



*Photo credit: Tanya Martineau, Prospect Arts, Food for the Hungry*

# FEED THE FUTURE KNOWLEDGE, DATA, LEARNING, AND TRAINING (KDLT) ACTIVITY

End Of Contract Report | April 2019–January 2024

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>ACRONYMS</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>LETTER FROM THE COP/COR</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>KDLT OVERVIEW</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>ACHIEVEMENTS</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Building Community and Providing Critical Resources in Innovative Ways</b>	<b>9</b>
Driving Growth on Agrilinks and ResilienceLinks through Outreach and Engagement	9
Positioning Agrilinks as the Premier Site for Food Security Professionals through Enhanced Functionality and Content and an Improved User Experience	9
Driving Engagement on Agrilinks through Diverse Communication Strategies	10
Growing Global Resilience Knowledge through a Strengthened ResilienceLinks Website	13
Improving ResilienceLinks through Rigorous Research and Testing	15
Developing Online Platforms and Tools	16
Using Expertise in Digital Design to Build the Private Sector Engagement Hub Website	16
Center for Nutrition and DEIA Podcasts: Reaching Audiences through Personal Narratives and Compelling Content	17
<b>Promoting Data-Driven Decision-Making through Tools And Analysis</b>	<b>18</b>
Creating a Culture of Data-Driven Decision-Making: Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning on KDLT	18
REFS Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Plan Development	19
Counting Innovations to Understand Impact: The Center for Agriculture-Led Growth Research Rack Up	19
Using Data to Understand the Impact of Global Shocks	19
Encouraging Data Use through Dynamic, Accessible Data Dashboards	21
<b>Improving Stakeholder Capacity and Confidence to Use, Create, and Exchange Knowledge</b>	<b>22</b>
Cultivating Professional Growth through Capacity Building and Training Initiatives	22
Maintaining Learning Amid Uncertainty through Pivots to the Virtual Context	23
Building Knowledge Management Skills and Tools through Systems and Relationships	25
Sticky Knowledge: The REFS Youth Knowledge Management Plan	26
Promoting Knowledge Sharing for the Center for Agriculture-Led Growth and	

Center for Nutrition	26
KDLT and BHA: Sharing Knowledge and Stories to Promote Dialogue, Capacity Building, and Utilization of Evidence	27
BHA Research Round-Ups	27
BHA Evidence and Learning Newsletter and Compendium	27
BHA “Local Staff Learning Corner” Videos	27
Building BHA Staff Competencies in Essential Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting Skills	28
BHA Building Understanding of Complex Development Topics in Development and Humanitarian Assistance	29
BHA Creating Dialogue to Enhance Third-Party Monitoring	30
BHA Participatory Learning Resources	30
<b>Promoting a Greater Culture of Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting</b>	<b>31</b>
Creating Learning Events that Inspire Action and Connection	31
Leveraging Learning-Focused Retreats to Build Alignment and Connections	31
Adaptability Paves the Way for Effective Learning Events	34
Driving Organizational Learning at All Levels to Improve Outcomes	38
Fostering Coordination, Thoughtful Decision-Making, and Adaptive Capacity to Drive Effective Strategy Revision Processes	38
Supporting Change and Leadership in Times of Organizational Change	40
The Power of Innovative Participatory Structures to Promote New Learning	41
BHA Process Improvement for Program Cycle Management	41
Leaning into Learning and Flexibility to Maintain Excellence in Implementation	43
Promoting Internal Learning and a Culture of Collaboration	45
<b>PROJECT LEARNING</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>ANNEXES</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>KDLT Indicator Data</b>	<b>48</b>

## ACRONYMS

AAR	After-Action Review
ALT	Applied Learning Team
AOR	Agreement Officer's Representative
BAR	Before-Action Review
BFS	Bureau for Food Security
BHA	Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance
BIFAD	Board for International Food and Agricultural Development
CA	Center for Agricultural-Led Growth
CARLE	Cross-Agency Resilience Learning Event
CLA	Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting
CN	Center for Nutrition
COP	Community of Practice
CR	Center for Resilience
CV	Community Visioning
DART	Disaster Assistance Response Team
DDI	Bureau for Development, Democracy, and Innovation
DEIA	Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility
DIS	Development Information Solution
DMEAL	Design, Monitoring, Evaluation, and Applied Learning
EAG	Emergency Application Guidelines
GEO	Geographic Office
GFSS	Global Food Security Strategy
GLEE	Global Learning and Evidence Exchange
GROW	Generating Resilience and Opportunities for Women
HCD	Human-Centered Design
HDP	Humanitarian-Development-Peace
IP	Implementing Partner
IPI	Bureau for Inclusive Growth, Partnerships, and Innovation
KDLT	Knowledge, Data, Learning, and Training
KICKS	Knowledge is Central to KDLT Success
KII	Key Informant Interview
KM	Knowledge Management
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning

