Request for Applications

Serve as Local Research Partner for
Malawi SEED Impact Evaluation Baseline

Introduction

Data for Impact (D4I) is a five-year cooperative agreement funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). D4I supports countries to realize the power of data as actionable evidence that can improve programs, policies, and—ultimately—health outcomes. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-CH), through the Carolina Population Center (CPC), leads D4I in partnership with Palladium, ICF, John Snow, Inc. (JSI), and Tulane University.
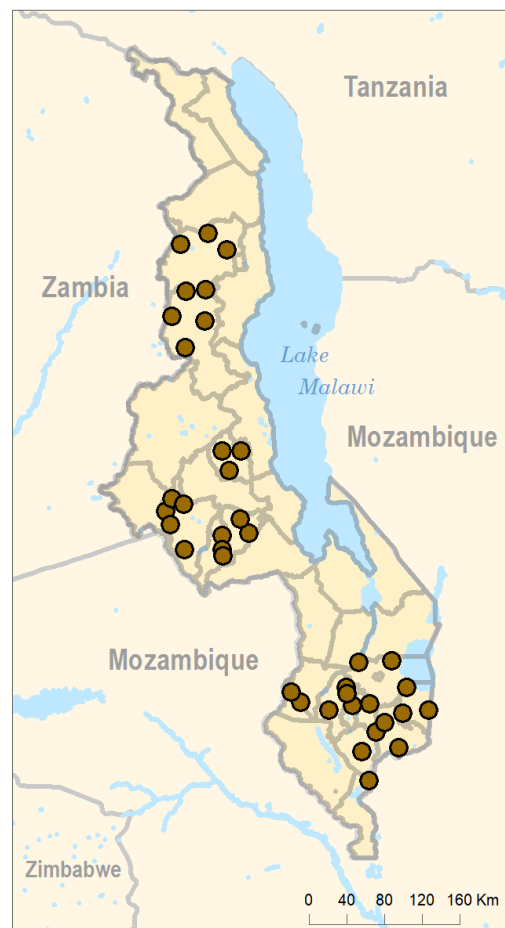
D4I seeks a research organization to serve as our local partner for the Malawi Secondary Education Expansion for Development (SEED) impact evaluation baseline. The purpose of this request for applications (RFA) is to determine the organization best suited to play this role. The successful applicant will demonstrate superior technical, logistical, and organizational capacity needed to conduct the study. If a successful applicant is selected, they will be contracted through UNC-CH.

Malawi SEED Impact Evaluation Baseline

Funded by USAID/Malawi, SEED works to provide increased public Community Day Secondary School (CDSS) access through the design and construction oversight of new CDSSs in targeted Malawi rural areas as shown on the map to the right. SEED's development hypothesis is that by providing increased access to secondary schools, young Malawians will attend secondary school rather than move into the "out-of-school" population that impedes the country's future development. According to the USAID Country Development Cooperation Strategy for 2013–2019, only 50 percent of students complete primary school and of those, only 68 percent pass primary school. With a lack of quality primary education and lack of secondary school opportunities, there is a growing population of uneducated youth. Furthermore, young girls who do not have access to education and secondary school often end up getting married and engaging in early sexual activities, increasing risk of HIV infection. Through the proper design of classroom learning space and school facility infrastructure and an increase in access to secondary education, young Malawians will be provided the opportunity to learn, which improves economic growth and personal attainment.

D4I will conduct a mixed methods impact evaluation of SEED to help understand whether there is a change in a range of educational outcomes and health behaviors in communities where SEED is carrying out expansion and construction. A better understanding of these impacts will help USAID and its multiple partners understand how integrated outcomes can result from secondary school construction in Malawi.

New Rural Schools for SEED

Activities and Responsibilities for the Local Research Partner

The local research partner will work in close collaboration with D4I to carry out the following activities.

Ethics Approval and Translation of Tools

Prior to the start of data collection, D4I will obtain ethics approval from UNC-CH in the United States. The local research partner will be responsible for obtaining ethics approval in Malawi with assistance from D4I. The local research partner will also be responsible for translation and back-translation of the study tools into Chichewa.

Recruitment of Enumerators

The local research partner will recruit a sufficient number of qualified enumerators and supervisors to implement data collection in approximately 30 days.

