/Agriculture Program also developed the Video Note series to capture technical knowledge from food security and agriculture experts during visits to Washington, DC. Based on the high number of video views (14,755 views of the 163 videos on Microlinks YouTube channel from May 2011 to May 2012 and 2,569 views of the 27 videos on the Agrilinks YouTube channel from June 2011 to May 2012) and positive feedback, KDMD will continue these activities. The success of the videos reinforced the importance of producing knowledge products in a variety of formats.

KDMD has also learned the value of collaborating with conference organizers on social media. Over time, it became clear that most partners had limited social media knowledge and lacked an understanding

of how to promote and engage through social media before, during, and after the event. In what began as an informal venture, KDMD has since codified processes and procedures to maximize the outcomes for both KDMD and the conference organizer. KDMD developed an MOU template, clearly outlining the roles and responsibilities of each party, including those related to social media. Social media conference activities include:

- Development of conference hash tag
- Promotion of conference on social media accounts and KDMD websites prior to event
- Live-tweeting from event sessions
- Sharing best practices for highlighting social media activities on conference materials and signage
- Recording video interviews

KDMD has also developed a social media training package and worked with several partners to educate their staff on social media basics and helpful tools. By offering social media expertise, KDMD was often featured in conference materials, provided exhibition space, and included in conference communications. These activities have significantly strengthened partnerships and, as such, conference organizers continue to seek media partnerships with KDMD. KDMD learned to formalize social media engagement to showcase expertise and build relationships.

## **B. K&L Portfolio**

In February 2012, the KDMD project, led by the K&L Portfolio, migrated from Go-To-Meeting and Go-To-Webinar software to the Adobe Connect platform. This decision was made after piloting Adobe Connect for selected special events including webinars, trainings, and online discussions over the previous year. Adobe Connect offers many benefits compared to Go-To-Webinar including a customizable webinar space, polling capability for participants, increased interaction between webinar attendees and hosts, and sophisticated recording capability with interactive post-event products.

The KDMD project has also been able to bring in several remote presenters using Adobe Connect. For example, the project has facilitated remote presentations from London, Paris, California, North Carolina, and the Philippines. Ease of connection, combined with multiple ways to interact with both in-person and online attendees, allows increased presentation flexibility. Response to Adobe Connect has been positive, with participants commenting on webinar quality, increased interaction with other participants, and convenient access to relevant documents through the online room. KDMD has also used Adobe Connect to facilitate exploratory meetings around new project ideas with missions and USAID, which has proven very effective in helping remote participants share lessons learned around specific practices.

The K&L Portfolio continues to explore innovative applications of the Adobe Connect technology and platform to better serve clients and stakeholders.

## **C. A&L Portfolio**

During this reporting period, A&L promoted the idea of using interviews as a tool both to seek input on new initiatives and to give deeper context to evaluations of courses and seminars. Based on previous difficulties in obtaining comprehensive feedback on pilot activities from busy mission staff through online surveys, A&L suggested using targeted interviews. This method proved to be successful in soliciting rich input from select mission staff to inform the pilot IDEA/Mobile Solutions program as well as useful in garnering detailed feedback on missions' experiences with the CDCS process. The A&L team also used interview techniques to complement its evaluation efforts in Economic Growth (EG) and Food Security/Agriculture (FS/Ag) trainings, which led to a more nuanced appraisal of participant experiences than surveys alone.

Furthermore, the A&L team sought to improve its reporting and documentation methods over the course of this period with more extensive and better-organized course reports and activity assessments.

Previously, the A&L team primarily used table and chart presentation formats for course evaluation reporting. The team has updated to a document-style format that allows for further textual explanation and analysis. The team also added webpage analytics data to activity assessment reports and standardized the background and demographics data collected from participants. In order to capture internal lessons learned, A&L developed the Assessment Report for Learning and Impact (ARLI), which serves as a means for KDMD activity leads to reflect and document the positive, negative, and unexpected outcomes of an activity that does not receive a formal After Action Review. The ARLIs act as another mechanism for KDMD to consistently document the lessons learned that this Learning and Impact Report presents.

Finally, the A&L team deployed follow-up assessments targeting past participants in trainings and seminar series to evaluate the impact on participants' job performance several months after participating in the events. The A&L Portfolio utilized this approach for the first time to evaluate the EG Overview Course, which served as a learning experience as to how to improve the process for future follow-ups. For example, none of the 133 recipients replied to express interest in participating in an interview, so for future follow-ups A&L included a question in the survey inviting respondents to participate in an interview, which increased response rates. In addition, there was confusion in the responses to participants' work location (in DC or at a mission) and the following question about which mission participants worked in, which A&L clarified for subsequent follow-up evaluations. Developing the follow-up evaluation process has led to improvements to A&L's own evaluation methods, which ultimately has helped KDMD to understand the long-term outcomes and impacts of its activities that this report will outline.

## Microenterprise Development Program

KDMD has worked in microenterprise development since 2003 and the project's contract sits with the USAID Microenterprise Development (MD) office. The objectives of the MD Program include assisting with the accumulation of knowledge related to microenterprise development, encouraging knowledge flow by promoting collaboration and knowledge sharing across the microenterprise development industry, developing and building knowledge infrastructure, and implementing the Grants under Contract (GUC) mechanism. The MD Program work cuts across all KDMD project portfolios. In addition, the KDMD project works across the USAID/MD team portfolio, including collaborating with the FIELD-Support LWA, the SEEP Network, and others. The team also seeks to facilitate dialogue and collaboration with USAID's other microenterprise and microfinance partners.

During this reporting period, KDMD continued to facilitate the popular After Hours and Breakfast Seminars series, in addition to adding the new Diaspora and Emerging Payment Systems (EPS) events. The GROOVE Learning Network<sup>1</sup> expanded its collaborative learning activities, yielding excellent examples of what small, targeted grants and a commitment to knowledge sharing can achieve across organizations. The program also continued to conduct e-Consultations and Speakers Corners to connect practitioners around the world to share technical knowledge and case studies and generate new knowledge. Finally, the MD program continued to build off of its successful upgrade of the Microlinks website to improve user experience and increase KDMD's online reach.

### A. Synopsis of Activities and Products

#### GROOVE Learning Network

The KDMD team coordinated and facilitated a number of activities through the GROOVE Learning Network around the capacity building and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) tracks of the network's learning agenda. In addition, KDMD supported a new mentoring program started by one of the GROOVE member organizations with the goal of facilitating knowledge sharing and learning within its organization. This mentoring program, which was outside the original scope of the network, employed parallel non-linear approaches, including peer-to-peer mentoring, mentoring of new employees by development veterans, and mentoring of veterans by practitioners with particular knowledge or expertise. The fact that the four GROOVE member organizations collaborated to adopt and refine this outside program demonstrates the multiplier effects of the network. KDMD supported the following activities:

- GROOVE Check-in and Mentorship Kick-off workshop in Kigali, Rwanda
- Webinar: Mentor/Mentee Check-in #1
- Webinar: Mentor/Mentee Check-in #2
- Webinar: CARE-Ghana Mentee Presentation
- Webinar: CI-Cambodia Mentee Presentation
- e-Consultation/Webinar: "Integrating Experiential Knowledge and Staff Observation in Value Chain Project M&E"

As part of the project's learning agenda, KDMD conducted a retroactive baseline and an outcome evaluation for the GROOVE Learning Network in July 2011. Since the grant was in its third year and a baseline had not been undertaken at commencement, it was decided to gauge progress using a retroactive baseline, despite the limitations of such baselines. The baseline combined interviews and reviews of the first quarterly learning journals completed by each organization for the July-September 2009 period. The baseline intended to estimate the following attributes as they were at the beginning of the project:

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<sup>1</sup> The GROOVE Learning Network organization members are CARE, CHF, Conservation International (CI) and Practical Action.

- Grantees' knowledge of the value chain (VC) approach
- Capacity building methods, tools, and technologies adaptable to different contexts by staff
- Measures used to evaluate staff performance and professional development/training needs in implementing value chain programs in each grantee organization
- Practices and perceived needs that were used/existed in regard to M&E for VC development
- Changes to grantees priorities in 2011 in comparison to 2009

In September 2011, the GROOVE members, along with the support of KDMD's Knowledge & Learning team (K&L), coordinated an advisory team of select experts to develop a series of three technical briefs on M&E for Value Chain Development. As part of this effort, KDMD facilitated an e-Consultation to solicit expert feedback on the first brief, and supported GROOVE members in receiving subsequent feedback through the advisory team and the Market Facilitation Initiative (MaFI).

In March 2012, KDMD performed an outcome evaluation of the learning network, called the Culture of Learning survey. The purpose of this evaluation was to assess participant perception of the factors that both contributed to and detracted from the effective functioning of the learning network in terms of VC approaches in microenterprise development. To do so, KDMD created a survey that asked questions about the participants themselves and how they interacted with each other, their perception of success of the network, and how the network functioned.

### Seminars

KDMD implements a variety of seminar series in cooperation with the MD office to circulate knowledge and best practices related to microenterprise issues and to foster industry-wide sharing, connecting USAID practitioners, partner organizations, and academics around these issues. These seminars cover complementary topics in microenterprise development:

- The After Hours Seminar Series addresses credit, financial inclusion, business enabling environment (BEE), small and medium enterprise (SME) finance, and rural/agricultural finance
- The Breakfast Seminar Series covers value chains and sub-categories that include methodology, behavior change, poverty reduction, agriculture, and BEE
- The Diaspora Seminar Series addresses BEE, markets, remittances, and trade/tourism in the context of migrant and diaspora communities
- The Emerging Payment Systems (EPS) Seminar Series focuses on mobile financial services including information technology (IT) and legal/regulatory issues in mobile payment systems

The KDMD team implemented 31 seminars covering all series, including 10 After Hours, 9 Breakfast, 6 Diaspora, and 6 MFS/EPS Seminars. During this reporting period, MD seminars were well attended, both in-person and online, with many seminars attracting more than 100 participants. The following tables illustrate the attendance rate of each seminar series during this reporting period.<sup>2</sup>

| After Hours Seminars |           |   |                      |                    |       |
|----------------------|-----------|---|----------------------|--------------------|-------|
| Seminar              | Date      | Title   | In-person attendance | Webinar attendance | TOTAL |
| 52                   | 6/2/2011  | The State of Microfinance and Financial Inclusion: Thoughts from Industry Leaders | 54                   | 64                 | 118   |
| 53                   | 7/20/2011 | Microfinance Investment Transparency and Evaluation                               | 42                   | 57                 | 99    |
| 54                   | 8/25/2011 | Government Payments and Savings: A Last Mile Approach                             | 16                   | 28                 | 44    |

<sup>2</sup> The Mobile Financial Services (MFS) Seminar Series was rebranded as the Emerging Payments Systems (EPS) Seminar Series halfway through this reporting period.

| After Hours Seminars |            |  |                      |                    |       |
|----------------------|------------|--|----------------------|--------------------|-------|
| Seminar              | Date       | Title  | In-person attendance | Webinar attendance | TOTAL |
| 55                   | 9/1/2011   | Financial Inclusion for Youth: Reaching the Next Generation                                    | 37                   | 42                 | 79    |
| 56                   | 10/13/2011 | Linking Remittances Beyond Consumption with Housing Microfinance                               | 9                    | 33                 | 42    |
| 57                   | 11/3/2011  | Overview of Microfinance Markets and Investment Opportunities in Russia and China              | 11                   | 59                 | 70    |
| Debate               | 1/30/2012  | Debate: Moving Financial Inclusion Beyond Microfinance   | 64                   | 196                | 260   |
| 58                   | 2/16/2012  | Viewing Value Chain and Household Finance From a Demand Perspective                            | 17                   | 74                 | 91    |
| 59                   | 3/21/2012  | Lessons Learned From Sequenced, Integrated Strategies of Economic Strengthening of the Poorest | 25                   | 60                 | 85    |
| 60                   | 4/23/2012  | Money on the Move: Payments and Money Transfer Behavior of African Households                  | 31                   | 81                 | 112   |

Table 1: After Hours Seminar attendance

| Breakfast Seminars |            |  |                      |                    |       |
|--------------------|------------|--|----------------------|--------------------|-------|
| Seminar            | Date       | Title  | In-person attendance | Webinar attendance | TOTAL |
| 60                 | 6/15/2011  | Rising to the Sustainability Challenge in the Facilitation of Value Chain Development                            | 75                   | 65                 | 140   |
| 61                 | 7/28/2011  | Behavior Change Perspectives on Gender and Value Chain Development   | 55                   | 77                 | 132   |
| 62                 | 9/30/2011  | Tourism as a Sustainable Development Strategy: A Systemic Supply Chain Approach                                  | 38                   | 45                 | 83    |
| 63                 | 10/20/2011 | Formalization of the Warm Milk Channel in Kenya: A Study in Effective Facilitation                               | 20                   | 20                 | 40    |
| 64                 | 11/4/2011  | Understanding the Intangibles: Trust, Risk, Leadership, and Transparency in Value Chain Partnerships             | 31                   | 42                 | 73    |
| 65                 | 1/26/2012  | Emergence of Sustainability in a Complex System: Are Lessons From the Health Sector Applicable to Food Security? | 25                   | 33                 | 58    |
| 66                 | 2/23/2012  | Tools for Mending Weak and Fractured Value Chains  | 28                   | 55                 | 83    |
| 67                 | 3/22/2012  | Market Aggregation: Facilitating “Game Changing” Opportunities in Ukraine  | 28                   | 22                 | 50    |
| 68                 | 4/26/2012  | Working in Complex Systems: The Rubber Value Chain in Indonesia  | 8                    | 24                 | 32    |

Table 2: Breakfast Seminar attendance

| Diaspora Seminars |            |   |                      |                    |       |
|-------------------|------------|---|----------------------|--------------------|-------|
| Seminar           | Date       | Title   | In-person attendance | Webinar attendance | TOTAL |
| 2                 | 7/14/2011  | Mobilizing Diaspora Entrepreneurship for Development                  | 52                   | 75                 | 127   |
| 3                 | 8/18/2011  | Fostering Diaspora Investment in Developing Countries                 | 43                   | 51                 | 94    |
| 4                 | 9/28/2011  | Connected through Service: Diaspora Volunteers and Global Development | 28                   | 19                 | 47    |
| 5                 | 11/8/2011  | Heritage Tourism and Nostalgia Trade                                  | 28                   | 10                 | 38    |
| 6                 | 12/15/2011 | Diaspora Philanthropy: Private Giving and Public Policy               | 41                   | 35                 | 76    |
| 7                 | 2/15/2012  | Voice After Exit: Diaspora Advocacy                                   | 42                   | 26                 | 68    |

Table 3: Diaspora Seminar attendance

#### EPS/MFS Seminars

| Seminar | Date       | Title  | In-person attendance | Webinar attendance | TOTAL |
|---------|------------|--|----------------------|--------------------|-------|
| 1       | 7/25/2011  | From Cash and Coin to E-Wallets: Challenges for Mobile Money Regulation in Developing World Contexts         | 32                   | 95                 | 127   |
| 2       | 9/26/2011  | Cloud Computing and Financial Services for The Poor: Promise and Perils of a New Computing Paradigm          | 29                   | 86                 | 115   |
| 3       | 10/21/2011 | Sound Expansion of Mobile Financial Services: A Risk Matrix Approach for Developing Enabling Environments    | 47                   | 82                 | 129   |
| 4       | 11/18/2011 | Deposit Insurance and Consumer Protection for MFS  | 25                   | 38                 | 63    |
| 5       | 2/28/2012  | Financial Action Task Force Recommendations: Relevance & Application within Public & Private Sector Contexts | 11                   | 24                 | 35    |
| 6       | 4/27/2012  | How Mobile Phones Can Improve Access to Services for Persons with Disabilities                               | 5                    | 18                 | 23    |

**Table 4: EPS Seminar attendance**

### **e-Consultations/Speakers Corners**

KDMD facilitates multi-day online forums through its e-Consultation and Speakers Corners series that allow select participants to engage in in-depth discussions and share experiences regarding particular microenterprise and microfinance issues. The following forums occurred during this reporting period:

- e-Consultation/Webinar: “Economic Strengthening Pathways for the Bottom Billion”
- Speakers Corner #44: “Islamic Banking and Microfinance”
- e-Consultation/Webinar with GROOVE: “Integrating Experiential Knowledge and Staff Observation in Value Chain Project M&E”
- Webinar with grant recipient Virtue Ventures: “Social Enterprise for International Development”
- e-Consultation with AMAP: “Pathways Out of Poverty”

### **Mobile Solutions Knowledge Management Strategy Planning**

KDMD also collaborated with the MD and Innovation and Development Alliances (IDEA) offices to explore the possible creation of a knowledge sharing platform for USAID missions involved in mobile financial programming at various stages of development. This involved an exploratory webinar with the USAID/IDEA Mobile Solutions team and pilot mission staff in Haiti, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Afghanistan. Furthermore, KDMD interviewed IDEA and mission staff to assess their prior experience with KM tools and willingness to participate in a future Mobile Solutions project.

## **B. Synopsis of Evaluations**

### **GROOVE Learning Network**

The retroactive baseline yielded a number of findings regarding the status of the learning network organizations in 2009. Although value chains expertise varied between the organizations, the participants reported that in 2009, the organizational knowledge base about VC approaches was low, spotty, and fragmented. In one case, there was a lot of expertise at headquarters, but very little at the country office level. All participating organizations reported a lack of human resources support in 2009 to help institutionalize or implement VC approaches across various projects as well as non-existent infrastructure to help country-based projects. In addition, none of the organizations had any formalized assessment tools to gauge staff training needs in VC approaches, nor did they have any tools, methods, or technologies to build organizational capacity to adapt VC approaches to different contexts. All respondents stated that their practices/program area priorities had not changed over the course of their grant.

Overall, the results of the outcome evaluation indicated the success of the GROOVE Learning Network. In particular, the evaluation demonstrated:

- High level of trust at the individual level (exemplified by the open and free sharing of documents)
- Honesty about areas of individual or organizational weakness
- Ability to challenge each other's ideas and to provide "*appropriate objective criticism*"

Nonetheless, members noted that trust at the organizational level was not high. Furthermore, according to respondents, the size of the network (four organizations) seemed about right. If anything, they noted that they might have benefitted by a slightly larger network (one to two organizations larger) to help share the workload without the group becoming unmanageable due to size. Devoting additional staff time to the GROOVE Learning Network grant activity might have been valuable both to share the work and to "*build broader involvement/sense of organizational ownership of the grant.*"

Finally, there was strong and apparent unanimous consent that the diversity of mission of the four GROOVE members was a positive factor from a learning perspective. It helped participants to think about VCs in new or alternative contexts to their own experience, and showed them how other organizations were institutionalizing VC development. This variety also seems to have broadened and stimulated participant interest in the development issues being addressed by the other organizations. The positive aspects of this diversity far outweighed the negatives (lack of relevance and agreeing on common priorities). There were several specific ideas on how the network could improve learning including: improving technology (especially the wiki, which some found hard to use), establishing learning goals, and creating a joint learning product earlier in the process so that it would be ready for dissemination to a wider audience by the end of the grant.

