Health Research Program Overview

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Health Research Program seeks to identify, develop, test, and facilitate the introduction of new or refined tools, technologies, approaches, policies, and interventions intended to accelerate improvements in the health status of infants, children, mothers, and families in low- and middle-income countries. Guided by an iterative approach that focuses on an implementation research/science process, the program engages in a collaborative process with country leaders, researchers, implementers, and other stakeholders. The program aims to support real-world research with planning and action that translates findings into effective health interventions that support country level action and by producing learning that can be adapted globally.

Implementation research often involves mixed methods approaches that may be used by program implementers, policymakers, researchers, advocates and others to generate findings that answer how and why maternal, newborn and child health and nutrition interventions are working or not. Results can be produced and applied in real-time to inform and adapt programs and practices.

The Health Research Program approach typically begins with setting priorities in partnership with local stakeholders, jointly planning and implementing research using existing systems, identifying bottlenecks to delivery or uptake of services and refining as necessary. Learning occurs throughout the process, at all levels and across diverse stakeholders.

The objectives are twofold: sustained scale at the national/sub-national level and collaborative learning at the global level.
THE HEALTH RESEARCH PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION RESEARCH APPROACH:

Promotes iterative improvement opportunities in programming

- Implementers undertake periodic implementation research to assess how to respond to changes and challenges in programs/projects.

- Findings can be discussed with stakeholders that may result in adjustments to ongoing implementation efforts as well as identifying new implementation challenges and potential topics for further implementation research.

- Approach allows for flexibility in supporting implementation research and providing technical leadership for multiple opportunities.

Is an adaptable tool

- Allows sharing of actionable results and broader learnings that can be useful for improving and expanding program implementation.

- Enables early engagement with key stakeholders and maintain engagement throughout the implementation process.

- Helps identify and document how learnings from research are applied throughout the implementation process.

Informs better outcomes

- Intervention programs should be based on real-world, proven results and refined to be relevant to different operational contexts.

- Implementation research is critical when applying findings or ideas to different geographical and/or cultural contexts.

- Implementation research draws on mixed method approaches including documentation of tacit knowledge or processes about how activities were carried out—and the changes that were applied to fit the context—so that programs can appropriately be introduced, sustained, scaled and replicated more effectively.