Training of Enumerators/Interviewers and Pre-Test of Data Collection Tools

The local research partner, with support from D4I, will train the quantitative and qualitative data collection teams. We estimate that the quantitative training will take 10 days, including a two-day pre-test of the survey tools, and the qualitative training will take five days, including a 1–2 day pre-test of qualitative tools. The two trainings can occur concurrently. The local research partner will handle all training logistics, including transport for pre-testing. Topics covered should include an introduction to the study and an overview of the survey, treatment of human subjects, interview techniques, and an in-depth review of the study tools in both English and Chichewa. The training should include practice interviews prior to the pre-test.

Finalization of Data Collection Tools
The local research partner will participate in the finalization of all data collection tools following the pre-test of the tools.

Liaise with Local Authorities
The local research partner will be responsible for conducting all necessary protocol visits with local authorities at all study locations prior to the start of data collection.

Data Collection/Data Quality
Data collection will include both quantitative and qualitative components. The quantitative component will focus on rural communities, while the qualitative component will focus on urban areas. The primary quantitative component will be a household survey based on sampled primary school students. The sample will be selected in two stages. In the first stage, 33 schools will be randomly selected from the list of feeder primary schools of the new SEED schools. The selection will be stratified by the three regions of Malawi: Northern, Central, and Southern. The expected location of the SEED schools is shown in the map above. An additional 33 primary schools will be selected for the comparison group from similar neighboring areas. Comparison schools will not be feeders of the new SEED schools but will be in areas of similar environmental, socioeconomic, and education supply (the number and type of primary and secondary schools in the area/education district, number of seats for Form 1, etc.) conditions. The local research partner will collaborate with D4I in the implementation of the school selection process. In the second stage, the local research partner will obtain each selected school's Grade 8 roster from the previous academic year and randomly select 10 children (5 girls and 5 boys). They will also obtain the current Grade 8 roster and randomly select 11 children (6 girls and 5 boys). The total sample will contain 1,386 children.

The local research partner will locate the households of the sampled children and implement a brief household questionnaire, an individual questionnaire with the sampled child, and a parent/caregiver questionnaire. Data collection will be implemented using tablets provided by D4I. D4I will program the survey in ODK. We anticipate implementation of the survey will take 60-90 minutes per household. A brief questionnaire to gather basic information will be completed for each primary and secondary study school (secondary schools are those which the primary schools "feed" into). The local research partner will upload data to a secure D4I server each day or whenever internet access is available. The data collection team will be responsible for conducting internal quality checks at different stages of field work. The local research partner will also collect geographical coordinates and other relevant location information for the sampled households and schools that will facilitate revisiting them in subsequent years.

The qualitative component will be carried out in the cities of Lilongwe, Blantyre, Mzuzu, and Zomba and will include a total of 32 focus group discussions (FGDs) and 24 key informant interviews (KIIs). In each city, D4I will provide a sample of two newly expanded SEED CDSSs, for a total sample of eight CDSSs. At each school, the local partner will conduct four FGDs: one with 68 Form 1 girls age 12 to 19, one with 6-8 Form 1 boys age 12 to 19, one with 6-8 mothers or female caregivers of Form 1 children, and one with 6-8 fathers or male caregivers of Form 1 children. In addition, the local partner will conduct three KIIs per school, two with educators and one with a community leader, such as a Group Village Head or other appropriate leader as suggested by the local research partner. FGDs are expected to take approximately 90 minutes and KIIs are expected to take approximately 60 minutes. The local research partner will record all FGDs and KIIs and transcribe the interviews into English.

Data Analysis
The analysis of the quantitative data will be led by D4I with the collaboration of the local research partner. The local research partner will analyze the qualitative transcripts using an agreed-upon qualitative software analysis program and provide a draft qualitative report. The local research partner will also provide input into the integrated quantitative/qualitative baseline report.

Dissemination of Results

The local research partner should also plan for a half-day results dissemination meeting in Lilongwe for USAID and other stakeholders (approximately 40 persons).

Deliverables
- Translation and back-translation of the data collection tools as well as finalization of the tools following the pre-test
- Ethics approval in Malawi
- Collection of data for the school selection
- Biweekly reports on field work preparations and progress
- Uploaded quantitative data files to D4I secure server
- Qualitative interview transcripts in English
- Qualitative report
- Input into integrated quantitative/qualitative baseline report
- Participation in dissemination meeting
- Provision of secure storage of all hard copy documents (e.g., consent forms)

Timeline
D4I has already begun preliminary preparations for the study. The successful applicant should plan to start activities in May 2021. The expected timeline for study benchmarks is presented below:

- Training of data collection team and pre-test of study tools: May 2021
- Completion of data collection: mid-July 2021
- Submission of qualitative report: One month after the conclusion of qualitative data collection

Application Requirements
The successful applicant will be required to possess the following skills and competencies:

- Experience with household surveys and qualitative data collection (experience with evaluation of education and/or health programs is strongly preferred);
- Experience managing large teams of enumerators collecting data in fieldwork settings;
- Evaluation design and research skills;
- Qualitative data analysis skills;
- Excellent project management and people management skills and the ability to deliver within timeframes as reflected in the work plan; and
- Excellent writing skills in English.