NEE	New Employee Experience
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
OU	Operating Unit
PERSUAP	Pesticide Evaluation Report and Safer Use Action Plan
PLR	Bureau for Planning, Learning, and Resource Management
PSE	Private Sector Engagement
R&I	Refine and Implement
RCLE	Resilience Coordinators' Learning Event
REAL	Resilience Evaluation, Analysis, and Learning
REFS	Bureau for Resilience, Environment, and Food Security
RFC	Resilience Focus Country
RFS	Bureau for Resilience and Food Security
RFSA	Resilience Food Security Activity
RLA	Resilience Learning Activity
RPM	Somalia Resilience Population-Level Measurement
RRU	Research Rack Up
SCC	Sahel Collaboration and Communication
TOC	Theory of Change
TPM	Third-Party Monitoring
TPQ	Office of Technical Program Quality
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
UX	User Experience

## LETTER FROM THE COP/COR

For the past five years, the Feed the Future Knowledge, Data, Learning, and Training (KDLT) Activity has catalyzed critical learning in service of organizational effectiveness and the goals of the Feed the Future initiative and the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) Bureau for Resilience, Environment, and Food Security (REFS). During this time, we have seen and experienced many changes and challenges that required us to respond to the tasks of the given moment with clarity on what to prioritize and to imagine what we can do to make needed, positive change. From the impacts of global crises, such as COVID-19 and Russia's war on Ukraine, to navigating organizational growth across the Agency, adaptability has proved critical to tackling these challenges. Changes, planned or not, opened unprecedented opportunities in the learning space and made clear the importance of deep partnership. This highlighted the critical dimensions at the core of what it means to bring together expertise in pursuit of overarching effectiveness and impact.

As USAID Contracting Officer's Representative (COR) and Chief of Party (COP) for KDLT, we chose to write this letter together, as a reflection of the partnership that underpinned the management of this activity. This partnership demonstrated a shared dedication and willingness to imagine the possibilities, then take action accordingly across USAID and the KDLT Activity. The vision, time, and expertise across so many USAID collaborators and leaders have played a crucial role in taking knowledge and organizational learning and training, communications, data, and web development expertise to new heights. A culture of mutual respect helped foster trust across USAID, the KDLT team, and wider stakeholders, as did valuing diverse knowledge and expertise areas, a commitment to quality work, and delivering on what we set out to achieve. Finally, putting people at the center of designing responsive, right-sized tools and strategies served as our North Star to help us all learn and adapt more effectively.

We hope that you learn something new from the stories and lessons in this report and that they inspire you to further your own practices of adaptive management and learning. We know REFS and the wider partner community are poised to continue this important and exciting work ahead.

Sincerely,

Zachary Baquet, COR, and Meaghan Murphy, COP

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the course of five years of implementation, the KDLT Activity successfully advanced the team's mission to strengthen the capacity of REFS<sup>1</sup> staff to document, disseminate, and exchange knowledge; share and communicate important data; and strengthen Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA) practices. The KDLT team embodied and applied adaptive management principles while strengthening the partnership with USAID across a range of offices, centers, divisions, and teams. This approach proved critical as USAID grappled with new internal reorganization challenges and external challenges wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact of Russia's war on Ukraine.

Early on, KDLT established a strong foundation in the core services of training and capacity building, data analysis and visualization, knowledge management (KM), digital communications, web development, organizational learning, and CLA. As KDLT approached the midpoint of the contract term, new REFS and Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) operating units joined existing buy-in partners, resulting in expansion of the level and types of support sought from KDLT. Ultimately, KDLT collaborated through buy-ins with nine units within REFS, plus the REFS Front Office, BHA, and the Bureau for Inclusive Growth, Partnerships, and Innovation (IPI)<sup>2</sup>.

