

TLC/ MFAN Evaluation Study

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Executive Summary:

The United States has been a leader in providing foreign assistance across the developing world for more than 50 years. This foreign policy tool is vital to advancing U.S. interests – promoting security, economic opportunity and our moral values – by helping to ensure that countries can meet the needs of their people and to protect human dignity. While this aid represents only about one percent of the federal budget, it has resulted in the transitioning of some countries from impoverished to middle income, to full trading partners of the United States. In order to ensure that the US Government's (USG) foreign assistance programs are meeting their targets in a cost-effective manner, however, it is vital to conduct and utilize quality evaluations that answer questions such as how funds are spent, whether programs and projects meet their targets, and what the impact is on intended beneficiaries.

Over the past sixteen years, the United States Government has ushered in numerous changes to the evaluation policies and practices of the primary agencies in charge of foreign assistance: The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Department of State (State), and the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), as well as the interagency President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR.) Under President Bush, great strides were made to expand and enhance evidence-based foreign assistance through the creation of the MCC and PEPFAR, both of which established clear objectives and benchmarks against which to measure progress. Under President Obama, the primary foreign assistance organizations adopted or revised evaluation policies that outlined specific requirements about when evaluations should be conducted, what types of methodologies are appropriate, who should be responsible, and what level of funding should be allocated to evaluations. Many of these changes aimed to improve the quantity, quality, and utilization of evaluations in order to ensure USG foreign aid is as efficient as possible in meeting its objectives.

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