Applicants should take steps to register in https://sam.gov/SAM/ if they are not already registered. Active registration in SAM.gov will be required prior to contracting.

Organizations wishing to serve as D4I's local research partner for the Malawi SEED Impact Evaluation Baseline should submit:

1) A **cover letter** that clearly identifies the application is responding to the "Malawi SEED Impact Evaluation Baseline" and stating the applicant organization's name, address, phone numbers, URL, and main email address. There should be a contact person listed for any purpose related to this RFA.

2) A **technical proposal** that describes in detail the approach to addressing the technical and logistical requirements to conduct a survey of the scope and magnitude described above. The approach should describe participation in the sample selection, a recruitment plan for enumerators (qualifications, where recruited from, size of overall team, number of team members, etc.), training topics for enumerators and

qualitative interviewers, qualitative participant recruitment plan, qualitative analysis process, and a discussion of data collection logistics and data quality measures.

The technical proposal should address the applicant's COVID-19 safety protocol for data collection activities.

The technical proposal should include a **detailed timeline** that lays out all the project activities and tasks with projected completion dates for each activity and task.

The technical proposal should be no more than 10 pages, 1.5 spaced with 1-inch margins and 11 point Times New Roman font.

3) An **organizational description and experience statement**. The applicant should provide a brief description of the overall governance structure of their organization. The applicant should describe the number and roles/responsibilities of the staff that will implement the study.

The applicant should name the key technical and administrative/financial personnel that will be involved in the activities. The applicant should name a Principal Investigator and a Chief Administrative/Financial Officer who will serve as the main technical and financial liaison persons with D4I (this can be the same person). CVs of key staff should be included in the application.

The applicant should also describe their organization's past experience successfully organizing and conducting similar quantitative and qualitative research in Malawi. The applicant should provide a description of past projects (up to three, with no more than a one-page description per project; these pages will not count to overall length of the application) that demonstrate the capacity to do high-quality work.

The organizational description should be no more than three pages, 1.5 spaced with 1-inch margins and 11 Times New Roman point font, exclusive of CVs and past project descriptions.

4) A **description of financial/accounting structures and practices**. The applicant should submit, on letterhead, a statement of how the applicant calculates any indirect costs (if charged in the budget).

5) A **detailed US$ budget and budget narrative** that breaks down costing information by line item. It should include, but is not limited to the following cost categories:

Personnel: List name and/or position title, annual base salary or daily rate, percent of effort or number of workdays for each category of staff (e.g., field supervisor, enumerator, etc.). Please provide justification and a description of responsibilities for each category of staff.

Training: Include expenses for training of enumerators, such as lunch and tea breaks, training materials, venue, and per diem.

Travel/Transport: List travel/transport expenses, such as vehicle rental, driver per diem, etc., for training and data collection.

Other Direct Costs: Indicate costs for ethics approval, printing of data collection tools and consent forms, cost of dissemination meeting, cost for internet connectivity to upload surveys to the secure D4I server, communication costs, cost for personal protective equipment (PPE), and any other direct costs.

Budgets should be supplied in an Excel spreadsheet along with a budget narrative in a Word document.

Deadline
Proposals must be submitted electronically to measure_rfp@unc.edu by 8 am U.S. Eastern Standard Time on March 10, 2021. The submission should include all materials related to the application.

Questions

Questions will be accepted via email at <u>measure_rfp@unc.edu</u> until 5pm U.S. Eastern Standard Time until March 1. Answers will be provided via email to each declared/intended bidder by 5pm U.S. Eastern Standard Time on March 2. A list of all questions and answers will be posted at https://www.data4impactproject.org/about-us/work-with-us/.

Proposal Review and Notification of Intent to Enter into a Sub-Agreement

Following receipt of applications, D4I will review the received materials and may conduct a second round review of "best and final" applicants. If this occurs, D4I will follow-up with specific questions and may request additional information from the "best and final" applicants. Applications will be reviewed in terms of their technical soundness, organization past experience, quality of key staff, and financial competitiveness.