In the final year of implementation, the KDLT team completed a wide range of work across the core service areas and multiple buy-in partners. For example, KDLT continued to support REFS's implementation of the revised Global Food Security Strategy and efforts to outline key changes to the scope and structure of the Feed the Future initiative. KDLT also provided change management support for the reorganization of the Bureau for Resilience and Food Security into REFS, as well as the provision of executive coaching for REFS leaders. KDLT's contributions to this change effort, and the earlier reorganization from the Bureau for Food Security into the Bureau for Resilience and Food Security, strengthened USAID's ability to effectively adapt at the Bureau level. A cross-functional KDLT team successfully worked with USAID to deliver the Gender Global Learning and Evidence Exchange in Ghana for over 125 USAID staff and partners. KDLT's ongoing work to strengthen and enhance the Agrilinks and ResilienceLinks websites with new tools, content, support, and outreach educated the larger development community about critical topics and drove significant engagement across multiple platforms and channels.

This report provides an overview of KDLT's work from March 13, 2019, to March 12, 2024. The KDLT at a Glance graphic highlights key achievements over the course of KDLT's implementation. The

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<sup>1</sup> REFS was formerly the Bureau for Food Security (BFS), which became the Bureau for Resilience and Food Security (RFS) before reorganizing into REFS.

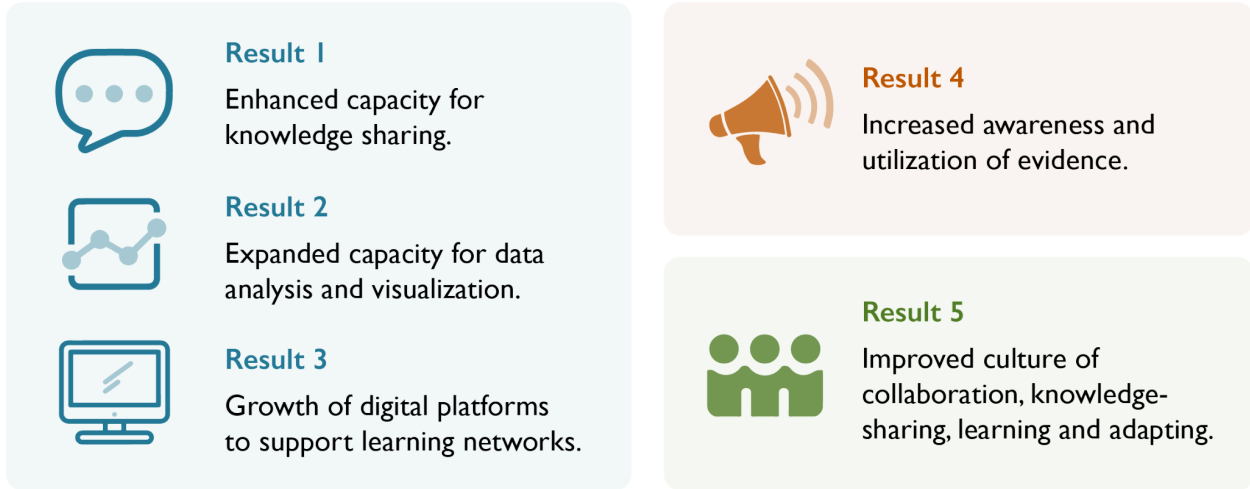
<sup>2</sup> IPI was formerly known as the Bureau for Development, Democracy, and Innovation (DDI).

Achievements section provides more detailed summaries and deep dives into KDLT’s most impactful technical work. The report closes with a synthesized review of the challenges, opportunities, and lessons learned over the course of KDLT’s tenure.

## KDLT OVERVIEW

The KDLT Activity’s mission was to support REFS in becoming a premier learning organization that successfully captures, analyzes, and shares good practices and data, and uses this knowledge to learn and adapt, helping REFS to achieve its mission of improved nutrition, strengthened resilience, and reduced poverty in target countries. KDLT helped REFS put the right processes, systems, and structures in place for knowledge sharing and fostered opportunities for strategic learning. This support strengthened REFS’s goal to develop an organizational culture based on collaboration, learning, and data-driven decision-making. As an activity, KDLT support was guided by five key results.

**Figure 1: KDLT Results Framework**



Results 1, 2, and 3 were designed to generate evidence and knowledge through various platforms, including learning events, data analysis, and content creation. Synthesizing and transforming the information, knowledge, and evidence accumulated under the three result areas, KDLT created strategies and informed decision-making for better Feed the Future programming under Result 4. To achieve Result 5, KDLT used synthesized knowledge—as well as key processes, systems, and structures from organizational learning and development disciplines—to develop strategies to advance an improved organizational culture of collaboration, knowledge sharing, learning, and adapting with REFS and its stakeholders.

