Society for International Development
Washington Chapter

# FY 2020
## ANNUAL REPORT

Monitoring & Evaluation Workgroup

# MONITORING & EVALUATION WORKGROUP

The SID-Washington (SID-W) Monitoring and Evaluation Workgroup is a group of individuals actively engaged in the processes of data monitoring and program evaluation. With events ranging from the consultation process of the SDGs to performance monitoring webinars, this workgroup aims to inform on the evolving practices and strategies of monitoring and evaluation.

## Dear Members of the Monitoring & Evaluation Workgroup,

Our Fiscal Year 2020 was an unusual one for us, as it was for so many, ending during a global pandemic. This certainly affected our ability to deliver programming, but despite this hurdle, the Workgroup was able to hold one excellent event: Emerging Technology in MERL – What is out there, and how is it being used?

We also welcomed Josh Mandell (IBM) as the new Co-Chair. We are excited to work with him over the next few years!

Now that we have mastered the art of virtual programming, we look forward to offering more events accessible to a wider audience and providing an even more dynamic community for interaction. We hope to see you at some of our upcoming events. You can see all of our programs on our website – and please check back often as we add new ones regularly.

Thank you for your interest in and support of our Workgroups. If you have questions, comments or ideas, please send email to events@sidw.org.

Best regards,

Katherine Raphaelson

Paul A. Sherman

**Erica Holzaepfel**

Senior Director of Programs.
The QED Group

As Senior Director of Programs, Erica provides leadership, strategic direction, contractual and budgetary oversight, quality assurance, technical support, and supervision to a portfolio of projects, programs, and staff.

Erica A. Holzaepfel is a senior strategy, research, and learning professional with more than 15 years of experience acquired through both management and technical positions. She is committed to enhancing client strategies and learning to strengthen the design, implementation, and effectiveness of investments that seek to improve the lives and livelihoods of marginalized and vulnerable populations. As a leader and mentor of diverse staff, she excels at problem solving, guiding teams to develop and deliver high-quality solutions, building and maintaining relationships, and formulating strategic recommendations to improve client performance. Erica has served as Team Leader, Primary Investigator, and Director on more than 40 evaluations, assessments, and studies conducted in over 30 countries around the world. Through these assignments, she has honed her technical expertise in forced migration, humanitarian emergencies, counter-trafficking, nutrition, food security, livelihoods, conflict, human rights, agriculture, youth, and gender.

Erica received her B.A. from St. Lawrence University and holds dual master's degrees from Tufts University Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy and Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy as well as a Graduate Certificate in Impact Evaluation from the School of Public Policy at Georgetown University.

**Josh Mandell**

Lead for Global Development

Josh Mandell is an international development specialist and executive at IBM Services on the Foreign Affairs team. He leads IBM's effort to partner with development institutions and bring the best of IBM to solve global development challenges. Prior to IBM, Josh led strategy and business development for DevResults, a technology company focused on data management and MEL software. Before DevResults, Josh was on the delivery side, where he focused on global education and training. He has an undergraduate degree in Middle East and African Studies from Trinity College, as well as an MPA from NYU Wagner School of Public Service.

**Wednesday, February 12, 2020**
4:00PM - 5:30 PM ET | SID-Washington

Emerging Technology in MERL – What is out there, and how is it being used?

# Emerging Technology in MERL – What is out there, and how is it being used?

Moderator:   **Dr. Peter Richards**, Senior Economist, Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning (PPL), USAID

Speakers:   **Kerry Bruce**, CEO and Founder, Clear Outcomes
**Alexandra Lily Robinson**, Independent Consultant
**Dr. Hua Ni**, Principal Data Scientist and Associate Partner, IBM GBS Public Services Advanced Analytics
**Melissa Persaud**, Director of New Business for Global Development, Fraym

**Event Description:** There are an increasing number of emerging technologies that could and are being used in the MERL space. This session explored these technologies, using research from two groups of practitioners in the MERLTech space and practical examples from two companies using innovative methods in the field. The event featured:
- A review of the key emerging technologies in the field today, based on the research and practice, specifically in the areas of big data, applications, remote sensing, blockchain, text analytics and machine learning.
- Two case studies of applications of emerging technology from the field, specifically looking at use of secondary data and machine learning and another example focusing on text analytics and natural language processing.