## Seminars

### *Web Analytics*

While the seminars drew large audiences, only 20-26 percent of the participants responded to surveys (online and in-person). This may be because repeat participants were reluctant to respond multiple times. To assess online activity, KDMD tracked total unique pageviews<sup>3</sup> for each of the seminar event pages and the post-event resources via Google Analytics as shown in the figures below.<sup>4</sup> For purposes of standard measurement, event pageviews are recorded for the two-weeks prior to the event until the day of the event and library pageviews are recorded for the week following the event. In total, the seminar event pages attracted over 12,000 visits and the library pages over 1,500 visits during their respective timeframes.

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<sup>3</sup> Unique pageviews are defined as the number of unique users that access a page. This statistic is designed to calculate the number of individuals exposed to a page over a period of time by removing multiple visits by the same people from the total number of pageviews or hits.

<sup>4</sup> Google Analytics (GA) was not active during the entire reporting period for purposes of government regulatory cookie restrictions. Once it was lifted, the KDMD team was then able to track the number of views.

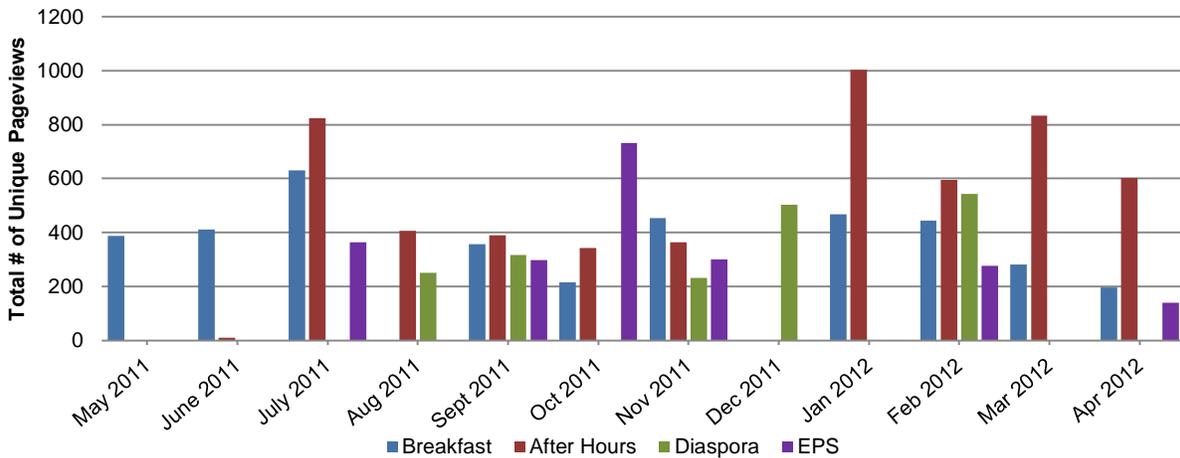


Figure 1: Total event page unique pageviews (all seminar series)

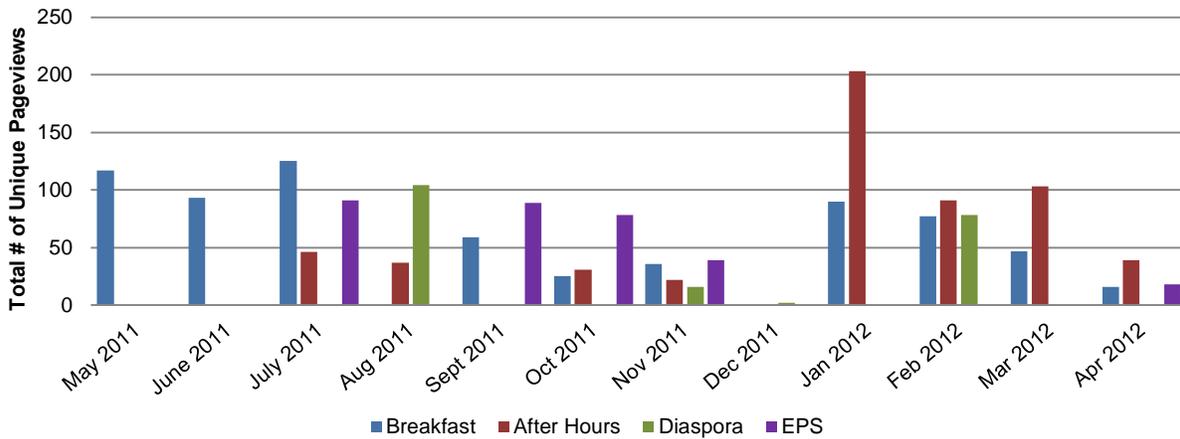


Figure 2: Total library page unique pageviews (all seminar series)

The After Hours Seminars’ event pages received the highest views with 537 on average over the reporting period. The other three seminars had comparable event page views on average, with 385 for Breakfast, 352 for EPS, and 308 for Diaspora. In terms of library resource page views, Breakfast had the highest on average, with 69, followed by After Hours with 57, EPS with 53, and Diaspora with 33. For some events, the library page received no hits during the one-week reporting period such as After Hours 52 (June 2011) and 55 (September 2011), but received numerous hits following the event until the end of the reporting period, 76 and 72 unique views for these examples, respectively.

Overall, the library pages and event resource pages received far less traffic in comparison with the event page traffic in the specified reporting, suggesting that many participants may only be interested in the live event or that they are unaware of the resource pages. The other challenge is that, despite KDMD’s efforts to produce the post-event resources as quickly as possible, other priorities often delay the completion of the library resource pages. Therefore, the library pages are not always finalized and promoted within one week of their related event, which has an adverse effect on pageviews. In the future, KDMD will amend the reporting period to begin when the library pages are finalized rather than at the conclusion of the event.

### Activity Assessment Data

For each seminar, KDMD also distributed activity assessments to both in-person and webinar participants to gather data pertaining to organization affiliation, work location, years of international development experience, as well as their level of overall satisfaction with the seminar events. The assessments gauged satisfaction in terms of the level of participant agreement that the content was interesting and applicable and the format was effective, ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”). While not all participants respond to the activity assessments, this data is aggregated for each series to provide a sample of audience background and satisfaction.

As Table 5 shows, for every series the most common two organizational affiliations were non-profit and for-profit (consulting/contracting), with for-profit the most prevalent for Breakfast, Diaspora and EPS, and non-profit only slightly more prevalent for After Hours. For all series, non-profit and for-profit combined represented a majority of the audience. After academia, the USAID audience was the next most common for all four seminar series. EPS had the highest proportion of USAID participants, with 15.7 percent.

| Type of Organization                         | After Hours Seminars (June 2011-May 2012) |                | Breakfast Seminars (June 2011-May 2012) |                | Diaspora Seminars (July 2011-Feb 2012) |                | EPS Seminars (July 2011-Apr 2012) |                |
|--|---|----------------|---|----------------|--|----------------|-----------------------------------|----------------|
|  | % of responses                            | # of responses | % of responses                          | # of responses | % of responses                         | # of responses | % of responses                    | # of responses |
| For Profit (Consulting/Contractors/Industry) | 34.00%                                    | 52             | 40.20%                                  | 39             | 32.40%                                 | 146            | 30.10%                            | 25             |
| Non Profits/Private Voluntary Organizations  | 34.60%                                    | 53             | 33.00%                                  | 32             | 30.70%                                 | 138            | 21.70%                            | 18             |
| Academia/University/Research Institutions    | 14.40%                                    | 22             | 7.20%                                   | 7              | 9.60%                                  | 43             | 15.70%                            | 13             |
| USAID  | 6.50%                                     | 10             | 7.20%                                   | 7              | 9.30%                                  | 42             | 15.70%                            | 14             |
| Other Donors (Multilateral, Bilateral)       | 5.90%                                     | 9              | 4.10%                                   | 4              | 5.60%                                  | 25             | 6.00%                             | 5              |
| Other U.S. Government                        | 2.60%                                     | 4              | 7.20%                                   | 7              | 6.20%                                  | 28             | 10.80%                            | 9              |
| Foundations                                  | 1.30%                                     | 2              | 1.00%                                   | 1              | 4.20%                                  | 19             | 0.00%                             | 0              |
| Foreign Government                           | 0.70%                                     | 1              | 0.00%                                   | 0              | 2.00%                                  | 9              | 0.00%                             | 0              |
| <b>Total</b>                                 | <b>100.00%</b>                            | <b>153</b>     | <b>100.00%</b>                          | <b>97</b>      | <b>100.00%</b>                         | <b>450</b>     | <b>100.00%</b>                    | <b>83</b>      |

Table 5: Organizational affiliation of seminar audiences based on activity assessments

Table 6 shows responses based on work location. For all four series, the vast majority of the audience was based in Washington, DC, with a range of 56 percent for After Hours to 78 percent for Diaspora. The After Hours series had the highest proportion of international respondents with 26 percent. One qualification with this location data is the relatively higher response rates to in-person assessments (and hence Washington-based respondents) than webinar assessments.

| Location of Work | After Hours Seminars (June 2011-May 2012) |                | Breakfast Seminars (June 2011-May 2012) |                | Diaspora Seminars (July 2011-Feb 2012) |                | EPS Seminars (July 2011-Apr 2012) |                |
|------------------|---|----------------|---|----------------|--|----------------|-----------------------------------|----------------|
|                  | % of responses                            | # of responses | % of responses                          | # of responses | % of responses                         | # of responses | % of responses                    | # of responses |
| Washington, DC   | 56.00%                                    | 84             | 66.70%                                  | 62             | 78.00%                                 | 85             | 63.80%                            | 58             |
| Other U.S.       | 18.00%                                    | 27             | 12.90%                                  | 12             | 10.10%                                 | 11             | 26.30%                            | 21             |
| International    | 26.00%                                    | 39             | 20.40%                                  | 19             | 11.90%                                 | 13             | 10.00%                            | 8              |
| <b>Total</b>     | <b>100.00%</b>                            | <b>150</b>     | <b>100.00%</b>                          | <b>93</b>      | <b>100.00%</b>                         | <b>109</b>     | <b>100.00%</b>                    | <b>80</b>      |

Table 6: Seminar audience location based on activity assessments

With respect to participant satisfaction, at least 90 percent of the respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that the subject matter interested them and was important to their work for all seminar series. Furthermore, over 70 percent of respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that they could apply what they learned to their work and that the format was effective for all four series. This data reflects overwhelmingly positive results with respect to customer satisfaction with the MD seminar series. Table 7 gives complete aggregate results for all four MD seminar series.

| Seminar Series                                     | Strongly Agree | Agree         | Neutral      | Disagree    | Strongly Disagree | # of responses |
|--|----------------|---------------|--------------|-------------|-------------------|----------------|
| <b>After Hours Seminars (June 2011-April 2012)</b> |                |               |              |             |                   |                |
| 1) The subject matter interests me                 | 156<br>71.56%  | 60<br>27.52%  | 2<br>0.92%   | 0.00%       |                   | 218            |
| 2) The subject matter is important to my work      | 132<br>60.27%  | 66<br>30.14%  | 20<br>9.13%  | 1<br>0.46%  |                   | 219            |
| 3) I can apply what I learned to my work           | 86<br>40.19%   | 71<br>33.18%  | 47<br>21.96% | 10<br>4.67% | 3<br>1.40%        | 214            |
| 4) This was an effective format                    | 112<br>51.85%  | 79<br>36.57%  | 17<br>7.87%  | 8<br>3.70%  |                   | 216            |
| <b>Breakfast Seminars (June 2011-April 2012)</b>   |                |               |              |             |                   |                |
| 1) The subject matter interests me                 | 190<br>68.10%  | 85<br>30.47%  | 4<br>1.43%   |             |                   | 279            |
| 2) The subject matter is important to my work      | 170<br>61.15%  | 81<br>29.14%  | 23<br>8.27%  | 4<br>1.44%  |                   | 278            |
| 3) I can apply what I learned to my work           | 103<br>37.45%  | 121<br>44.00% | 45<br>16.36% | 4<br>1.45%  | 2<br>0.73%        | 275            |
| 4) This was an effective format                    | 106<br>39.41%  | 134<br>49.81% | 27<br>10.04% | 2<br>0.74%  |                   | 269            |
| <b>Diaspora Seminars (July 2011-Feb 2012)</b>      |                |               |              |             |                   |                |
| 1) The subject matter interests me                 | 88<br>78.57%   | 23<br>20.54%  | 1<br>0.89%   |             |                   | 112            |
| 2) The subject matter is important to my work      | 60<br>56.07%   | 35<br>32.71%  | 11<br>10.28% |             | 1<br>0.93%        | 107            |
| 3) I can apply what I learned to my work           | 53<br>50.00%   | 42<br>39.62%  | 8<br>7.55%   | 2<br>1.89%  | 1<br>0.94%        | 106            |
| 4) This was an effective format                    | 51<br>49.51%   | 46<br>44.66%  | 5<br>4.85%   | 1<br>0.97%  |                   | 103            |
| <b>EPS Seminars (July 2011-Apr 2012)</b>           |                |               |              |             |                   |                |
| 1) The subject matter interests me                 | 56<br>69.14%   | 26<br>32.10%  |              |             |                   | 81             |
| 2) The subject matter is important to my work      | 46<br>56.79%   | 27<br>33.33%  | 8<br>9.88%   |             | 1<br>1.23%        | 81             |
| 3) I can apply what I learned to my work           | 35<br>43.75%   | 28<br>35.00%  | 15<br>18.75% | 3<br>3.75%  |                   | 80             |
| 4) This was an effective format                    | 44<br>56.41%   | 19<br>24.36%  | 12<br>15.38% | 4<br>5.13%  |                   | 78             |

Table 7: Participant satisfaction based on activity assessments

### e-Consultations/Speakers Corners

Very few participants in the e-Consultations/Speakers Corners completed surveys. However, the discussion thread views for this series consistently range from 1,500 to 2,200, which speak to the interest generated by the topics and the discussions. In the future, KDMD will work with discussion facilitators to raise the visibility of the activity surveys and underscore the importance of participant feedback.

## C. Lessons Learned and Applied

### GROOVE Learning Network

In July 2011, the GROOVE Learning Network underwent a shift in facilitation support based on feedback from the network members; the facilitation function was brought back as an internal function within KDMD, whereas an outside consultant had previously undertaken it. During the network’s meeting in Kigali, KDMD staff led a session with the grantees to discuss their facilitation needs based on the

network's evolving objectives and priorities. This conversation led to the development of a GROOVE facilitator terms of reference, which KDMD used to define roles for co-facilitators of the learning network. This discussion and the previous feedback sessions highlighted the need to periodically revisit the role of the facilitation function as a learning network progresses through its work.

The retroactive baseline exercise underscored the need to ensure that a baseline is undertaken at the beginning of a learning network's collaborative efforts. To that end, the KDMD project will compile a list of recommendations for weaving monitoring and evaluation throughout the design of future learning networks.

The mentoring program started by one GROOVE member, outside the scope of the network's work, and adopted by the other three members provides a concrete example of the positive multiplier effect of the collaboration between the network members.

### **e-Consultations/Speakers Corners**

During this time period the K&L team began the first integration of Adobe Connect webinars into e-Consultation and Speakers Corner online discussions. For the e-Consultation with the SEEP Network's Poverty Outreach Working Group on Economic Strengthening Pathways, a webinar was used to introduce the topic and to provide an opportunity for real-time discussion of case studies which had been submitted in advance. For the GROOVE Learning Network e-Consultation on Integrating Tacit Knowledge in M&E for Value Chain Development, a webinar was used on the final day of discussion to provide synthesis and real-time feedback opportunities on the brief under discussion. Both activities were well received and illustrated that integrating synchronous and asynchronous interactions in a collaborative activity can improve both the quality of the discussions and that of the resulting products.

### **Microlinks**

While optimization of the Microlinks site is an ongoing endeavor, this period saw some major shifts that will help KDMD clients and partners make better use of the site. The site overhaul process yielded valuable lessons learned, which KDMD was able to incorporate into upgrades underway on other KDMD sites, including Agrilinks.

By May 2011, the revamped Microlinks site had been online in beta for six months. The KDMD team continued to collect feedback from users of the site at various venues, including international conferences such as the Microfinance Centre Annual Conference in the Czech Republic in May 2011 and the Sanabel Annual Conference in Jordan in June 2011. Based on user and internal feedback the web team made the following changes to the site:

- Added new group functionality for working and training groups
- Streamlined topics categories and standardized tagging conventions
- Developed new functionality and implemented new best practices for log-in/account creation
- Conducted an audit of the Value Chain Wiki and planned for improvements in accessibility
- Improved Speakers Corner functionality
- Enhanced image rotator to promote the events and resources on the site
- Conducted initial search engine optimization to clean up metadata and improve search results
- Added functionality for videos to play in a modal window
- Modified the templates for and added styling to the Library Resource content type
- Created a signup page to streamline subscriptions to newsletter and event invites

Arguably, the most important change to Microlinks was the redesign of the site's main navigation menu and related updates to the banner and site map. The previous menu followed the "3+1" site structure that grouped content into the Learning Marketplace, Good Practice Center, and Library, with content then being aggregated from across the site onto key Topic pages. Feedback from site users led KDMD to the conclusion that this organizational structure was confusing and cumbersome. By making high-demand

content more accessible from any page with one click, the new menu and site structure is much more intuitive and user-friendly. The menu now includes the following top-level categories: Topics, Events, News, Resources, and Groups. The drop-down menus underneath each of these tabs have also been redesigned for clarity.

## D. Long-Term Outcomes and Impact

### GROOVE Learning Network

The shift in focus and facilitation of the learning network during the July 2011 meeting in Kigali led to a greater emphasis on network-level products. A work plan was developed to clarify the group knowledge products within the learning network’s two tracks: M&E and capacity building. An additional knowledge product synthesizing findings from the learning network approach continues to be under development by KDMD with inputs from the GROOVE Learning Network members and USAID.

### Seminars

The A&L team administered a follow-up survey and interviews with past participants of the After Hours and Breakfast Seminars (those who attended at least five seminars). The survey sought to answer the underlying research question of how well the participants have been able to apply the content of the seminars and in what ways they have used the knowledge in their work. There were 19 responses to the survey, representing an 18 percent completion rate out of the 108 participants contacted, 4 of the 19 respondents agreed to a follow-up interview. The most common organizational affiliations of respondents were non-profits and for-profit (consulting/contractors/industry), and most respondents worked in Washington, DC. As Figure 3 illustrates, respondents mostly agreed that “the seminars were useful to their work,” with an average of 4.58, and that they have “shared knowledge from the seminars,” with 4.37. Respondents agreed less strongly that they “have applied approaches and made professional contacts” at the seminar, with average scores between “neutral” and “agree.”