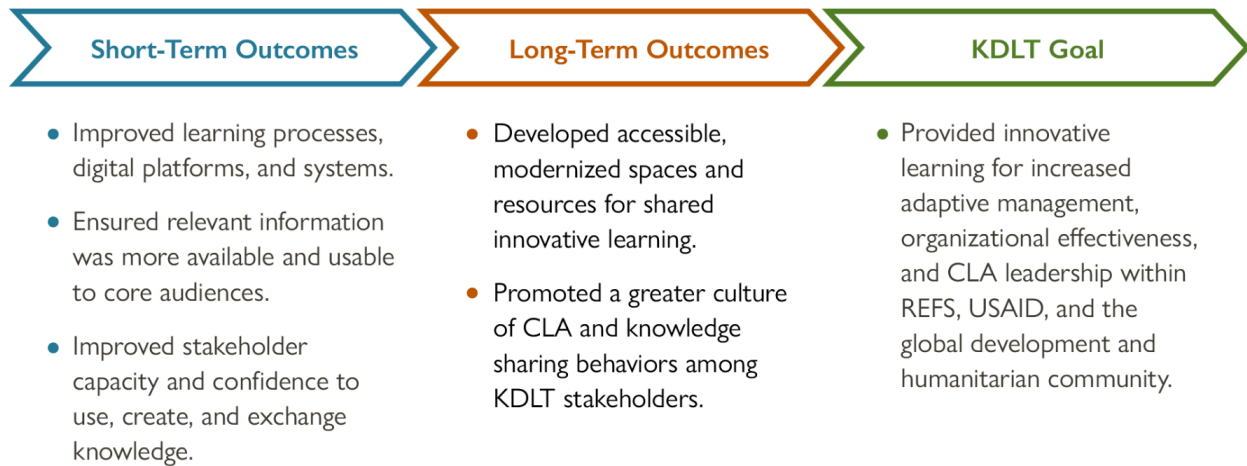


## KDLT Theory of Change (TOC)

KDLT's TOC reflected how the project worked across its result areas to support REFS and USAID. The TOC further refined the thinking behind how KDLT's interventions led to short- and long-term outcomes, which contributed to KDLT and USAID's overarching results for this activity. In addition, the TOC showcased the crosscutting nature of activities implemented by KDLT.

**Figure 2: KDLT Theory of Change**

KDLT contributed to and enabled USAID/REFS's overarching mission: To lead and support USAID's efforts to strengthen and improve resilience, food security, and water security, sanitation, and hygiene to sustainably reduce global hunger, poverty, and malnutrition.



# ACHIEVEMENTS

## **Building Community and Providing Critical Resources in Innovative Ways**

### **Driving Growth on Agrilinks and ResilienceLinks through Outreach and Engagement**

The Feed the Future Knowledge, Data, Learning, and Training (KDLT) Activity digital communications team brought to bear its extensive experience in branding, outreach, social media, and community engagement on the Agrilinks and ResilienceLinks websites over the five years of the KDLT contract. With a deep understanding of the sites' histories and trajectories and an appreciation of the immense opportunities for growth, the team worked closely with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to expand knowledge sharing, content, and connection to the user communities.

As a first step, the team worked with USAID to solidify the voice, brand, and editorial style of the sites and built effective outreach and content processes. With these processes established, KDLT expanded the social media and audio and visual media on both sites, ultimately managing seven social media channels. On Agrilinks, KDLT implemented continuous improvements based on USAID and audience feedback. For example, KDLT initiated auto-emails on blog status, improved the content submission and activity page process, and created a dashboard for USAID theme month hosts. Over the course of the contract, KDLT increased Agrilinks newsletter subscribers by more than 79 percent, USAID-authored blogs by more than 50 percent, webinar registrations by 115 percent, and overall blogs by 35 percent. On ResilienceLinks, KDLT spearheaded a theme month approach, which fostered high levels of involvement from the Center for Resilience (CR). KDLT increased ResilienceLinks newsletter subscribers by more than 290 percent. Its webinar series, launched in 2022, averaged 184 attendees per webinar.

The team's continuous and iterative improvements on both sites, particularly to processes for content management and outreach, created robust and vibrant user communities, impressive growth, and increased engagement.