This was a joint event with the Information, Communications & Technologies Workgroup.

## Key Takeaways:

### 1) The Rising Importance of Artifical Intelligence

**Dr. Hua Ni** (IBM) presented on varying topics in data utilization, and more specifically on the best methods and practices for sorting data. He discussed the importance of artificial intelligence, a field that has become essential to data analysis in the last few decades and will continue to grow exponentially. Dr. Ni highlighted that experience with artificial intelligence makes an individual a strong candidate for employment in the field of data and communications, as there is always an incredibly high demand for data analysts and artificial intelligence analysts. Additionally, Dr. Ni elaborated on the differences between microanalysis – identifying the finer elements of data such as text, words, phrases, parts of speech – and macroanalysis – involves larger-scale ideas, themes, meanings, key words and context – in artificial intelligence. Both types of analysis are crucial to understanding the data community and affect findings and research. Even small differences can significantly alter data, which is why Dr. Ni emphasized the importance of training individuals in the field of artificial intelligence and proper data analysis.

### 2) Accessibility in Data

**Kerry Bruce** (Clear Outcomes) discussed patterns in emerging technology and highlighted market changes in terms of data processing. She believes that technological advancements in GIS/satellite data and drones make data technology more accessible and practical to use and understand. In her presentation, she stressed the importance of creating spaces and programs for data learning and management. Making data more available through proper documentation and development libraries is critical in reaching larger audiences. Through these resources, data that is collected and evaluated is used more frequently and practically. Bruce explained that often after data collection is complete, the data is not fully utilized. Bruce firmly believes that accessibility and inclusivity is the direction data management and development programs should be moving in in order to support and promote emerging technology.

### 3) Strategies for Organization

**Alexandra Robinson** (Independent Consultant) suggested different methods of inquiry when organizing and compiling data. The first primary method of inquiry is making sure both qualitative and quantitative analyses are completed, followed by collection of focused, specialized data. Robinson believes that the leading method of data collection is done through technology (i.e. satellites, remote sensors, mobile phones, and computers). She highlighted that technology has shaped the course of data collection and processing. When completing a data analysis, Robinson shared the best strategies for collection: remote sensors, visualization, and geospatial tools. However, even with today's advanced technology, there are still significant barriers. Some of these include organizational rele-

vance and the lack of resources, staff, funding, data infrastructure, and protection gaps. Additionally, Robinson discussed the apparent disconnect and power differential between private and public sector actors, who often violate ethics, privacy, and bias of subjects.

**4) Data Strengthening and Utilization**
**Melissa Persaud** (Fraym) primarily uses satellite imagery for data analysis in her work and explained the ways in which she uses data to finish large project assessments. Persaud emphasized how data collection is often a wasteful process; so much data is collected, yet only a small sample is ever used. Persaud is committed to making the most of data when it is collected,

believing in the importance of proper planning beforehand. Specific data will most likely be fully utilized and strengthen a project. From a development perspective, Persaud highlighted the ways in which Fraym uses data when planning initiatives in other countries. First, Fraym looks at security and other factors of vulnerability for the locations of each project. Next, Fraym takes an environmental perspective using satellite and remote data to track patterns between communities that reveal common struggles and weaknesses. Persaud emphasized that specific data are critical to obtain accurate and impactful results when working with developing communities and identifying a pattern.

### SID-Washington Programming Staff

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### FY 2020 Workgroup Co-Chairs

Erica Holzaepfel - The QED Group, LLC

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### Photo Credit

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### Acknowledgement

We would like to thank Program Associates: Megan Dixon, Mikaila Harper, Lydia Henning, Shabnam Kabir, Fadima Konate, Devang Laddha, Seth Reinhard, Melina Reynoso, and Vivian Zhang for their hard work to create this report.

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