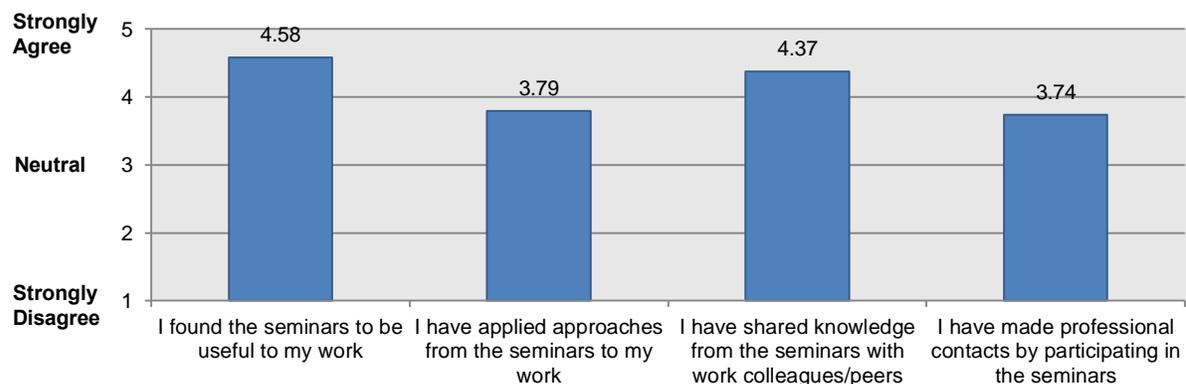


Figure 3: Average respondent assessment of seminars

The survey also included open-ended questions to allow participants to indicate which issues or topics were most useful for their current work. Respondents reported that they had professionally applied what they learned at the seminars to:

- Inform policy briefs, reports, and proposals
- Provide an overview of ICTs to validate proposals
- Construct financial education and training curricula
- Share information with other colleagues
- Provide information on a start-up of a private-public partnership in Sri Lanka
- Inform value chains and financial inclusion programs

- Develop a project on behavior change
- Learn about current projects (success and failures)

In terms of aspects of the seminar that were most useful, respondents noted that the diversity in topics and case studies were particularly helpful, as well as the opportunity to expand their professional network to stay informed on current advancements in the field of microfinance. Respondents also noted that they enjoyed the chance to interact in a less formal discussion in comparison to other USAID forums.

The follow-up interview also asked if the participants recommended these seminars to their colleagues. Three out of the four participants reported that they would recommend the seminars to their colleagues. The one participant who responded “no,” explained that the time involved in recommending was too much, since most of her professional colleagues were overseas. Some of the comments regarding how and what respondents recommended to colleagues were as follows:

- E-mailed on listservs and forwarded links
- Recommended through word of mouth
- Shared and forwarded screencasts from seminars
- Provided a list of organizations and websites (including Microlinks) to colleagues in the field

Furthermore, all of the four interviewees reported that they had made contacts or networked at the seminars. Three of the interviewees reported that they already knew a person who was either presenting in the seminar or was a past colleague and that the seminars were a great opportunity to meet new and old colleagues. One participant networked with a presenter from an Ethiopia project and maintained contact in order to learn best technical approaches for a project that she was implementing. Respondents noted that webinars were less appealing given the lack of this face-to-face interaction.

Overall, the participants responded positively in both the surveys and interviews regarding their experiences in After Hours and Breakfast Seminars, noting they are excellent contributions to the field that should continue. Among the positive aspects regarding their experience, respondents noted that the seminars are:

- Recommended to colleagues in the field
- A forum for professional connections within the microfinance community
- Timely, vibrant, and well attended
- An effective and efficient way to disseminate knowledge, information, and experience

Some participants provided suggestions about how to make the seminars more successful. Some of the participant comments indicate that:

- Seminars that focus more on the technical are more rewarding than the more abstract presentations
- Audience questions for the presenter sometimes go unanswered
- A one-step registration link would make attending easier
- Presentations could be offered twice to allow people in other time zones to participate

These suggestions and recommendations will be kept in mind as KDMD reviews its overall seminar strategy for the coming year.

### **e-Consultations/Speakers Corners**

Based on lessons learned regarding integration of synchronous and asynchronous interactions in online discussions, KDMD compiled updated guidance for designing and facilitating Speakers Corners and e-Consultation activities for the internal KDMD wiki. This guidance should improve the team’s operation of knowledge sharing forums in the future.



## Food Security/Agriculture Program

The KDMD Food Security/Agriculture (FS/Ag) Program works with the USAID Bureau for Food Security (BFS) to promote the exchange of knowledge and learning among USAID staff and partners through a range of instruments with the goal of improving the effectiveness of USAID agricultural and food security investments. During this reporting period, FS/Ag produced 21 seminars and webinars, 3 trainings, and continued to expand and improve its online presence through further development of the Agrilinks platform, as well as initiated re-design efforts of the Feed the Future website. These activities have enabled dissemination of innovative content to and interaction between BFS Washington, mission staff, and practitioners, which ultimately could lead to improvements in agricultural programming in the developing world. This section summarizes the activities of the FS/Ag Program over the last year and will explain the evaluation process, lessons learned, subsequent improvements, and impacts.

### A. Synopsis of Activities and Products

#### Seminars

During this reporting period, KDMD facilitated 10 monthly Ag Sector Council Seminars and four Feed the Future (FTF) Stakeholder Meetings for USAID staff and implementing partners, while successfully expanding the series' audiences. Through these seminar series, FS/Ag supported the discussion and dissemination of emerging agricultural and food security-related topics for both in-person and online participants around the world.

In addition to the flagship seminar series, FS/Ag also delivered two special seminars held during this reporting period: "Poverty Reduction & Food Security despite High Food Price Volatility" (May 20, 2011) and "Approaches to Building Food Security Policy Analysis Capacity in Developing Countries: IFPRI and MSU" (March 13, 2012).

In addition, FS/Ag undertook a number of one-time knowledge sharing events over the last year. In July 2011, KDMD worked with BFS to participate in an Ag Research Forum blogging activity with the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU). Participants who were unable to attend the Forum in person could access the event through the Agrilinks blog and a live audio stream. This event represented an opportunity for BFS and KDMD to work with APLU for the first time, providing a foundation for future partnerships.

FS/Ag hosted a Feed the Future Monitoring System Training Webinar using the Adobe Connect webinar platform for the first time in December 2011. This activity connected nearly 60 USAID mission staff from over 20 countries, primarily in Africa, to discuss a new monitoring system tool. The use of Adobe Connect created an interactive experience for participants, which included polls, a presentation with screenshots of the online tool, and time for questions and answers.

In February 2012, USAID held a Feed the Future Public-Private Partnership Technical Forum at the White House. To engage a broader audience in conjunction with the in-person event, KDMD designed and facilitated an online breakout session with four facilitators. Participants were asked to identify opportunities and discuss barriers for USAID to collaborate with private sector organizations.

KDMD and BFS hosted the second AgExchange entitled "Best Practices, Lessons Learned, and Effective Tools in Knowledge Sharing for Food Security and Agriculture Programs" in March 2012. This was a 3-day online event, hosted on the Agrilinks platform, in which facilitators engaged participants in a discussion about current practices, challenges, tools, and next steps on knowledge sharing in food security and agriculture programs worldwide. This discussion aimed to assist practitioners as well as to inform future activities for BFS and USAID.

This reporting period also saw the first #AskAg Twitter Hour focusing on the Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI). The online event was an opportunity for BFS and KDMD to pilot the use of Twitter to engage a new audience, raise awareness and understanding of the WEAI, and promote discussion. A total of 318 tweets were posted related to the event (approximately 33 percent of the #AskAg tweets were KDMD promotions) and participants asked more than 30 questions about the WEAI tool that USAID experts answered live on Twitter or via the Agrilinks blog.

### **Agrilinks**

Since the Agrilinks website launched in the summer of 2011, KDMD has strived to identify opportunities for improvements and expansion. In an effort to plan strategically and comprehensively, the KDMD team implemented a discovery phase to prepare for the Agrilinks site upgrade during the latter part of this reporting period. The discovery phase included focus groups, surveys, and interviews with various offices at BFS and with Agrilinks users in order to explore desired site capabilities. KDMD used this feedback to inform the recommended changes to site structure and design, content development, and testing leading up to the site re-launch, which is anticipated for the fall of 2012.

This reporting period also saw the launch of two new blog series on Agrilinks: “It’s All About M&E” and the “Reader’s Corner.” The Feed the Future M&E team launched the M&E blog to discuss the WEAI, FTF learning agenda, and other pertinent M&E topics. The Reader’s Corner provides document summaries and a recommended reading list from USAID agribusiness and food security specialists to inform the audience on issues and resources related to food security, agriculture, and training.

### **Trainings**

KDMD implemented three Ag courses during this reporting period: two iterations of the 5-day Ag Core Course in June and December, and one 2-day Ag Overview Course in September. Broadly stated, the Core Course seeks to provide officers involved in agricultural programming with an understanding of current policies, technical approaches, and best practices for increasing rural incomes and reducing hunger through agriculture and food security programs. The Ag Overview Course has similar objectives, but focuses more on informing USAID Ag officers of the Agency’s current practices in agriculture and bureaucratic support structures within USAID. The September Overview Course also included a new 1-hour online module, adapted from the former half-day Ag Orientation Course.

## **B. Synopsis of Evaluations**

KDMD administers activity assessments to evaluate the effectiveness of BFS seminars. In the case of trainings, daily in-person evaluations and in some cases on-site interviews were conducted to determine participant satisfaction of the courses and potential participant application of course content. This section presents attendance and the results of evaluations for all seminars and courses implemented during this reporting period.

### **Seminars**

Figure 4 shows the total attendance (webinar and in-person) for Ag Sector Council Seminars during this reporting period.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> There was no Ag Sector Council Seminar in August 2011.

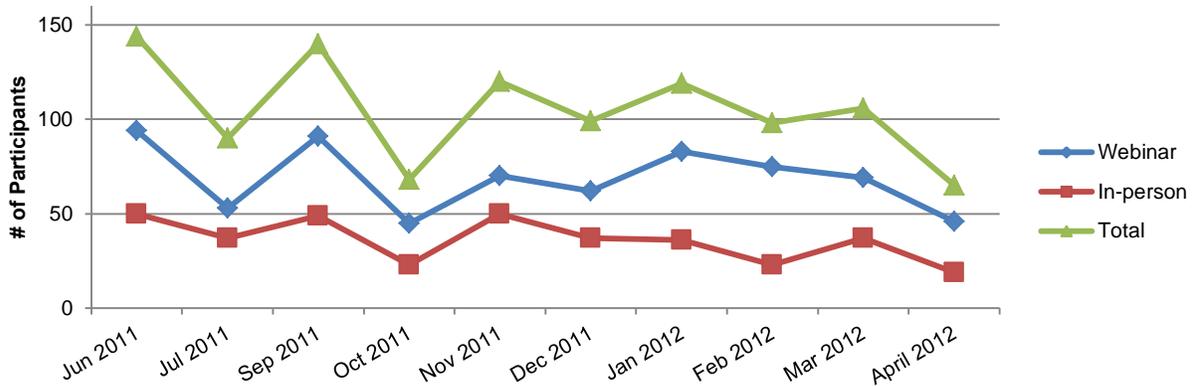


Figure 4: Ag Sector Council seminar and webinar attendance (May 2011 - May 2012)

After the relatively low attendance rates during July 2011 (a common occurrence in the summer months), attendance spiked in September 2011 before dropping again significantly in October. The seminar topic in October was “Applying Peanut CRSP Research to USAID Initiatives.” It is likely that the narrowness of the seminar topic contributed to lower participation.

Figure 5 shows the attendance rate for the FTF Stakeholder seminars between June 2011 and May 2012. The peak in attendance in February could be partially attributed to audience anticipation after the seminar hiatus.

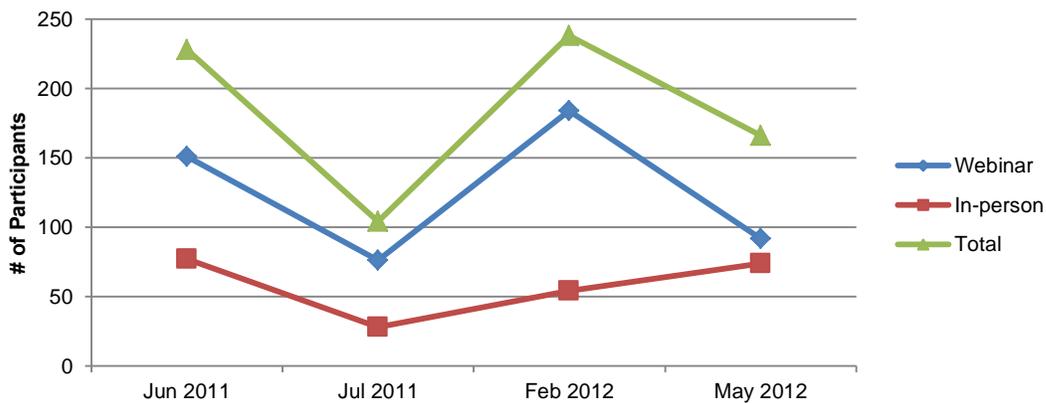


Figure 5: FTF Stakeholder seminar and webinar attendance (May 2011 - May 2012)

Table 8 presents the data used to gauge perception of the usefulness and application of both seminar series. Both series received positive assessments during this reporting period, with over 90 percent of respondents indicating “strong agreement” or “agreement” with the subject matter being important to their work. The applicability of seminar content to work also received a positive assessment.

|  | Strongly Agree | Agree         | Neutral      | Disagree   | Strongly Disagree | # of Responses |
|--|----------------|---------------|--------------|------------|-------------------|----------------|
| <b>Ag Sector Council Seminars (June 2011 – April 2012)<sup>6</sup></b> |                |               |              |            |                   |                |
| 1) The subject matter interests me                                     | 164<br>68.05%  | 63<br>26.14%  | 8<br>3.32%   |            | 6<br>2.49%        | 241            |
| 2) The subject matter is important to my work                          | 162<br>60.90%  | 87<br>32.71%  | 15<br>5.64%  | 2<br>0.75% |                   | 266            |
| 3) I can apply what I learned to my work                               | 110<br>42.15%  | 103<br>39.46% | 45<br>17.24% | 3<br>1.15% |                   | 261            |
| 4) This was an effective format  | 108<br>47.58%  | 98<br>43.17%  | 18<br>7.93%  | 3<br>1.32% |                   | 227            |
| <b>FTF Stakeholder Seminars (June 2011 – May 2012)<sup>7</sup></b>     |                |               |              |            |                   |                |
| 1) The subject matter interests me                                     | 106<br>71.14%  | 38<br>25.50%  | 5<br>3.36%   |            |                   | 149            |
| 2) The subject matter is important to my work                          | 94<br>63.51%   | 48<br>32.43%  | 5<br>3.38%   | 1<br>0.68% |                   | 148            |
| 3) I can apply what I learned to my work                               | 60<br>41.67%   | 67<br>46.53%  | 16<br>11.11% | 1<br>0.69% |                   | 144            |
| 4) This was an effective format  | 52<br>36.11%   | 68<br>47.22%  | 20<br>13.89% |            | 4<br>2.78%        | 144            |

**Table 8: Participant satisfaction of seminars based on activity assessments**

KDMD also introduced questions about Agrilinks on BFS seminar activity assessments in order to anticipate site re-design efforts. Of the 140 responses since February 2012, 72.9 percent indicated they were familiar with Agrilinks. In response to the most useful aspect of the site, “events” was the most common response with 48 percent. Qualitative survey responses were largely positive, noting that the site was informative and content was helpful. Other comments included suggestions to provide linkages between agriculture and other sectors and a reading list of important books and publications.

### **Agrilinks**

This section summarizes key findings from the Agrilinks discovery phase, launched in Spring 2012, which sought to obtain feedback from BFS staff and Agrilinks users to inform the site upgrade. Furthermore, the discovery phase had the positive ancillary outcomes of engaging users, promoting the site and increasing awareness, answering questions, and creating proponents of the site.

### **BFS Staff Client Surveys and Interviews**

In all, 15 participants responded to the client survey that KDMD distributed at meetings with various BFS offices as well as online after all of the meetings had taken place. The purpose of the BFS client survey was to gauge BFS staff perceptions of the current Agrilinks site and to provide participants an opportunity to elaborate on site capability and functionality in the context of the target audience (missions, evaluators, and implementing partners). The client survey results revealed that the majority of respondents (53.3 percent) visit Agrilinks one to three times a month. Overall, 60 percent of respondents rated the current site as “average.” When asked to list three attributes of the current site, 33.3 percent of respondents

<sup>6</sup> The May 2011 results were already included in the previous reporting period. The May 2012 results will be captured in the next reporting period.

<sup>7</sup> The May 2011 results were already included in the previous reporting period. There were no FTF Seminars between August 2011 and January 2012. There were no FTF Seminars in March and April 2012.

indicated that the site was “relevant,” followed by “useful” at 26.7percent. The remaining responses were distributed among other attributes.

Table 9 shows respondent satisfaction level with various current site features. The majority of participants (60 percent) reported not being familiar with the blog feature, which suggests that KDMD could focus on promotion in the future.

| How satisfied are you with the following current Agrilinks website features? | Very Satisfied | Somewhat Satisfied | Average | Somewhat Dissatisfied | Very Dissatisfied | Not familiar with feature | # of Respondents |
|--|----------------|--------------------|---------|-----------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|------------------|
| a) Event Listings  | 40.0%          | 40.0%              | 13.3%   | 6.7%                  |                   |                           | 15               |
| b) Agrilinks Event Screencasts   | 26.7%          | 33.3%              | 26.7%   |                       |                   | 13.3%                     | 15               |
| c) Online discussions (AgExchanges)  | 13.3%          | 20.0%              | 20.0%   | 13.3%                 |                   | 33.3%                     | 15               |
| d) Library   | 6.7%           | 33.3%              | 6.7%    | 13.3%                 |                   | 40.0%                     | 15               |
| e) Blog  | 6.7%           | 26.7%              | 6.7%    |                       |                   | 60.0%                     | 15               |
| f) Navigation  | 6.7%           | 26.7%              | 53.3%   | 6.7%                  |                   | 6.7%                      | 15               |
| g) Search capability   | 6.7%           | 20.0%              | 26.7%   | 13.3%                 | 6.7%              | 26.7%                     | 15               |
| h) Creating a profile  | 6.7%           | 20.0%              | 40.0%   | 6.7%                  |                   | 26.7%                     | 15               |
| i) Site design   | 13.3%          | 46.7%              | 40.0%   |                       |                   |                           | 15               |

Table 9: BFS client satisfaction level with current Agrilinks site features

BFS staff members were also asked to rate various upgraded site features in terms of level of significance, with 1 as “not important” and 5 as “very important.” “Finding technical resources” received the highest rating with an average score of 4.73, followed by “getting advice from experts” with a score of 4.27 and “learning about USAID partners and projects” with score of 4.20. The upgraded site feature that received the lowest level of significance rating was “browsing member profiles” with an average score of 2.53. The low score could also explain why 40 percent of client respondents rated creating a profile as “average.”

In addition to client feedback through the surveys, KDMD also conducted nine follow-up interviews and four focus groups. Some of the key themes and areas for improvement identified through the interviews include:

- Improved search functionality is necessary
- Way to find resources by topic is necessary
- Agrilinks should be a place to push out information, connect with partners, and field questions
- Interactive features can take too much time
- Online trainings and tutorial of the Agrilinks site would be good
- Working groups can be a great way to share resources, but burdensome if they are not focused
- Multimedia content is more effective
- The site should highlight projects and bring exposure to the work USAID is doing
- Pop-ups with function descriptions, guidance, etc., would increase site clarity

### *Agrilinks User Surveys*

KDMD conducted a wider Agrilinks user survey in early April 2012, promoting it through the Agrilinks and Microlinks websites, social media and regular email campaigns to the FS/Ag mailing lists. In total, 86 participants responded to the survey, the majority of which (52.3 percent) indicated that they work overseas. Unlike the results of the client survey, the majority of respondents (56.8 percent) to the user survey rated the current Agrilinks site overall as “very good.” Top attributes of the current site identified by both cohorts were “relevant” and “useful,” while the top desired attributes for the upgraded site were “informative” and “easy to use.”

Table 10 reflects participant satisfaction with the current Agrilinks site features based on 81 responses. Similar to the client survey responses, event listings and Agrilinks event screencasts received the highest

satisfaction levels. These responses were reiterated in the user focus groups and interviews, which revealed that people tend to visit the site for events and to access event resources. Like the BFS clients, users reported being most unfamiliar with the blog and profile features, which further supports the conclusion that these features need to be better advertised or perhaps more intuitive.

| How satisfied are you with the following current Agrilinks website features? | Very Satisfied | Satisfied | Average | Somewhat Dissatisfied | Very Dissatisfied | Not familiar with feature | # of Respondents |
|--|----------------|-----------|---------|-----------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|------------------|
| a) Event Listings  | 37.0%          | 35.8%     | 19.8%   | 2.5%                  |                   | 4.9%                      | 81               |
| b) Agrilinks Event Screencasts   | 24.7%          | 37.0%     | 21.0%   | 3.7%                  |                   | 13.6%                     | 81               |
| c) Online discussions (AgExchanges)  | 16.0%          | 30.9%     | 24.7%   | 4.9%                  | 1.2%              | 22.2%                     | 81               |
| d) Library   | 18.5%          | 37.0%     | 23.5%   | 3.7%                  |                   | 17.3%                     | 81               |
| e) Blog  | 12.3%          | 25.9%     | 23.5%   | 4.9%                  |                   | 33.3%                     | 81               |
| f) Navigation  | 16.0%          | 40.7%     | 24.7%   | 9.9%                  | 1.2%              | 7.4%                      | 81               |
| g) Search capability   | 16.0%          | 32.1%     | 25.9%   | 9.9%                  |                   | 16.0%                     | 81               |
| h) Creating a profile  | 14.8%          | 28.4%     | 18.5%   | 4.9%                  | 2.5%              | 30.9%                     | 81               |
| i) Site design   | 30.9%          | 35.8%     | 22.2%   | 3.7%                  | 2.5%              | 4.9%                      | 81               |

**Table 10: Agrilinks user satisfaction level with current Agrilinks site features**

The survey also asked participants to assess which features would be most useful to consider in the site re-design. The top three features mentioned were training resources (68.6 percent), guidance documents (65.1 percent), and news (61.6 percent). Additional qualitative feedback from both users and the client reflect that they would like to see resources on specific topics and post-course materials. Similar to the client survey results, respondents to the user survey also rated “finding technical resources” the highest in terms of level of significance with an average score of 4.36, followed by “learning about USAID partners and projects” (average score of 4.25) and “registering for Agrilinks events” (average score of 4.23).

### *Agrilinks User Focus Groups*

The discovery phase culminated in the administration of two focus groups with Agrilinks users, one in-person and one via webinar using Adobe Connect. The objective of the Agrilinks user focus groups was to supplement responses provided on the user survey by gaining a better understanding of how key Agrilinks/BFS stakeholders use the site and how the site can support their efforts as agriculture and food security practitioners. Of the 38 contacts identified, a total of 12 participants attended the focus groups. Some key themes from the focus groups include:

- Emails and word of mouth drive people to the site
- Library is valuable, but search functionality needs to improve
- Categorization by topic and region function would be useful
- Links to other sites would allow user access to full spectrum of resources
- Newsletter with hot topics that people can opt out of would be useful
- Heading is confusing - what is KDID?
- Connection and download speed is a problem
- Star ratings are unreliable and not helpful
- People are willing to contribute by uploading content

### *Summary Recommendations*

The feedback from the discovery phase resulted in some higher-level conclusions related to what is working, what is not working, and what users would like to see on the upgraded site. Areas of the site that are working include communication of Agrilinks events, breadth of information, and multimedia content. The key areas that were identified as not working on the site include: search capabilities, cluttered look and feel, working groups, delay in loading/downloading, and difficulty logging in. Finally, both users and BFS would like to see the following features on the upgraded site: news; more information on projects

and goals of USAID/BFS; pop-ups and tutorials/guidance; search by filters; links to other sites; demonstrated value of profile; training resources; and more transparency about the ratings system.

During its first 10 months as an independent site, Agrilinks visitation has steadily climbed. As KDMD embarked on the discovery phase of the Agrilinks upgrade, it was clear that key stakeholders and users of the site viewed Agrilinks as an established and recognizable name in knowledge sharing for agriculture development and food security. People felt the site was straightforward and offered high value in terms of events and resources. It was also clear from feedback gained during this period that more work needed to be done to connect with the audience through additional channels.

## Trainings

A total of 62 participants attended the Ag Core Courses offered in June and December 2011 and 25 participants attended the September 2011 Ag Overview Course. KDMD solicited feedback through daily course evaluations. On average, participants of the two iterations of the Overview Course “agreed” (average of 4.23) that the course was informative. Participants “agreed” (average of 4.28) that the Core Course was applicable to their work (1=Strongly Disagree and 5=Strongly Agree).<sup>8</sup>

KDMD also piloted on-site interviews at the September 2011 Ag Overview Course to complement the existing daily in-person evaluations. Overall, participant feedback revealed that the course achieved most of its overall goals and objectives for individual sessions. However, some sessions were less successful at meeting objectives, specifically the USDA presentation. The interviews also suggested that participants were satisfied with the overall content of the course as well as the breadth and depth of the content. Many interviewees highlighted that the course was adequate for participants with diverse backgrounds.

Given the varying experience of the participants, there were requests for both more background content and advanced topics. One suggestion was to go deeper into the fundamentals of agriculture, including value chains. There was also a request to receive information about USAID goals and BFS priorities prior to the course, which would provide better structure and direction in the sessions. Participants also wanted the course to cover Feed the Future in a more in-depth manner, in addition to greater focus on the actual work USAID is doing. Several of the participants said they wanted more information on climate and environmental issues in the context of BFS.

## C. Lessons Learned and Applied

### Seminars

In August 2011, KDMD facilitate a BFS Seminar Review and Planning Workshop the goal of which was to take stock of experiences, lessons learned, and best practices of the two BFS seminar series processes (Ag Sector Council and FTF Stakeholder Meetings) implemented to date. The objectives of the workshop included discussing successes, acknowledging the growing ownership within KDMD and BFS, and identifying untapped potential moving forward to improve the seminars.

The workshop identified the need to assess planning processes and how participant and client feedback from the seminars is used in shaping future events. All KDMD portfolios participated in the workshop, which was useful in connecting learning from the BFS seminars to the MD seminar processes and vice versa. One of the recommendations that came out of the workshop was to consider conducting a seminar review twice a year or on a quarterly basis with a smaller group and engage additional input remotely.

The FTF Monitoring System Training Webinar provided a good opportunity for BFS to learn about the requirements and elements needed for a successful online-only webinar experience. The technological preparation, advance briefing and presenter preparation, as well as support on the day of the event

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<sup>8</sup> This reflects the average assessment for all sessions. Surveys for the two courses did not have the same questions.

provided useful lessons for future activities. The K&L team identified and mapped these steps to assist in future implementation of webinar-only events. In addition, there were some challenges encountered during the event, mainly due to unforeseen issues with the internet connection and the lack of clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Some recommendations that were identified for future events include:

- Conduct a dry run to help the presenters and KDMD staff define roles and test technology
- Have a member of the IT staff on site in case of technical/internet difficulties
- Encourage presenters to speak more slowly and with an even volume/tone
- Have someone dedicated to move pertinent questions out of the chat box and put them in a separate window for presenters to focus on
- Have two people running the Q&A to help avoid silences and minimize lengthy pauses
- Hold Adobe Connect trainings for KDMD staff

KDMD implemented the last recommendation, which was beneficial in the team's transition from GoTo Meeting to Adobe Connect for all future KDMD web-based seminars in the spring of 2012. Despite the challenges encountered, the team still considered the event a success, as it was an opportunity to implement a new tool for training and knowledge sharing purposes.

The Feed the Future Public-Private Partnership Technical Forum also provided an opportunity for KDMD to learn how to facilitate discussions using Adobe Connect. There were approximately 20 online participants, 5 of whom actively participated. Lessons learned from the process include the need to allow everyone to speak using their computer microphones when engaging a small group in a targeted online discussion. In addition, as only a small number of online participants actively participated in the discussion, it is better to invite more people to ensure a more active discussion. Two hours were allotted for the online brainstorming session, but as it was difficult to keep the small number of participants engaged for the duration of the session without any presentation, the discussion ended early. Finally, a dry run the day before the event was essential to familiarize the four facilitators with Adobe Connect and to provide guidance on using the headphones and microphones.

### **Agrilinks**

KDMD completed the beta phase for development of the Agrilinks knowledge platform during this reporting period. Agrilinks development entailed a deliberate, agile approach, making sure to incorporate lessons learned from development of other sites. The development focused on a core set of functions and features presented with a clearly articulated navigational structure and design. Focus areas for this first phase of development and engagement included:

- Designing landing pages and content for a dynamic homepage, events, external events, library resources, a blog, and search results
- Piloting Working Groups in coordination with the USAID Ag Core Course
- Launching a social media presence for Agrilinks, including Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and the Agrilinks blog (adding additional blog series throughout the year)
- Establishing enhanced seminar and webinar processes, post-event communication, and online functionalities to promote continuous engagement and learning
- Creating and disseminating Agrilinks promotional materials including one-pagers, bookmarks, and a banner to boost awareness of the brand and opportunities to engage

### ***Upgrade Discovery Phase***

Some of the lessons learned during the Agrilinks upgrade discovery process include: setting more realistic timelines and expectations for web development with clients, improving internal KM of activity protocol and planning processes, ensuring consistent documentation/recording of interviews and methodology, being more strategic about screening interview candidates, and refining interview questions to avoid repetition.

One of the positive outcomes of this process was the management of the discovery process by the KDMD team rather than outsourcing to a consultant, which was done in the past. This allowed for an expedited and seamless transition between feedback obtained from the client and users to recommendations for site development. The mini focus groups conducted with the BFS teams were also an excellent opportunity for KDMD to educate BFS staff about the purpose and goal of the Agrilinks site and the distinction between the Agrilinks and Feed the Future sites. Finally, the response rate from user surveys was good, even considering the short time frame in which the survey was active, due to aggressive outreach to the Agrilinks mailing lists, as well as effective promotion on Agrilinks and Microlinks with incentives to participate in the survey.

The Agrilinks upgrade discovery phase revealed that people generally come to the site for events and documents. Users are not typically receptive when it comes to social media and they do not see much value in it. They think Agrilinks is a leading source, however, and pushing the field (including USAID) in the right direction. The Agrilinks upgrade, while still underway, was a great opportunity to identify what is working on the site and to improve what is not. In thinking ahead to the next phase of development, there was overwhelming consensus from users and BFS client feedback that navigation should be simple and the messaging clear while maintaining ease of use.

### **Feed the Future Website**

In the summer of 2011, USAID approached KDMD to help re-design the Feed the Future website – [feedthefuture.gov](http://feedthefuture.gov) – representing the first opportunity for KDMD to implement a web project that was not affiliated with the KDID portal. This resulted in several lessons learned, namely, it was the first time the team used Drupal 7, which was more user-friendly than the previous version of Drupal. In addition, the KDMD team improved its coordination with USAID/BFS by implementing a strategic process in which clear feedback and sign-off points were utilized. BFS facilitated the planning process and engaged the key staff involved in the initiative while KDMD provided necessary inputs and advised on the implementation timeline and strategies for maximizing the content feedback during the limited time allotted to implement this project.

Some additional improvements that were identified and already implemented include: building more discovery capacity in-house and providing the project’s web development sub-contractor, Zaloni, with more exact and comprehensive instructions. The former was implemented for the Agrilinks upgrade process and the latter has been incorporated into conversations with Zaloni for ongoing web development activities and has resulted in more effective communications the developers. Other areas to consider for the future include:

- Have a communications team member involved from the beginning of the process, as well as the same people involved throughout the duration of the project
- Have the style guide ready before development and communicate with Zaloni to ensure they use it
- Notify the team when activity budget milestones are imminent (e.g. when 80% of the activity budget is attained)

### **AgExchange**

One of the first opportunities for participants to interact on the new Agrilinks site was the AgExchange. Key lessons learned during this activity include:

- Increase communication between Microlinks and Agrilinks site managers to manage differences and improve troubleshooting
- Document the facilitation process further to capture tacit knowledge
- Hold dry runs with the facilitation team weeks prior to the event to help improve training
- Conduct pre-event outreach to tailor content to the audience (i.e. a preliminary survey)

- Use the KDID account creation process (required for AgExchange participation) in order to capture participant data
- Look for additional ways to organize the resources other than one long discussion page
- Explore options to limit the frequency of emails distributed throughout the activity
- Improve communication/prioritization of technical web issues during the event
- Send an email about tips for participants prior to the event
- Encourage people to introduce themselves and state the location from which they are participating

The AgExchange also resulted in 59 new users joining the Agrilinks community to participate in the AgExchange.<sup>9</sup>

### #AskAg Twitter Hour

Some lessons learned identified through the first BFS activity facilitated by KDMD using social media include:

- Provide a learning agenda (possibly in a blog post) for participants to read through beforehand
- Tighten the topic more for the next Twitter Hour (i.e., women’s empowerment is too broad)
- Improve the branding for the activity (i.e., Chat vs. Ask an Expert or Expert Chat)
- Credit other partners as appropriate rather than USAID focus only
- Think creatively about who is asking questions during the event
- Consider piloting an M&E Working Group on Agrilinks to continue discussion from Twitter
- Figure out how to better cater to non-technical experts for this type of event
- Define the “voice” that will moderate the Twitter chat (personal handle vs. organization handle)

### Trainings

The team identified and applied the following lessons learned from each of the course offerings, resulting in improvements to subsequent iterations of the course during this reporting period.

#### *Ag Overview Course*

A key takeaway from the September Ag Overview Course revealed the need for flexibility, as high-level presenters may need to reschedule their sessions. Another suggestion included sending Outlook appointments for the times of the speakers’ scheduled sessions. Participants also liked the new “speed dating” event, in which participants rotated between USAID experts from several regions of the world for 20-minute courses and Q&A sessions on agriculture issues in each region.

#### *Ag Core Course*

The implementation of the Core Course over this reporting period allowed for important lessons in terms of roles and responsibilities needed for in-person training support, facilitator processes, and technological support. For example, KDMD selected a new location for the next iteration of the Ag Core Course due to technical difficulties encountered at the previous venue. The new location will also allow greater functionality with Adobe Connect and open the possibility of using more remote presenters, with an eye towards implementing the course abroad.

The course featured one remote speaker, joining from Illinois via Adobe Connect. The need for having back-up plans was imperative and the team identified solutions to technical challenges that arose with the remote speaker’s audio. The team resolved this issue by sending the participants’ written questions to the presenter via the chat function. Another technological lesson learned was the importance of having videos downloaded or imbedded fully in presentations to avoid the delays caused by buffering.

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<sup>9</sup> The 59 users joined Agrilinks between March 6 and March 29 and were part of the AgExchange Group.

Participants responded positively to the adjustments to the Ghanaian case study, namely, the guidance given to the groups, additional information, and clarified objectives, which resulted in stronger, more integrated presentations than those from previous courses. Participants engaged in high-level thinking and came up with creative solutions to the fictional situation in Ghana. These adjustments helped participants apply the content more effectively with a particular focus on integrating the themes of gender, nutrition, vulnerable populations, and climate change. Participants also indicated that they enjoyed the chance to engage directly during the Learning and Adapting Session, which used a more interactive approach employing audience-response, or “clicker,” devices.<sup>10</sup>

During the simulation activity “The Game of Life in the Village,” a new strategy of playing with an electronic spreadsheet was piloted, with two to three facilitators per village, one laptop, and projector each. The purpose was to see if this would streamline calculations and time spent on figuring out the results of each round, but this did not happen. While it allowed participants to visualize all of participants’ choices on a spreadsheet, this detracted from the discussion, and shifted the emphasis too heavily on calculations. Furthermore, this required more preparation to set up and additional training support (more people to run the laptops). For the next iteration, the course will eliminate the spreadsheet, revert to participants working through their own sheets individually, and have a guided facilitator discussion and debrief by round.

An online community was tested as a pilot activity to provide a space for participants to access and share resources after the course. However, only 14 participants signed up to be members of this space. In the future, additional attention will need to be placed on facilitating community access during the course and encouraging participants to access the space. In the past, USB drives with materials were distributed to participants, which might be revisited if the goal is to provide access to these materials to a maximum number of people. However, if the goal is to encourage participant interaction in a virtual space, strategies and additional attention will need to be considered with a focus on a potential USAID facilitator for the space. It is important to learn from this recent experience about the level of effort involved to set-up, manage, and incentivize participant use. The online working group will be tested a second time for the July 2012 Ag Core Course, but in this case participants will be required to join the group to access pre-work three weeks prior to the course.

#### **D. Long-Term Outcomes and Impact**

During the latter part of this reporting period, KDMD undertook efforts to assess the impact of BFS seminars and courses. Impact is measured by whether participants are able to apply the tools and methodologies presented during the seminar or course to their current work. The follow-up surveys and interviews also asked respondents to explain how they had applied course content.

##### **Seminars**

This survey targeted participants who attended three or more of the Ag Sector Council Seminars between January 2011 and April 2012.<sup>11</sup> The survey also invited respondents to participate in a short follow-up interview. Overall, there were 25 survey responses out of the 120 participants that were invited to complete the survey, representing a 21 percent response rate. Nine survey respondents participated in the follow-up interview.

Figure 6 displays the average participant assessment of whether they shared seminar content with colleagues/peers and made professional contacts by participating in the seminars. On average, respondents agreed that they shared seminar content with work colleagues/peers. However, respondents

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<sup>10</sup> “Clickers” are hand-held devices that participants can use to provide real-time responses to polls or other questions posed during events to get a quick snap-shot of responses from the audience.

<sup>11</sup> The effort was focused on the Ag Sector Council seminar series, as this represented more of a legacy series under the Food Security/Agriculture Program rather than the FTF Stakeholder Meetings.

were fairly neutral towards making professional contacts at the seminars. The interviews helped to explain this further as participants said they tend to network with existing contacts if attending the seminars in-person. One interviewee noted that while he does not make new professional contacts at the seminars, he does make personal ones by re-connecting with lost contacts. Furthermore, those who tend to participate in the seminars via webinar inevitably found it difficult to network with peers, but did make an effort to follow up with presenters for specific technical questions.

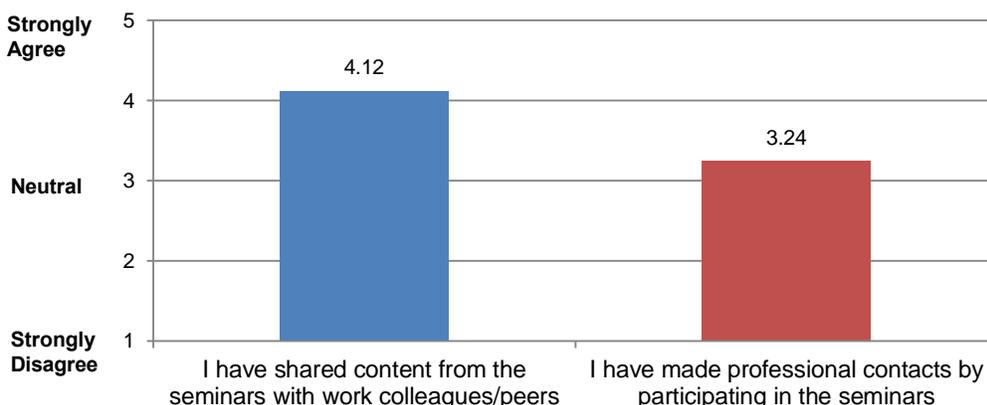


Figure 6: Average participant assessment of sharing seminar content and making professional contacts

In addition, 22 out of 25 survey respondents reported forwarding or sharing seminar invites with colleagues. Eight out of the nine interviewees also recommended the seminars to colleagues when the topics were relevant to their work. However, a majority also reported that their colleagues tend to be on the Agrilinks mailing list already. The one interviewee who did not recommend seminars to colleagues indicated that he is the only person in his office that works on projects for which the seminars would be relevant. Other examples of ways in which respondents have shared information from the seminars with colleagues include: sharing relevant links to past and current resources on Agrilinks (presentations and other technical resources); forwarding post-event emails; and informing colleagues of key takeaways from the seminars in group meetings or other such forums. As Figure 7 shows, the 25 participants that responded to this question largely agreed that the seminars were useful to their work, with slightly less agreement that they applied the approaches.

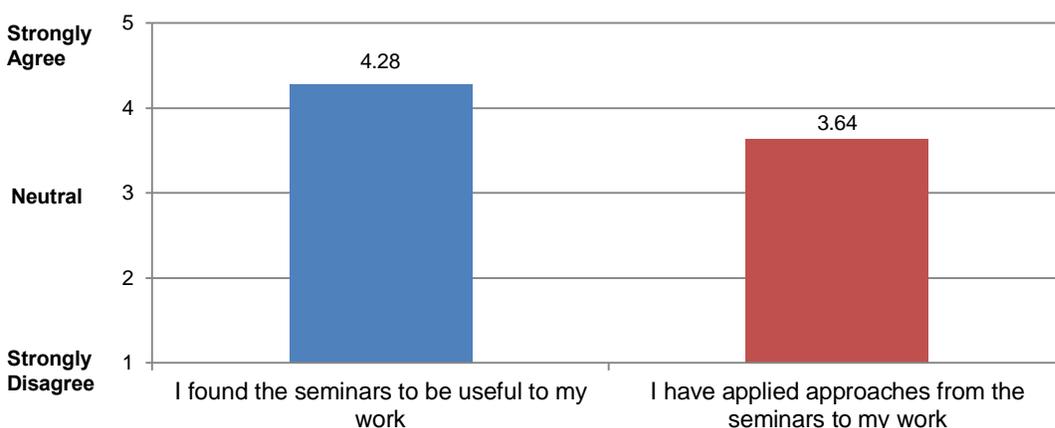


Figure 7: Average participant assessment of usefulness and application of seminar content

The survey and follow-up interview also gave participants an opportunity to elaborate specifically on what seminar content they found most applicable to their work. Some examples mentioned include the role of gender in economic growth, natural resource management, and warehouse receipts projects.

Further conversations with participants revealed that the information from the seminars has helped participants to: inform conversations with high-level government officials; develop multi-year strategies for a particular region; apply technical concepts to potential work in new countries; and provide different perspectives to the work they are currently doing.

The interviews and surveys also asked participants to share aspects of the seminars that they liked the most and found the most useful. Some key themes which surfaced include:

- Punctuality of the seminars
- Opportunity to hear different approaches/strategies applied to various projects
- Information on new developments and current priorities in the field
- Availability of resources to share with colleagues after each seminar

This follow-up evaluation suggests that respondents are pleased with aspects of the seminars ranging from format and logistics to content. Participants see value in attending the seminars as a way to stay current in USAID agriculture and food security related topics and to be exposed to experiences shared by other practitioners.

Although both the surveys and in-person interviews garnered positive responses, participants had a few suggestions about how to make the seminars more successful. Some recommendations based on participant feedback are as follows:

- Reach out to a larger USAID audience
- Cut off RSVPs once registration has reached capacity or re-schedule high-demand seminars to a larger venue
- Provide a USAID/BFS framework to be explained at the start of every seminar

## Trainings

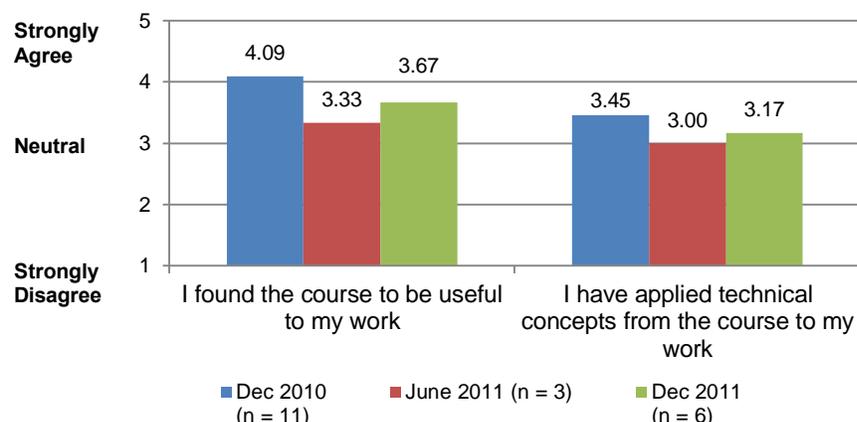
KDMD invited past attendees from the Ag Core Course to participate in the follow-up survey and interview.<sup>12</sup> There were 20 survey responses out of the 100 participants, representing a 20 percent response rate, and four of the respondents participated in a follow-up interview. The majority of responses (55 percent) came from the December 2010 cohort.

Participants were asked about the types of programs they work on with the option of selecting more than one program. Agricultural production received the highest response rate at 75 percent, followed by value chains and agribusiness at 70 percent. Only 45 percent of respondents reported working on sustainable intensification and NRM programs.

The majority of respondents found that formal presentations and discussion panels/Q&A sessions were the most useful aspects of the course in terms of application to their current work. The average score of all participants was 3.85 in terms of how useful the course was and 3.30 in applying concepts to their work. The December 2010 cohort gave the most positive assessment of the course content in terms of usefulness to their work with an average score of 4.09. The application of technical concepts received a more neutral assessment from all course cohorts with the average scores evenly distributed among all groups, as shown in the Figure 8.

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<sup>12</sup> The survey targeted past participants of the USAID BFS Agriculture Core Course offered in December 2010, June 2011, and December 2011.



**Figure 8: Average participant assessment of course content by course date**

Content from the course that participants cited as being directly applicable to their work was related to agricultural sector finance and value chains. One respondent stated that they were not able to apply the content from the course to their work as their job entailed mostly administrative tasks, but other respondents were able to apply one or more aspects of the courses to their work.

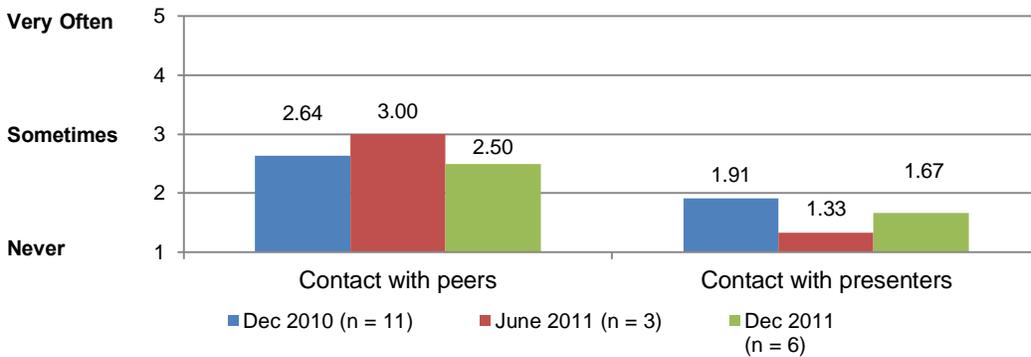
The survey also asked participants to assess their level of agreement that the course objectives successfully prepared them for their work. Table 11 depicts the average results by course cohort. The lowest average scores were reported by the June 2011 group. However, it is important to consider that this cohort represents a small sample size of the total response pool.

| Objectives  | Course Date       |                   |                  |                           |
|---|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|---------------------------|
|   | Dec 2010 (n = 11) | June 2011 (n = 3) | Dec 2011 (n = 6) | All participants (n = 20) |
| 1) Understand the role of agriculture in economic growth and food security.   | 3.82              | 3.67              | 4.50             | 4.00                      |
| 2) Recognize the value of integrating other sectors into agriculture and food security for improved program impact. | 4.09              | 3.67              | 4.33             | 4.10                      |
| 3) Understand technical approaches and best practices to increase incomes and reduce hunger through agriculture.    | 3.73              | 2.67              | 4.50             | 3.80                      |
| 4) Strengthen our agriculture community of practice.  | 4.00              | 2.67              | 4.00             | 3.80                      |

**Table 11: Average participant assessment of course objectives in relation to preparation for work by course date**

In addition, participants were asked whether they maintain contact with their peers and presenters and if so, how often. Frequency of contact with presenters received consistently low average scores among all groups, suggesting that respondents almost never maintained contact with presenters, as shown in Figure 9.

The interviews revealed that some of the respondents maintain contact via email and telephone with other DLIs or Junior Officers in the same region. However, participants saw the most value in connecting with other Ag backstops during the course rather than following the course. One interviewee did convey that he was able to follow up with a senior officer regarding a technical issue and received a response. Another interviewee noted that he was able to maintain contact with a peer who also participated in the course and the contact served as a useful resource for a potential new project.



**Figure 9: Average participant assessment of contact with peers and presenters by course date**

The follow-up interview and survey also asked participants to remark on some of the challenges that they face in their current work, whether the course helped to address some of these challenges, and what kind of information could have better prepared them to face these challenges. Two key challenges cited include sharing experiences and lessons learned on designing programs with other missions, and applying technical agricultural information to ongoing projects.

In terms of addressing some of these challenges, participant feedback indicated that it would have been helpful for the course to give greater emphasis on approaches other missions have taken and to have more time for discussion. Respondents noted that the course was helpful in providing a new perspective and exposure to specific tools that can be applied when going back to the mission.

The follow-up survey and interview results show that, overall, participants had a good experience with the course and found the content to be useful to their current work in terms of providing new tools, an opportunity to connect with peers to share experiences, and exposure to technical concepts. Participants were able to apply the tools and methodologies learned from the course in areas such as drafting scopes of work for the Feed the Future initiative in Bangladesh, informing a Project Design course outline, and exploring opportunities in other countries for new food security projects. However, in some cases, respondents explained that being a Junior Officer/DLI sometimes precludes them from working directly on technical issues at the missions.

Participants also occasionally refer to materials provided from the course for resources. One interviewee noted that it would be helpful to know if new materials are available for participants who attended an earlier iteration of the course. Some other recommendations based on participant feedback are as follows:

- Expand the target audience to include more senior officers, not just DLIs
- Incorporate more case studies and best practices to the course
- Introduce new ideas/cutting edge research to the course and less “AID-speak”
- Expand the focus from African cases to other regions as well
- Encourage participants to have at least one year of experience in the field before participating in the course to get more value out of it
- Consider having a refresher follow-up session following the course to gauge how participants are applying the information and to allow participants to provide feedback on various challenges

## Economic Growth Program

KDMD's Economic Growth (EG) Program works with the EG Office (EGAT/EG) to leverage knowledge sharing activities and improve its training program by infusing it with adult learning methodology and knowledge management best practices. The majority of KDMD's work in the EG Program is focused on Adult Learning and Training, with the program implementing or supporting five blended and in-person courses to meet the needs of the new and existing EG Officers. Many lessons learned from the previous iterations of EG courses were applied to improve courses in this reporting period. Over the past year, the program has also provided instructional design and development support in the creation of a certification process for in-depth courses, an ongoing process that will continue into the following year.

This section will give an overview of EG Program activities implemented during the current reporting period, including relevant evaluation data, lessons learned and applied in the implementation of the courses, and long-term outcomes and impact. The section pertaining to long-term outcomes and impact will provide the results of an evaluation of past participants of the EG Overview Course, which gives insight into the impact of EG trainings.

### A. Synopsis of Activities and Products

In the past year, the EG program implemented the following activities:

- Economic Growth (EG) Overview Course (June 2011 and December 2011)
- Economic Growth (EG) in Post-Conflict Countries Course (June 2011)
- Advanced Topics, Issues, and Tools in Development Economics Course (March 2012)
- Trade and Investment Training Course (March 2012)<sup>13</sup>
- Economic Growth (EG) Course Certification (Ongoing)

#### EG Overview Course

This reporting period saw two more iterations of the EG Overview Course (in June and December 2011), which used a blended learning format consisting of online modules that culminated in a 5-day in-person workshop. Broadly stated, the EG Overview Course seeks to give USAID officers a common and shared technical knowledge base by providing theoretical and applied content. The specific goals of the course are to give officers competency in identifying and assessing key economic growth constraints in developing countries in addition to designing and managing programs that address these constraints.

#### EG Post-Conflict Course

In June 2011, KDMD delivered the EG in Post-Conflict Countries Course for the fourth time, which provides guidance to EG planners facing the challenges of identifying and prioritizing needs, designing, and delivering EG programs in post-conflict environments. The goals of the course include promoting the understanding of how EG programs fit into post-conflict environments, what assessment tools are available, which program options are feasible, and what resources are available within USAID and the US government.

#### Advanced Topics Course

The EG Program also implemented an in-depth pilot course called Advanced Topics, Issues, and Tools in Development Economics in March 2012. This course meets the specific need and demand for a more comprehensive and sophisticated approach to economics. The Advanced Topics Course provides training on advanced economic topics and relevant programs, policies, and tools to respond to those issues. The course sessions and content have an applied focus that target officers that already have a foundation in

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<sup>13</sup> For this course, the EG Program provided only limited logistical support and was not involved in curriculum design or course evaluation whatsoever. As such, this report will not discuss this course.

economic fundamentals. The KDMD team did not play a major role in the course design, but facilitated logistical implementation and course evaluation.

### Economic Growth Course Certification

Finally, KDMD is working with the EG Office to provide instructional design and support in the development of a certification program for the EG in-depth online courses. The EG Office aims to launch the first certification course in Winter 2012. While this work initially began in early 2011, it took nearly a year for the EG Office to reach an agreement on which in-depth course area to focus on first. The EG Office reached a decision in the summer 2011, after which KDMD assembled a design team consisting of project sub-contractor GLS and the KDMD Program Manager. Between October 2011 and May 2012, the design team has collaborated with the EG Office to design the user’s certification experience, a content matrix, and a workflow process. The team has started creating content for the Financial Services Course, which is currently about one-third complete. KDMD has also been in discussion with the team from USAID University to determine the technical requirements needed to enable the course experience. The project hopes to initiate the second in-depth course – Trade and Investment– later this year.

## B. Synopsis of Evaluations

The Assessing & Learning Portfolio uses online and in-person evaluations to assess participant satisfaction and to gauge the degree to which participants feel the training courses are relevant and applicable to their work. This feedback includes both qualitative and quantitative questions. Furthermore, post-course debrief sessions provide reflective feedback from course organizers and presenters. Table 12 shows the attendance rate of each of the training courses in addition to the survey response rate, which changes given that each day of the courses have separate surveys.

|                          | Number of Participants | Daily Survey Response Rate |
|--------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|
| EG Overview June 2011    | 40                     | 30% - 75%                  |
| EG Overview Dec 2011     | 30                     | 73% - 96%                  |
| Post-Conflict June 2011  | 32                     | 19% - 66%                  |
| Advanced Topics Mar 2012 | 35                     | 57% - 91%                  |

**Table 12: Number of course participants and daily survey response rate**

For the majority of the course sessions, the evaluations inquired whether participants felt the content was applicable to their work. This measure of the usefulness and usability of the course content can serve as a predictor for potential future impact since the more professionally applicable content is, the more likely it will result in behavior change by USAID officers. Participants responded whether they agreed that the content was applicable to their work on a scale from “strongly agree” (5) to “strongly disagree” (1).<sup>14</sup> Figure 10 shows the mean response of all sessions for each of the courses. All courses have averages that near 4, or “agree.” This indicator increased in successive iterations of the Overview Course, which may suggest improvements in the course over time.

<sup>14</sup> Earlier versions of the evaluations ask whether sessions were “relevant” to participants’ work, which was revised to “applicable.”

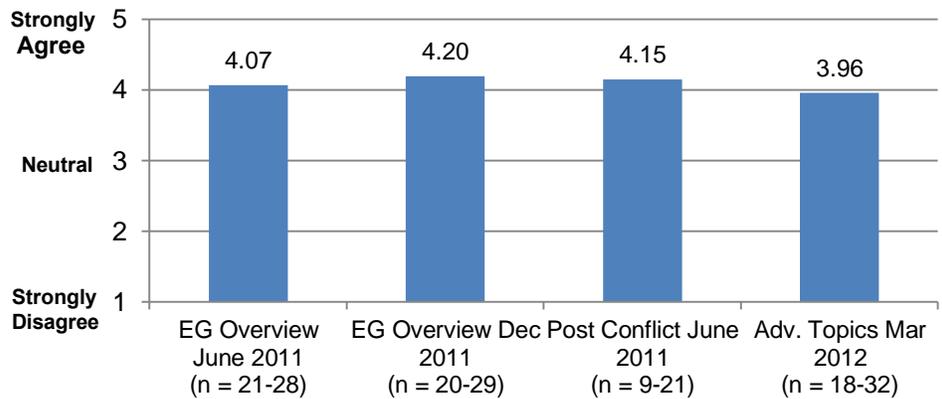


Figure 10: Average assessment of professional applicability/relevance for all sessions

Furthermore, on the final day of the courses, participants were asked to evaluate the courses as a whole, with responses ranging from “very good” to “not good” or “poor.”<sup>15</sup> All of the courses received a majority of positive responses, as shown in Figure 11. Similar to the assessment of applicability, the overall evaluation of the Overview Course improved from June to December. The Advanced Topics Course received unanimous positive assessments from the respondents, with 55 percent responding “very good” and 45 percent “good.” The Post-Conflict Course received some negative responses, which suggests the course could improve with subsequent offerings. Critical responses for the Post-Conflict Course cited the heavy burden of the course readings and the length of time devoted to case studies.

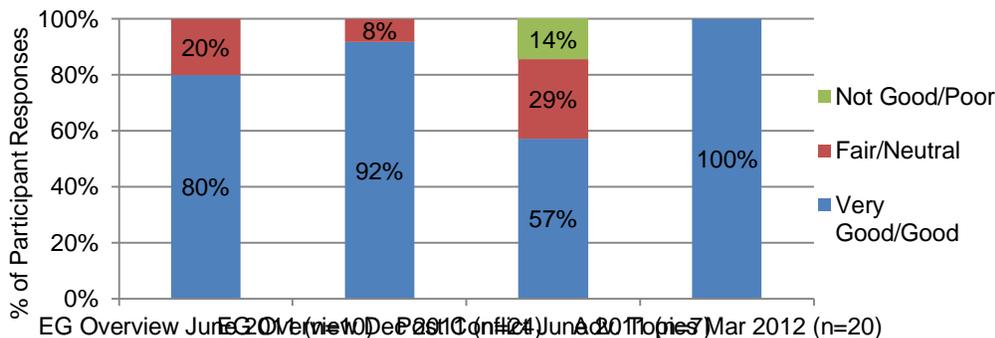
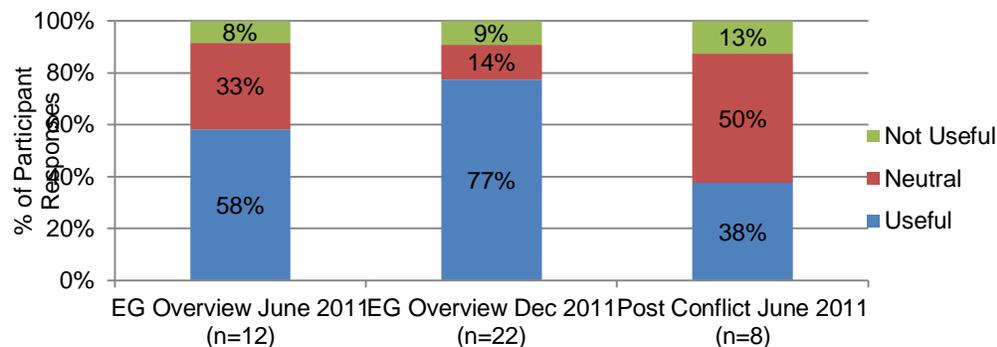


Figure 11: Overall assessment of course experience

Given the significant emphasis on blended online and in-person learning methods in EG courses, the evaluations also asked participants if they felt the online components of the courses were useful. Ideally, the online component should provide additional context for the overall course themes and have a direct link to the in-person course. As Figure 12 shows, most of the responses for the Overview Course indicate that the online modules were useful, with improvement from June to December that parallels the higher overall assessment. The responses for the Post-Conflict Course were less positive, with half of the responses “neutral,” suggesting that the online components could be more helpful.

<sup>15</sup> Earlier versions of the survey have three possible responses (“very good,” “neutral,” and “not good”), which were revised to be on a five point scale (“very good,” “good,” “fair,” “poor,” and “very poor”). The responses were condensed as indicated in the figure legend for the sake of comparability.



**Figure 12: Usefulness of online pre-requisites in preparation for course**

The A&L team also conducted in-person interviews during the December 2011 Overview Course. In general, the participants indicated that the course gave them knowledge that they could apply to their jobs, especially regarding USAID policies and strategies, which would allow them to align their projects and country strategies with USAID mandates. Furthermore, the course gave participants a deeper understanding of how larger policy issues affect specific projects. The course also helped non-EG officers to understand economic ramifications in other project sectors. For example, one agriculture officer was impressed by the connections drawn the course that suggested how economic growth interventions might enhance agriculture projects. In general, the non-EG background participants felt the course gave them a greater ability to communicate with their EG peers and inspired many to try to work across sectors.

The interviewees also described specific ways they intended to apply the knowledge gained in the field. One participant, for example, appreciated learning about workforce development approaches and anticipated applying USAID’s education strategy to their own work plan. Another interviewee said they would use project design tools presented in the course in their own projects and scopes of work. In addition, many indicated that they would refer to the course materials, such as tools to design a scope of work, in conducting their mission-specific projects.

### C. Lessons Learned and Applied

Based on prior experience and participant feedback, KDMD strives to iteratively improve course implementation. This section will summarize some of the lessons learned and applied to the courses in addition to describing some of the initial outcomes and challenges in developing the certification project.

#### EG Overview Course – June 2011

In terms of course organization and planning, the June offering drew upon several experiences with past courses in order to make improvements. Day Leads, who serve as daily coordinators and primary contacts with the core training team, were used for the first time in this course after the concept proved successful in the Agriculture Core Course in 2010. In addition, KDMD implemented other changes in logistical organization and planning, including:

- Strengthening the registration process with more explicit deadlines for prospective participants
- Communicating with participants weekly to remind them to complete pre-work activities
- Introducing a materials matrix to organize the multiple online (e.g. PowerPoint, internet links) and physical (e.g. handout, course binders) resources for each day’s sessions

Furthermore, KDMD altered some of the course content and format for the June course based on participant feedback and a comprehensive analysis by the course organizer. Among the improvements:

- Redesigned daily recap exercises to include a variety of review activities, rather than a single Jeopardy!-style game for each day
- Scheduled working sessions with the Day Leads to review session themes and linkages
- Adapted the workforce development and the ‘Poverty in an Hour’ online screencasts to create new in-person sessions
- Reviewed case study directions more thoroughly on Day One of the course
- Introduced two new daily thematic illustrative case studies to the course
- Revised course evaluation

The June course also saw significant changes to the online pre-work modules and required activities. When past participants indicated that they felt the online preparatory activities were too burdensome, the EG Overview Course organizers:

- Reduced the necessary completion time of the pre-work by asking the Day Leads to distinguish between required and recommended material and by adding some of the topics to the in-person course
- Provided new content on the daily economic growth themes in consultation with Day Leads
- Added executive summaries to the pre-work resources

### **EG Overview Course – December 2011**

The successful changes explained above in the June 2011 course continued in the December iteration of the course. In part due to the lessons learned in the June course, the December course also introduced new planning and organizational tools, including:

- Dress rehearsals for Day Leads and presenters, which served as a review of the daily activities for the Day Leads
- Facilitator’s Guide for course facilitators and Day Leads

Furthermore, the December course included a number of changes in content and structure, including new presenters and sessions. In order to continuously improve the content and format to meet evolving learning objectives the course organizers:

- Included a Development Credit Authority session to the in-person course
- Changed the structure of the case study presentations on Day 5 to an interactive round table format, which created several subsequent improvements
- Reduced the length of case study preparation sessions from two hours to an hour and a half
- Introduced new prestigious presenters, Steven Radelet (USAID’s Chief Economist) and Hernando de Soto (famed Peruvian economist and President of the Institute for Liberty and Democracy)
- Moved review grids/matrices to afternoon recap sessions for a clearer and more uniform review

The December course also saw further changes to the online pre-work component of the course. These changes represent a continuous evolution of the EG Overview Course’s blended learning format:

- Created a USAID-staffed online facilitator role
- Posted weekly questions on EGLC in order to increase participant discussion regarding online module content
- Provided screencasts offline for Macro 101 modules in response to access difficulties experienced by some participants

Finally, to facilitate ongoing improvement of the EG Overview Course through feedback from participants and course organizers, evaluation tools were added and updated:

- Conducted on-site interviews with participants to get deeper and more contextual assessment of their experience in the course
- Revised in-person survey evaluations

The success of the December 2011 course will lead most of the changes to be adopted in the next recurrence of the course in June 2012. KDMD and USAID hope to secure Hernando de Soto and Steven Radelet as presenters again given the overwhelming positive feedback from both participants and organizers. The difficulty of some participants in streaming the online modules has encouraged KDMD to try to provide greater offline access for the pre-work modules through downloadable files in future courses. Finally, given the low participation in the online discussions, June 2012 will omit the online facilitator role.

### **Post-Conflict Course – June 2011**

In the prior installment of the Post-Conflict Course, the course organizers noticed that there was a low rate of completion of the pre-work readings. Participants were expected to devote approximately eight hours of preparation to the course in the form of readings, selected lectures on post-conflict examples, and background information for a week-long case study. To increase the rate of pre-work completion – and, by extension, the participants’ understanding of course material – the course organizers provided stricter and more direct communication with the participants regarding expectations and course pre-requisites.

Furthermore, the June course introduced some new content areas and yielded some lessons specific to content that will be applied to the June 2012 course. For example, the pre-work material included readings to prepare for the Sudan case study. While this new addition intended to improve the case study activity by informing participants in advanced, as mentioned above, participants complained that the pre-work requirements were too burdensome. Participants appreciated the examples of inter-agency partnerships included in the 2011 course and suggested that the course expand this content. The feedback also suggests that the course could provide examples that are more recent and reflect a greater regional diversity.

Finally, the 2011 course had a low survey completion rate. Collection of the survey evaluation needs to improve through increased effort at collecting the survey at the end of each day.

### **Advanced Topics Course – March 2012**

The Advanced Topics, Issues, and Tools in Development Economics Course in March 2012 was a pilot course developed in response to the demand for a more in-depth and advanced training in development economics. While KDMD played less of a role in course design than in the other courses, there were still illustrative lessons that will be useful to future versions of the course and KDMD trainings in general. Lessons based on debriefings with course organizers include:

- Communicate more with presenters to identify clear objectives for each session
- Identify audience more explicitly and tailor course accordingly
- Link sessions together in a more cohesive manner
- Introduce more experiential learning to reduce emphasis on lecture and PowerPoint presentations

### **EG Certification Project**

As this was the first time that KDMD engaged with USAID on such an endeavor, the design team spent considerable time negotiating workflow processes and the course experience structure. Currently, the course structure is fairly well defined, but the workflow processes have undergone changes since the project’s inception. These changes are likely to continue during the development of the first Financial

Services Course. The prototype demonstration for the EG Office in March 2012 was a major milestone for the project. After that demonstration, KDMD conducted a debriefing session in which the team identified various areas to improve workflow processes. The suggested changes and recommendations for improvement related to content, process, and scheduling. The most exigent issues, recommendations, and resulting actions include:

- Shorten screencasts to a more manageable length that can be viewed in 30-minute sessions
- Increase interactivity of sessions, allowing participants to demonstrate and self-assess key learning objectives
- Capture all standards and practices in a central design document
- Conduct further research on the use of USAID's LMS and allow for flexibility and adaptation from the original layout/course experience
- Consider functionality and course structure issues before making the final decision on the organizing structure
- Encourage instructional designers to engage more directly with the subject-matter experts during content development in order to support subject matter experts in creating engaging learning strategies, to support development of the follow-on practice activities and resources, and to ensure instruction is aligning with stated learning objectives
- Improve beta module review process to be more cost and time efficient
- Create centralized location for feedback on the sessions as they are being developed to avoid missed comments, facilitate collaboration amongst reviewers, and decrease LOE to organize comments

## D. Long-Term Outcomes and Impact

### Impacts and Improvements

Overall, KDMD's EG training activities in this period disseminated knowledge on economic growth to 137 USAID officers, giving them the technical tools to both identify and tackle constraints to economic growth in developing countries. This section will outline some of the impacts of the changes and improvements made in EG activities based over the course of this reporting period.

#### *EG Overview Course*

Informed by feedback and lessons learned, the iterative changes made to the Overview Course over the reporting period led to marked improvements in course planning and organization, online and in-person content, and session format. These improvements have led to better logistical implementation of the course and ultimately higher participant satisfaction, as suggested by course evaluations. Perhaps the most influential change, the addition of Day Leads in June 2011 streamlined the planning, coordination, and content selection for the EG Overview Course in fundamental ways. The inclusion of Day Leads who have expertise and practical work experience in their respective subject areas allowed the course to incorporate the most current USAID priorities and frameworks in its sessions. Organizationally, the Day Leads helped the course to better define and distinguish the four daily economic growth themes through a higher-level synthesis, which led to more effective targeting of course learning objectives. By giving greater ownership and accountability to Day Leads through an official role, the course also gained visibility within USAID. Other enhancements made in terms of planning and organization resulted in the following changes:

- Registration procedures, including defined opening dates and deadlines, permitted ample time for participants to complete pre-work.
- The materials matrix made preparation easier by creating an inventory of all materials used in the course, which allowed for the seamless transfer of tasks.
- Dress rehearsals helped preparation and provided a context for the day's themes.

- The facilitator guide also allowed for clearer preparation for Day Leads and provided guidelines for the flow and organization of each day, leading to more efficient preparation for all involved.

The changes to the online and in-person course content and session format outlined in the previous section also led to marked changes including:

- The new round table presentation format on Day 5 required all participants to present in small groups, resulting in greater group ownership, accountability, and attendance.
- The small group format of presentations on Day 5 also allowed for more informal interaction among peers and with USAID experts, allowing for higher-quality and in-depth feedback that increased networking possibilities.
- High-caliber speakers Steven Radelet and Hernando de Soto increased visibility of the course and gave participants the chance to interact with these influential practitioners.
- Revised pre-work was shortened, made available offline, and underscored as an essential pre-requisite to the course, leading to higher completion rates.
- Greater ownership of pre-work by Day Leads led to more dynamic content as screencasts were converted to live format.

The evaluation process also evolved over this reporting period, leading to:

- Better understanding of long-term impacts through standardized baseline evaluation questions and follow-up surveys (described later in this section)
- Greater understanding of participant backgrounds
- Greater participant and practitioner influence on the course format and content based on feedback (especially with regards to pre-work and case studies)

#### *Post-Conflict Course*

The KDMD team was pleased to see that a higher rate of participants had completed their pre-work given the changes made in communication in June 2011. Based on this success, similar communication strategies regarding pre-work will be employed for future offerings. However, participant feedback suggests that the amount of readings and communication about the pre-work expectations continues to be a challenge.

#### *Advanced Topics Course*

The success of this pilot course lays a strong foundation for future installments. Reflection by course organizers suggests that future questions remain, including the frequency and structure of this course offering. Furthermore, course organizers need to decide whether the course will emphasize specific topics or a set of tools. Nonetheless, this course answers the need for instruction of higher-level economic content for USAID officers and hence expands the audience of the EG Office's existing suite of courses. The longer sessions in the Advanced Topics course allowed for more in-depth discussions and activities suitable for the treatment of more complex economic concepts.

#### *EG Certification Project*

The long-term horizon for the certification project is unclear due to the many unknowns surrounding this project: ambiguity around the course and testing experience, amount of content creation needed, and availability of subject matter experts and USAID's LMS team. The team has learned a lot during this reporting period and is striving to be more precise about expectations for completing the current course in addition to setting a realistic approach to develop the remaining in-depth courses. The team conducted a review of their workflow processes and identified problem areas which are listed under the Lessons Learned section. Improvements made in response to the prototype demonstration include:

- Creation of centralized design document by GLS as the project proceeds

- Collection of feedback systematically via a Google document with standardized slide identification codes to ensure consistency and organization
- Integration of instructional design team into the entire content development process so that format and design adjustments can be minimize

These improvements have allowed the design team to work more efficiently and cohesively. As KDMD begins to work with the next EG in-depth course, they will need to insist on applying these lessons learned from the start to avoid some of the setbacks and inefficiencies encountered with this first in-depth course.

### Long-Term Outcomes

As this report has described, the majority of KDMD’s work with the EG Office focuses on building capacity of USAID officers in a range thematic areas related to economic growth. These courses have sets of objectives that outline what the course hopes to achieve, usually linked to programmatic changes in EG development initiatives in the field and more informed decisions made by USAID officers. This section seeks to outline the impact of EG activities, focusing on the EG Overview Course, given the prominence and frequency of this course.

In order to assess the long-term outcomes and impact of the flagship EG Overview Course, the KDMD team contacted past participants of the course with the goal of identifying how well the participants have been able to apply the content of the course and in what ways they have used the knowledge in their work. The survey targeted participants of the December 2009, June 2010, and December 2010 iterations of the EG Overview Course. The survey asked respondents about the effectiveness of the course content and the achievement of course objectives. In addition, during the December 2011 course, A&L conducted in-person interviews that asked participants how they anticipated applying course content.

Overall, 28 out of the 133 participants responded to the survey, representing a 21 percent completion rate. The response to the survey is spread relatively equally across the three course dates. Table 13 on the following page shows the distribution of survey responses by course cohort and the range of responses for quantitative and qualitative questions.

| Course  | Number of Participants | % of total  | Quant. Responses | Qual. Responses |
|---|------------------------|-------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Economic Growth Overview Course December 2009 | 7                      | 25%         | 7                | 4 to 5          |
| Economic Growth Overview Course June 2010     | 10                     | 36%         | 10               | 4 to 7          |
| Economic Growth Overview Course December 2010 | 11                     | 39%         | 11               | 4 to 7          |
| <b>Total</b>                                  | <b>28</b>              | <b>100%</b> | <b>28</b>        | <b>12 to 19</b> |

Table 13: Response rate by course date

Figure 13 displays the results of how professionally beneficial past participants felt the course was and whether they applied approaches from the course to their work. The results suggest that participants rated the June 2010 course highest, with an average score of 4.1 for “I found the course to be beneficial to my work” and 3.7 for “I have applied approaches from the course to my work.” There was an improvement in the scores between the December 2009 and June 2010 classes, and a slight decrease in the December 2010 scores. The median score for all of the responses to these two questions was 4, or “agree.”

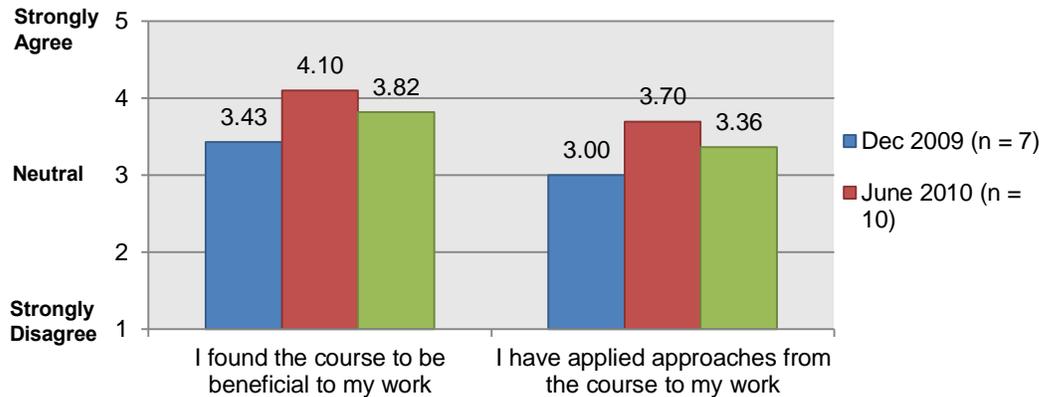


Figure 13: Assessment of courses and application of content by date

The survey also gave past participants the opportunity to give qualitative responses to indicate which aspects of the course were most useful for their current work. Most of the 19 responses were positive in their assessment of the course content. Nonetheless, some participants were displeased with the level of course content, which they perceived as too basic and catered toward non-economists. Another response noted that more examples and specific applications would have been useful. An environment officer noted that they had hoped that there would have been more discussion of the relationship between environmental issues and economic growth. According to comments, the most professionally useful aspects of the courses were:

- Understanding the official USAID perspective on economic growth approaches
- Learning about factors that inhibit growth in developing countries and interventions to overcome them
- Gaining a broad overview of how microeconomic, macroeconomic, and market development enabling factors work together to promote economic growth
- Receiving a good review of information previously learned
- Presenting different EG tools, including World Bank indicators and indices
- Participating in ‘Enterprise Development,’ ‘Poverty in an Hour,’ and the country case study presentation sessions

The survey also asked participants for specific examples of how they had applied what they learned professionally. Several people responded that the course gave them guidance for program design in the field. Other responses included:

- Content on financing mechanisms informed implementation of enterprise development programming
- Enabling environment and enterprise development content helped to promote private sector competitiveness in a developing country context
- Course informed country economic growth assessments and the design of a clean energy program
- Course helped in design of a public-private innovative development program
- Course informed creation of strategic partnerships
- Team exercises were good preparation for actual mission work for those with less experience

The results of how well the course has prepared participants to apply the course objectives in their work follows the same pattern as the previous questions, with June 2010 receiving the highest assessment and December 2009 the lowest, as Figure 14 shows. The responses indicate that the courses did a slightly better job at helping participants identify economic growth constraints (3.4 in June 2010) than designing

and managing programs (3.1 and 2.9 in June 2010, respectively). The median score for all objectives was 3, or “neutral” for all three course iterations.

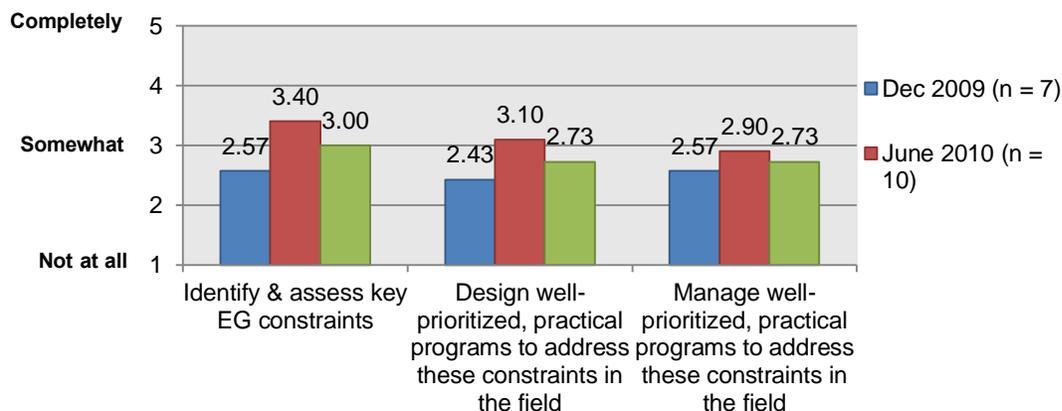


Figure 14: Level of preparation to implement course objectives professionally

The survey also included an open-ended question allowing the participants to elaborate on how well the course has prepared them to apply the objectives to their work. The results indicate the following:

- Case study was an effective format for applying the objectives through experience
- Economic concepts enhanced experience in the field and helped participants to design programs
- Course gave a deeper understanding of the expectations of an EG officer and how to apply the objectives
- Course was not very useful in helping officers apply the objectives to their work for some who already had a foundation in economics
- Basic course content precluded learning how to design and manage actual programs; examples of real projects would have helped

The survey also inquired whether respondents had maintained communication with their peers from the courses to gauge whether the course helped to foster continued knowledge sharing and a sense of community among economic practitioners. The results shown in Table 14 indicate that the December 2010 course had the highest level of ongoing communication among participants, declining successively with earlier courses, which likely suggests that communication declines over time. Qualitative feedback indicates that the course was useful as a forum for staff from different bureaus and offices to interact and learn from one another.

|  | Dec 2009<br>(n = 7) | June 2010<br>(n = 10) | Dec 2010<br>(n = 11) |
|--|---------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| How often do you communicate with contacts made at the training? | 2.00                | 2.30                  | 2.55                 |

Table 14: Communication with peers

Furthermore, many respondents suggested content modifications and other changes to the course that would have made the training more applicable to their work. The case study received mixed reviews, as some participants noted that it was the most useful in terms of applicability, while others wanted more time devoted to presentations by experts. Comments noted changes or additions to the course that would be useful:

- Including specific examples of projects that were successful
- Providing list of projects in different topic areas

- Emphasizing project design, including specific parts of the design process such as activity approval packages
- Integrating content from different sectors, such as environment and agriculture

Finally, the survey allowed the participants to give additional feedback that the other questions may not have covered. A summary of the responses includes:

- Supervisors should attend trainings to promote a mutual understanding of the subject matter
- Online modules were too burdensome and took too much time
- Course could be divided into beginner and advanced versions given range of experience among the participants
- Course was a good introduction to economic growth overall

While there were some critical responses, the vast majority of participants contacted gave neutral or positive assessments of the three iterations of the course in terms of being beneficial to their work and applying the content. Overall, the June 2010 course received the most positive average assessment, followed by the December 2010 course and finally the December 2009 course, which received the lowest assessment. Furthermore, FSNs gave higher scores on average than non-FSNs. Those with three to five years of experience also gave consistently higher assessments than those with less than two or greater than five years of experience. The surveys suggest that participants were able to apply course content to their current work effectively. With respect to being able to meet the objectives of the course in their current job, most participants felt the courses prepared them to identify EG constraints, but there were less positive results for designing and managing programs. This suggests that redoubling the focus on program design and management in the future could better prepare participants. Much of the criticism of the courses related to perceptions that the course was too basic and broad in its technical scope and lacked specific examples of successful projects.

## **Policy, Planning, and Learning Program**

The Bureau of Policy, Planning, and Learning (PPL) is responsible for leading the Agency's policy planning efforts, shaping overall strategic and program planning, ensuring the Agency's evolution as a learning and evaluation organization, overseeing donor engagement, and institutionalizing science and technology while guiding USAID as the premier development agency. KDMD coordinates a diverse range of activities within the PPL Program, including workshops, conferences, strategic research, and policy development. Many of these initiatives seek to promote fundamental changes to the USAID program cycle by infusing organizational learning practices on a systematic basis. Since KDMD's activities for PPL relate to groundbreaking organizational evolutions within USAID and topics at the frontiers of development theory, they involve intrinsic learning at multiple levels – program, project, bureau, and mission – and have high potential for long-term impact through organizational change. Among these activities are the development of a Strategic Learning Plan and the Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting approach for USAID. Many of these activities are in their initial phases and as such, their impacts will occur over the coming years. This section will give an overview of PPL activities over the past year, including lessons learned and applied, and anticipated long-term outcomes.

### **A. Synopsis of Activities**

#### **Agricultural Technology Evidence Summit**

KDMD was involved in USAID's Agricultural Technology Adoption & Food Security in Africa Evidence Summit in June 2011 – or Ag Tech Summit – which was co-sponsored by the Agricultural Technology Adoption Initiative (ATAI), an agricultural research group. The 2-day Evidence Summit sought to highlight the role of technology in African agricultural production and to identify technologies

that are appropriate for small-scale African farmers – particularly those with proven potential to enhance productivity, incomes, and food security. This event brought together USAID Washington and mission staff, academics, and practitioners working with agricultural technology to better understand what agricultural technologies work, when to use them, and how to scale up agricultural technologies. For this activity, PPL and KDMD consulted with contacts at the USAID Bureau of Food Security (BFS) to develop the agenda and conference products. KDMD also worked with ATAI to identify speakers, coordinate presentations, and handle event logistics.

### **Complexity Event and Evaluation Workshop**

The Complexity Event was a 1-day symposium held in October 2011 that focused on the emerging field of complex systems in the context of international development. The event brought together academics and practitioners across USAID, and featured a number of experts in complexity theory as presenters, including the renowned Michael Quinn Patton. The purpose of the USAID Complexity Event was to respond to the considerable interest across the Agency in understanding the central ideas of complexity thinking and its implications for development practice in crisis and transitional countries. The Event introduced complexity thinking to those unfamiliar with it, and provided opportunities for deeper discussion of how to better adapt development practices to complex environments. KDMD worked with the client to help develop the format and agenda, handle logistics for the event, and capture video interviews. After the event, KDMD produced event resources including a conference report, short videos, and screencasts, which were disseminated through the KDID portal.

The Evaluation Workshop occurred the day after the Complexity Event and had many of the same participants. This workshop was developed for USAID's Evaluation Interest Group (EIG) to better understand utilization-focused and developmental evaluations and to take advantage of Michael Quinn Patton's knowledge and experience in applying complexity theory to evaluation. KDMD helped facilitate the in-person event and the parallel webinar in addition to capturing the event and producing a screencast.

### **Futures Symposium**

The Symposium on Future Development Challenges was a 1-day event held in November 2011. The Symposium brought high-level USAID, State Department, and UN staff together to discuss emerging evolutions and possible drastic changes related to international development, focusing on different themes – populations, environment, political economy, and science and technology. The organizers charged KDMD with developing an engaging way to document participant reactions to sessions, particularly since they did not have a way of capturing breakout session presentations and discussions. KDMD worked with the client to devise a plan to target participants and video interview them. With the help of PPL/Science & Technology organizers, KDMD was able to interview about 40 people and produced 8 videos around the various themes of the conference.

### **KM4Dev**

KDMD also worked with PPL to edit and co-author the May 2012 issue of the KM4Dev journal, focusing on the results of the Knowledge Management Impact Challenge (KMIC) held in 2011. This involved overseeing the development of nine articles that explained the KMIC processes and activities and highlighted six of the most highly ranked case stories submitted to the challenge. In organizing this issue, KDMD worked with the authors of the featured KMIC case studies to expand their case stories into full-length journal articles.

### **Strategic Learning Plan and CLA Baseline**

USAID/PPL developed a Strategic Learning Plan with the goal of leveraging collaboration, learning, and adaptation to increase the effectiveness of USAID's development efforts. The plan is broken out into three phases. Phase 1 of the Strategic Learning Plan focuses on integrating learning and adapting throughout the Mission Program Cycle. Currently, efforts are underway within PPL support Phase 1 through the development of the Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA) process that is to be

incorporated throughout the Program Cycle. KDMD has supported the CLA process through the development of the Baseline Monitoring and Evaluation Plan.

The goal of the baseline is to develop a plan to monitor PPL's progress toward supporting the integration of learning throughout the Mission Program Cycle. To do so, KDMD helped to gather baseline and ongoing data to assess and adjust over time for continuous improvement, and to evaluate the benefits of program cycle learning integration. This is an ongoing project with multiple proposed phases, including:

- Developing a monitoring and evaluation plan
- Developing tools to help missions implement M&E in their learning plans
- Developing the baseline
- Learning about program cycle and learning strategies from USAID and other organizations
- Analyzing USAID's progress and adapting learning strategies and implementation plans
- Sharing results and lessons learned

Thus far, KDMD has worked to complete the monitoring and evaluation plan and has made some progress on refining evaluation methods and questions to ask missions to inform the baseline, but due to budgetary constraints, KDMD has not been able to make further progress. Over time, these activities will allow PPL to develop resources to help missions and implementing partners monitor and evaluate their own learning efforts.

### **External Knowledge Management Scan**

The KM Scan was a review and synthesis of the knowledge management and organizational learning strategies of large organizations in order to inform USAID's ongoing strategy development. The scan's objective was to research other donors, comparable multilaterals, and implementing partners to understand how they integrate strategic learning into their organizational processes, programming, and operations. The scan focused on example learning initiatives undertaken by key partners, in addition to the successes and challenges they faced in implementation. KDMD also interviewed various organizations to find out how they have integrated learning, including IFAD, ADB, and the World Bank. This information will inform KDID Learning Lab guidance/support to missions on developing and implementing learning plans, PPL's strategic learning plan rollout and change management effort, and CLA baseline. Thus far, the scan has been useful for PPL internally as they continue to develop guidance for missions. In the coming year, additional data will indicate how missions use or apply this information.

### **Program Cycle Learning Lab**

The purpose of the Program Cycle Learning Lab is to provide USAID staff guidance and knowledge around how to apply the collaborating, learning and adapting framework to their work, particularly around the Program Cycle, including strategy, project design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Part of this ongoing project is to consult with PPL/Learning, Evaluation, and Research (LER) staff on consolidating their various web assets (including KDID Learning Lab, EvalNet, HTE Portal, intranet, extranet, evidence summit pages, etc). Ultimately, the Learning Lab seeks to fill knowledge gaps and create a central online hub for KM and learning activities focused on missions and partners in order to support the CLA process and to integrate learning throughout the Program Cycle. It will include guidance on identifying opportunities for coordinating within and among organizations; KM resources and best practices; peer and expert support through a community of practice for missions, implementing partners, and the broader KM field; and training on knowledge and learning.

### **Other Events**

Furthermore, KDMD assisted PPL in implementing a number of small internal events. These included hosting LER Office retreats in October 2011 and April 2012 and Office of Strategic and Program Planning (SPP) retreats in March and April 2012. KDMD provided audio-visual support to create an Evaluation Policy Briefing in November 2011 for internal USAID use. In addition, the team facilitated

and recorded the Evaluation Design Workshop in March 2012. KDMD played only minor logistical roles in these activities and as such, this report will not cover them in depth.

## B. Synopsis of Evaluations

The PPL Program had assessment components in the form of in-person evaluations and AARs for ATAI, the Complexity Event, and the Evaluation Workshop. The remaining activities outlined in the previous section did not have formal evaluation mechanisms. Table 15 shows the combined in-person and online attendance and survey response rates for the events with evaluations.

|                     | Number of Participants | Survey Response Rate |
|---------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| Complexity Event    | 79                     | 41.77%               |
| Evaluation Workshop | 34                     | 64.70%               |
| ATAI                | 85                     | 11.76%               |

Table 15: Number of event participants and survey response rate

The surveys asked participants their level of satisfaction with the event, whether what they learned was applicable to their work, and other event-specific questions. This measure of the usefulness and application of the event and workshop content can serve as a proxy for potential future impact as the more professionally applicable content is, the more likely it will result in behavior change by USAID officers in the field. Participants ranked their agreement to whether the content was applicable to their work on a scale from “strongly agree” (5) to “strongly disagree” (1). The following chart shows the average participant response for how applicable sessions were in each of the events. For most events, the average participant assessment of the applicability of all sessions to their work was nearly 4, or “agree.” The Evaluation Workshop received a higher assessment still, with a 4.64 average.

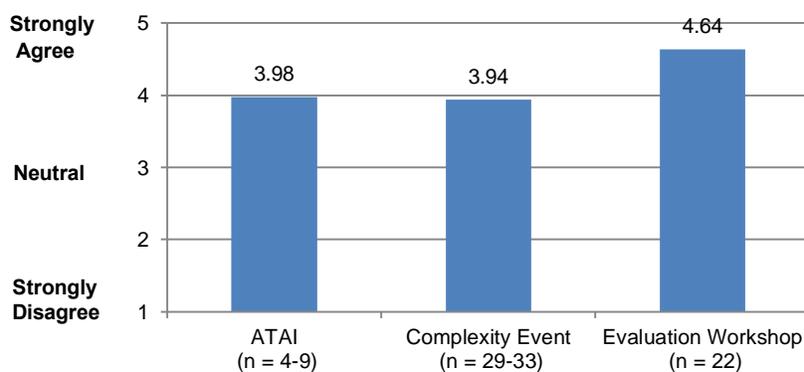
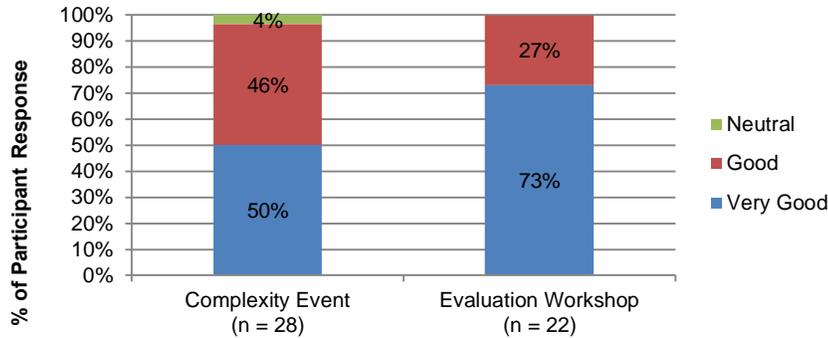


Figure 15: Average assessment of professional applicability/relevance for all sessions

The Complexity Event and the Evaluation Workshop both asked participants to rate the event overall on a scale ranging from “very good” (5) to “very poor” (1). Figure 16 shows the distribution of the scores, which averaged 4.46 for the Complexity Event and 4.73 for the Evaluation Workshop. As the figure illustrates, nearly all of the participants in both events gave a positive assessment of “very good” or “good.”



**Figure 16: Overall participant assessment**

The Complexity Event also evaluated what participants had learned and expected to apply, in addition to documented breakout sessions in which participants reflected on how complexity presented challenges and opportunities within USAID. Participants cited a number of conceptual models and tools presented during the event as the most important takeaways, including Mintzberg’s tracking strategy and Patton’s complexity framework among others. These tools present new paradigms in program design, monitoring, and evaluation, which if indeed used as new tools could have an impact in the Program Cycle. Nonetheless, participants also noted limitations to adopting a complexity theory approach in their work, including the lack of practical applicability, rigid bureaucratic structures, unsympathetic leadership, and so on.

The Evaluation Workshop questionnaire also asked participants to explain what content they hoped to apply. Respondents answered that the workshop gave them new understanding of how to work with uncertainty and complexity through the application of a systems approach. They also noted that an important takeaway was to consider monitoring and evaluation at earlier phases in the Program Cycle.

Evaluations from the Ag Tech Summit asked participants what they learned and how it might influence their work, which provides insight into possible outcomes. Some noted that the Summit was unlikely to influence their work, yet others explained that they had learned about new services and new ways to look at food security.

### **C. Lessons Learned and Applied**

The diverse scope and evolving nature of KDMD’s activities with PPL make the program unique within KDMD. While PPL does not operate ongoing legacy activities such as branded seminars or trainings as many of the other programs do, PPL’s oversight of high-level strategic research endeavors and knowledge sharing in innovative content areas yield distinctive lessons for KDMD. Since these are one-time activities, many of these lessons do not have clear applications to subsequent installments as recurring series of events in other programs do. In addition, since the longer-term strategic research activities, such as the CLA Baseline, are still in their preliminary phases lessons learned and impact will be more apparent in the future.

#### **Agricultural Technology Evidence Summit**

This was the second Evidence Summit that KDMD was involved with and the team reflected on the results of the first throughout the planning of the Ag Tech Summit. Overall, the client was pleased with the event and the participants gave positive feedback. ATAI successfully identified a large number of relevant speakers to attend the event and organized the sessions in a manner that was topically cohesive. Unfortunately, the large number of speakers scheduled resulted in rushed presentations and little time remaining for discussion. In future events, a more concentrated number of speakers and topics could allow for more time for individual presentations and discussion. While KDMD had intended further conversations around the agriculture technology assessment tool developed at the event, subsequent

information sharing failed due to competing priorities. The experience with this event led to the realization that a regional event might be more relevant in that the target audience was agricultural officers in missions. Furthermore, the Evidence Summits do not have clear ownership or purpose within USAID and PPL has an ambiguous role, which are issues that need clarification. PPL continues to explore this internally, taking note of the lessons learned from each summit in order to effectively disseminate this knowledge within USAID.

### **Complexity Event**

The short planning horizon, last minute agenda, and presenter changes in the Complexity Event required the KDMD team to be flexible and adaptive. The client was pleased with the perceived seamless implementation of the event, despite the continuously shifting agenda. The Complexity Event was a learning experience that illustrated the need for long term planning and involvement of USAID/PPL and perhaps the COTR in helping to structure the timeline, minimize last minute changes to the agenda, and support agreed-upon deadlines.

Despite the challenges, the KDMD team identified capture opportunities and successfully developed and disseminated post-event products online. Participant feedback was positive and suggested that the event was an interactive learning process in itself. In particular, the group breakout sessions allowed participants to reflect critically on some of the inherent challenges in the USAID Program Cycle and share experiences about working in complex environments. The positive feedback around the breakout sessions suggest that this format should be incorporated into similar events in the future.

### **Futures Symposium**

KDMD's role was limited to advising on a knowledge capture strategy and creating short video vignettes composed of participant interviews on the Symposium's themes. The quick video turnaround time was a challenge, providing a lesson for the team to be realistic about the time required given other programmatic requirements. Nonetheless, the participants were enthusiastic and the USAID client was impressed with the video output, especially the supplementary web statistics that KDMD provided.

### **External Knowledge Management Scan**

Although KDMD successfully completed the Scan, the scope of this activity became narrower over time, beginning with general KM implementation and learning to later providing more specific guidance to missions implementing CLA in relation to the Program Cycle. These changes occurred iteratively through conversations and meetings with KDMD, outside consultants, and the USAID/PPL activity lead.

### **Strategic Learning Plan and CLA Baseline**

Like many of the PPL activities, this activity has changed over time and is currently suspended due to budget limitations. One of the primary changes that has occurred is what the baseline seeks to measure – whether missions' technical capacity is strengthened through collaborating, learning and adapting vs. how collaborating, learning, and adapting helps missions to improve relationships, understand local contexts, influence other local actors, coordinate efforts, and adapt programs. The focus has shifted from the former to the latter, with an emphasis on linking improved learning, collaborating, and adapting to programming and ultimately the resulting development outcomes, rather than operational improvements or outputs. Deciding what to measure in the baseline has been a challenge given the new and evolving nature of the CLA process.

Another change in this activity occurred after conversations with PPL/SPP. Since missions with CLAs have been experimenting with the process on their own due to limited guidance from Washington, it might not be appropriate to measure *how well* they are implementing it. Instead, it may be better to gather evidence of *how* they are implementing the CLA in general to highlight good examples and document what is actually occurring in various cases. This is important in order for USAID to understand how

missions are incorporating learning and interpreting the CDCS. This activity is expected to resume if funding becomes available.

### Program Cycle Learning Lab

As this is the first website design for PPL, the program has attempted to draw on the experience of other KDMD programs and the Web Development Portfolio to inform budgets, timelines, and processes. The scope of the Learning Lab project has expanded and contracted several times over the course of the last year. Originally, the website was intended to host not only CLA guidance around the Program Cycle, but also resources on learning and KM for international development generally. Then, it was decided the Learning Lab would focus only on the CLA/Program Cycle and potentially be hosted on KDID, linking to the internal ProgramNet site for technical strategy and program design guidance around the Program Cycle. Currently, the scope of the website is still undecided, but it seems that the site may instead be hosted on AllNet or another USAID web space so that users can have a single sign-on for both the internal ProgramNet and external Program Cycle Learning Lab. Uncertainty surrounding budgets and the ultimate location of the website has been a challenge for PPL.

### D. Long-Term Outcomes and Impact

The Policy, Planning, and Learning Bureau’s ambitious mission of formulating Agency-wide policy and ensuring USAID’s evolution to a learning organization gives PPL’s activities the capacity for cascading long-term impacts within the Agency and ultimately in the developing world. KDMD’s work with PPL has supported this mission, yet it is difficult to assess the outcomes and impacts of these nascent and ongoing activities. On the whole, KDMD is engaged in ongoing research and support for PPL’s high-level strategic plans for the Agency and dissemination of pioneering knowledge within USAID and among practitioners, which is contributing to organizational learning and evolution of the Agency.

If resources allow, KDMD recommends reaching out to the participants of the various events detailed above to find out whether they are using any of the tools and methods shared during the events and workshops. Such an effort will highlight any potential long-term impact by measuring the behavior change due to knowledge dissemination in the events.

The CLA Baseline and the Program Cycle Learning Lab are activities which have been suspended due to resource constraints – if these activities are resumed KDMD will be able to evaluate their impact at a later date.

### Complexity Event

After the Complexity Event, KDMD produced event resources, including screencasts, videos, and audio recordings, which were posted on the Complexity Event webpage on KDID. Of these, the “Session One: What is a Complex System” screencast and the video “Complex Systems in Less than 3 Minutes” received the highest number of pageviews with 132 and 124, respectively. These resources attracted participants from countries all over the world as Table 16 shows.<sup>16</sup>

| Session One Screencast |              | Complexity In Less than 3 Minutes Video |              |
|------------------------|--------------|---|--------------|
| Country                | Unique Views | Country                                 | Unique Views |
| United States          | 44           | United States                           | 68           |
| South Africa           | 53           | United Kingdom                          | 12           |
| Switzerland            | 12           | Spain                                   | 6            |
| Botswana               | 3            | Canada                                  | 4            |
| Kenya                  | 2            | Kenya                                   | 6            |

<sup>16</sup> For the Complexity video, table does not include countries with less than two views: Australia, Italy, Argentina, Austria, Greenland, Ireland, India, New Zealand, Palestinian Territories, Thailand, Germany, and South Africa.

|                |   |             |   |
|----------------|---|-------------|---|
| United Kingdom | 1 | Switzerland | 3 |
| Philippines    | 1 | Pakistan    | 2 |

**Table 16 Pageviews for Complexity Event**

### **Futures Conference**

After the Futures Symposium, KDMD transcribed and edited the interviews recordings in order to produce a series of eight vignettes. These short videos were posted on YouTube and embedded on the Futures Symposium event webpage on KDID.<sup>17</sup> In total, the 8 videos received 354 views (an average of 44.25 views each), with Steve Radelet’s presentation receiving the highest number of views at 90.

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<sup>17</sup> Event page location: <http://kdid.org/events/symposium-future-development-challenges>

## **Europe & Eurasia Program**

The overarching mission of the Europe & Eurasia Democracy and Governance Social Transition (E&E/DG/ST) team is to enhance the ability of all people in E&E countries to improve their quality of life by assisting these countries in establishing effective and efficient social systems appropriate to market democracies. The ST team covers these key sub-sectors: education, labor markets, social services, social insurance, and social assistance, as well as issues relating to gender and trafficking in persons. Health issues are covered by the E&E Bureau's Health team. The Democratic Governance and Economic Growth team continues to encourage the economic and democratic policy gains in the region. KDMD's role is to assist these teams in developing knowledge sharing activities and products that increase awareness of the teams' work in these areas among staff at USAID missions and Washington offices, the State Department, other donors, NGOs, implementing partners, researchers, and other constituencies in the region.

### **A. Synopsis of Activities and Products**

During this reporting period, KDMD implemented the Inclusive Education Event (ST team), the Twenty Years of Democracy and Governance Programs in Europe and Eurasia Commemoration Event (DG team), and the Health Digital Stories Legacy Project (Health team).

#### **Inclusive Education Event (ST)**

The E&E Bureau's Social Transition (ST) team – in collaboration with the Bureau of Policy/Office of Policy, Planning and Learning and the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance/Special Programs to Address Needs of Survivors – hosted the event: “Inclusive Education - A Discussion with Dr. Margaret McLaughlin and Lynn Losert About Best Practices and Continuing Challenges in Europe and Eurasia, Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Southeast Asia.” The event was held in July 2011 and brought together various stakeholders who work on education and disability. The ST team wanted participants of the event to learn more about inclusive education, including best practices, and the contextual factors that affect program implementation. The event screencast was posted on the Social Transitions website.

#### **Twenty Years of Democracy and Governance Programs in Europe and Eurasia Commemoration Event (DG)**

The E&E Program – in conjunction with the E&E Bureau's DG team and George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs' Institute of European, Russian, and Eurasian Studies and International Development Studies Program – hosted a 1-day event commemorating 20 years of Democracy and Governance programming in the Europe and Eurasia region. The event was held in December 2011 with the purpose of taking stock of efforts and outcomes in promoting democracy and democratic governance in the region since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the communist bloc. Some of the outcomes of the event include: a discussion of past and current trajectories of democratization; an analysis of programmatic approaches to encourage improvements in democracy and governance; and a focus on remaining challenges for the region in building democratic systems moving forward.

#### **E&E Health Digital Stories Legacy Project (Health)**

The E&E Health team requested KDMD's assistance in developing a product that celebrates health successes in Eastern Europe and Eurasia, particularly because USAID is phasing out health programs in the region. This on-going activity started in August 2011 to highlight the E&E Bureau's health work implemented over the years. After consulting with KDMD, the E&E team approved the development of digital stories, which would appeal to a wide audience and serve as an engaging product that would best capture and express the health achievements in the region. The USAID Activity Manager chose to highlight health programs in seven countries: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Russia,

and Ukraine, with a focus on their programmatic successes around key themes, namely, service delivery improvement, human capacity strengthening, and civil engagement.

The E&E Program interviewed a health program team member in each of the seven USAID missions to develop content. The program later decided to re-frame the stories to fit the general topics of health strengthening systems (HSS), and maternal and child health (MCH) since USAID E&E health programs achieved particular success around these interventions.<sup>18</sup> The narrative scripts were developed and grouped as follows:

- Health conditions in each country prior to project start-up (background information)
- Project results achieved
- How the results were achieved (implementation)
- Legacy of the project (impact)

While the missions were reviewing the scripts, KDMD collected video footage and photos from the missions and assigned them to portions of the draft narrative to storyboard the script. Final script approval and completion of the digital stories is expected in Summer 2012.

## B. Synopsis of Evaluations

### Inclusive Education Event

KDMD administered an activity assessment to event participants with 10 out of 37 participants responding to the evaluation. The majority of respondents were affiliated with an NGO (60 percent), followed by 20 percent from USAID. Table 17 below shows two data points measured to gauge whether participants were able to apply program examples cited during the event to their work and whether recommendations for programming that were presented were useful to their programs. The majority of respondents provided a positive assessment of these metrics.

|  | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | # of Responses |
|--|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|----------------|
| Examples of best practices cited were applicable to my work.                   | 4              | 5     | 1       |          |                   | 10             |
|  | 40%            | 50%   | 10%     |          |                   |                |
| Recommendations for programming that were presented were useful to my program. | 4              | 5     | 1       |          |                   | 10             |
|  | 40%            | 50%   | 10%     |          |                   |                |

Table 17: Participant assessment of application and usefulness of event content

Additional feedback from participants indicated that they would have liked more time for Q&A and discussion, as there was a lively discussion following the presentations that had to be cut short due to scheduling constraints.

### Twenty Years of Democracy and Governance Programs in Europe and Eurasia (DG)

As this was a special commemoration event, an evaluation was not requested for this activity. However, the major activity output was a dedicated webpage on the KDID portal featuring event resources such as transcripts, session summaries, and a photo gallery.<sup>19</sup> The event page received 195 unique pageviews

<sup>18</sup> During this time, there was change in the USAID Activity Manager, which resulted in this decision.

<sup>19</sup> <http://kdid.org/events/twenty-years-democracy-and-governance-programs-europe-and-eurasia>.

from by visitors in 9 countries. The post-event resources page only received four unique page views all from the U.S.<sup>20</sup>

### **E&E Health Digital Stories Legacy Project (Health)**

As the digital stories are not yet complete, viewer feedback is not yet available. However, the program presented a draft clip of the digital story portion from Belarus to the USAID Activity Manager and she was very pleased with the interim product. As a result, the Activity Manager has been consulting with others in the E&E Bureau about digital stories and they are interested in producing their own digital stories.

## **C. Lessons Learned and Applied**

### **Inclusive Education (ST)**

As this was an ad-hoc event, there were no other activities to which lessons learned can be compared. The client was pleased with the management of the event, the attendance, and participation from the audience.

### **Twenty Years of Democracy and Governance Programs in Europe and Eurasia (DG)**

Some of the challenges encountered during the planning and implementation of this event include technology issues and a delay in availability of post-event materials and products. Issues with the computers during this event caused delays that the team circumvented by distributing handouts and having a coffee break, which participants seemed appreciate as a networking opportunity. This challenge highlighted the importance of being able to use KDMD equipment rather than relying on venue equipment.<sup>21</sup>

For the post-event materials, there was a 4-month delay in obtaining USAID approval for session summaries. This resulted in low number of visits to the event page after KDMD sent the post-event materials. Post-event materials should be distributed immediately following the event for highest visibility and use.

### **E&E Health Digital Stories Legacy Project (Health)**

In developing the Health digital stories project during this reporting period, there was greater collaboration with the KDMD and E&E teams. KDMD worked to develop the process, which USAID approved in advance before proceeding with production. Some of the guidance that KDMD had developed for the learning network's digital stories in 2009 was useful to inform the digital story process for the Health Legacy Project and in explaining the digital stories concept to the USAID Activity Manager.<sup>22</sup> Table 18 describes some of the challenges encountered and solutions implemented during this reporting period.

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<sup>20</sup> Web stats were viewed on Google Analytics for kdid.org and filtered by two date ranges: November 28 – December 19, 2011 to determine the number of unique page views for the event page and April 25 – May 15, 2012 to determine the number of unique page views for the post-event resources. The post-event email was sent on or about April 25, 2012.

<sup>21</sup> The computers used at the event belonged to the venue and therefore required technical assistance from IT staff on-site.

<sup>22</sup> This guidance was developed and documented in 2009 for the learning network grantees at the time, as they were responsible for developing digital stories.

| Challenge  | Solution  |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capture of initial interviews with missions to collect storyline information</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Piggy-backing on mission staff TDY trips to DC enabled the team to capture three interviews at QED</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delayed response from missions in providing edits to the narrative script and photos/videos</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The team tried to make it easier for missions by providing Dropbox and Flickr account information for easy file transfer</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approval process for the narrative scripts became more complicated and cumbersome for the USAID Activity Manager</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The team needs to continue to support the USAID Activity Manager with edits to the script but the approval process remains with USAID</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Original budget estimate was too low due to unanticipated frequent communication with the missions and a higher level of effort needed to adapt the interview information into narrative scripts</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The team developed a more realistic budget based on an updated estimate. The team will also consult with the E&amp;E DG/ST counterpart to see if their internal divisions of the E&amp;E Program allocation can be re-considered so that some of ST's unused money can be used for Health's digital stories going forward</li> </ul> |

**Table 18: Challenges and solutions encountered in the Digital Stories Project**

Given the lessons learned for this activity, a major recommendation for the future would be to take into consideration the fact that developing narrative scripts is a long process and obtaining and discussing edits requires a great deal of communication with the client.

#### **D. Long-Term Outcomes and Impact**

Of the three activities implemented during this reporting period, the one activity that could potentially have measurable long-term outcomes is the Health Digital Stories Legacy Project. Once the final digital stories are produced and advertized, one way to determine impact would be if other missions or stakeholders were able to apply any of the content to their work. It would also be interesting to see if any other offices in the E&E Bureau have produced their own digital stories modeled after those of the Health Legacy Project resulting from discussions between the Activity Manager and other staff within the E&E Bureau. This will be explored further in the next reporting period.

## **Jamaica Program**

The purpose of the Jamaica Basic Education Program is to implement and manage the Partners for Educational Progress Community of Practice (CoP), a country-level community focused on improving basic education and early grade literacy in Jamaica. The CoP is a network of education professionals and stakeholders who collaborate virtually and in person to share knowledge, discuss critical issues, and provide peer support with the goal of advancing the country's education sector. The CoP is supported by a two-person facilitation team that is co-located with the USAID/Basic Education Project and works closely with community stakeholders and the USAID/Jamaica Mission to respond to CoP priorities.

### **A. Synopsis of Activities and Products**

For this reporting period, the KDMD team supported and implemented the following activities:

- Launched first community newsletter in July 2011
- Hosted the first E-Query on literacy and at-risk youth in July 2011
- Facilitated, participated in, and documented inaugural Camp Summer Plus in August 2011, which attempted to raise the education achievement levels of grade three students in some of Kingston's lowest performing schools
- Highlighted Camp Summer Plus practices in a special newsletter in October 2011
- Held a workshop with educators who participated in Camp Summer Plus and teachers from selected Jamaican schools to share knowledge on the strategies and practices of Camp Summer Plus
- Facilitated EduExchange #4 online discussion on the topic of parental involvement in children's education in June 2011
- Facilitated EduExchange #5 on utilizing Jamaican Creole to improve literacy and the academic performance of students in January 2012
- Facilitated EduExchange #6 on how early stimulation can be employed to support early literacy acquisition in March 2012

### **B. Synopsis of Evaluations**

The Jamaica team created the end-of-project Jamaica Partners for Educational Progress CoP Questionnaire with the objective of measuring the usefulness and value of the CoP. Unfortunately, only four participants responded to the survey so the team decided that reaching out to individual members would allow them to capture more feedback. The team plans to move forward by gathering additional feedback from selected members of the CoP for the next reporting period.

### **C. Lessons Learned and Applied**

The first Camp Summer Plus workshop was very successful and the teachers seemed to respond very well to the facilitators, who were also teachers. Two of the lessons learned were to retain the small workshop format and when necessary, extend the sessions to an entire day, to allow participants more time to apply/interact with the subject area.

The EduExchange #4 online discussion used a pre-registration process instead of expecting participants to register themselves. The participants indicated from previous EduExchanges that they preferred to be registered automatically by the facilitators rather than completing the registration forms themselves. This involved extra time for the CoP facilitation team but helped decrease participants confusion when it came to registering. Additionally, this specific iteration of the EduExchange was scheduled to last four days instead of the normal three. However, the team concluded that three days were sufficient, because while there were adequate discussions on the first three days, the fourth day did not yield any responses. In

order to accommodate the format changes, two moderators were recruited; EduExchange #4 was the first discussion where two moderators were used.

Participation was very low for the Jamaica Partners for Educational Progress EduExchange #5. The team determined that the moderator and the topic were both too academic and the high-level subject matter expert leading the discussion intimidated the community. As a result, the participants did not feel comfortable commenting. The team learned that the next topic should have a moderator that would appeal to a broader audience and to have them be less academic.

Based on the experience during the EduExchange #5, the team chose a topic and a moderator that would appeal to and engage a wider audience for EduExchange #6. The team also tested the functionality of the online platform more thoroughly. Additionally, the team also decided to issue an EduFocus bulletin on this topic because they felt it would garner interest and give people more interest for the discussion.