### ***Positioning Agrilinks as the Premier Site for Food Security Professionals through Enhanced Functionality and Content and an Improved User Experience***

Over the course of the KDLT project, the team of web developers, user experience (UX) researchers, content strategists, and communications professionals worked together to enhance the Agrilinks website and improve knowledge on food security worldwide. The team focused on improving the functionality of the site through updates to the Drupal platform; comprehensive, evidence-based visual redesigns; and improved user flows. The communications team worked to strengthen content processes, improve

quality of content and outreach, and develop deeper connections with members. Communications work included brand standardization, two newsletter redesigns, creation of an activity page manager newsletter, the development of a podcast and how-to videos, the continuation and expansion of popular webinar series, and the launch of a LinkedIn presence.

KDLT inherited Agrilinks on Drupal 7 and, over the course of the project, updated the site to the subsequent Drupal versions, concluding with Drupal 10. Work across these updates was critical to ensure that the website operated optimally and safely.

Starting at the beginning of the contract, the KDLT team began working to make the site's brand and design consistent and improve the site's usability, accessibility, and functionality. Based on audits, user testing, and threat and risk analyses, the team developed a modern and more user-friendly administrative end for Agrilinks content managers, as well as an enhanced experience for Agrilinks members to create content. The team improved the search functionality and the site's accessibility. These updates also included a refresh of posts and events pages; the home page; the topics, events, and tools and training tabs; and a complete rework of activity pages. KDLT followed the Agile process throughout, making incremental improvements driven by user interviews and user research.

One of the largest undertakings was KDLT's redesign of the Agrilinks activities pages. Drawing on user feedback, the team led a complete overhaul of the administrative and the front-end experience. Along with substantial overhauls of every landing page on the site, the team redesigned the topics landing page.

*"I wanted to send our appreciation for how [KDLT] transformed Agrilinks. It's a really strong site with a lot of new functionality that helps us to share our work with a great community."*

*—An Agrilinks user on the enhanced site*

The redesign features a colorful tile structure. Additionally, the team improved topics subpages to better highlight associated posts, events, activities, and theme months. KDLT added new topics and removed outdated topics as part of the modernization effort. As with other major updates on the site, the team created the new topics and events pages based on key informant interviews (KIIs) and a content audit.

### ***Driving Engagement on Agrilinks through Diverse Communication Strategies***

Agrilinks has a rich audience that has grown over 12 years. The KDLT communications team strengthened that community and bolstered relationships with USAID experts and staff. The team built new processes to engage theme month hosts and ensured that materials across the site and platforms, including YouTube, LinkedIn, Mailchimp, X (formerly known as Twitter), and Facebook, aligned with

brand standards. These improvements contributed to significant growth across all platforms. Over the course of the project, the KDLT team published 2,043 articles from 2,326 authors around the world, with 266 articles authored by USAID staff. KDLT hosted a total of 49 theme months across multiple topic areas, partnering with new and returning USAID hosts on 47 of the 49 themes. Agrilinks continued to serve as an established event hub, seeing the publication of 565 event posts.

Throughout the project, the KDLT communications team filled the Agrilinks social media accounts with the latest content coming from the users. The KDLT team managed four social media accounts: LinkedIn, X (formerly known as Twitter), YouTube, and Facebook. The team produced at least one social post for nearly every post on Agrilinks throughout the duration of the project. The team launched a LinkedIn account and saw significant growth on that platform. Along with social media, the communications team produced a number of email products, including a newsletter every two weeks, event invites, a targeted email to activity page managers, and post-event emails. The mailing list grew to more than 30,000 subscribers during KDLT's tenure.

The KDLT communications team created various multimedia projects for Agrilinks. The monthly podcast, "[USAID's Kitchen Sink: A Food Loss and Waste Podcast](#)," produced in conjunction with the Center for Nutrition (CN), featured conversations with experts on food loss and waste. "[How-to](#)" videos showcased simple DIY innovations and the "[day in the life](#)" video series highlighted the daily life of agriculture and food security specialists. The [Agrilinks 10-year anniversary video](#) series celebrated the Agrilinks community and member voices.

The communications team also oversaw the hugely popular Agrilinks webinars. Under KDLT, the communications team tailored the webinar approach, creating specific "theme month webinars" and "spotlight webinars." These categories allowed for more stakeholders to participate in webinar opportunities. The team improved the webinar processes and, as a result, significantly grew the webinar registration and attendance. KDLT delivered 67 Agrilinks theme month and spotlight webinars, and 17 ResilienceLinks webinars.

### Using the Power of Images to Tell Stories of Resilience in Agriculture

In early 2023, the KDLT team conducted the Agrilinks Photo Contest in partnership with Feed the Future. The contest was designed to showcase the power of visuals in capturing the impact of global agricultural development. The contest, which was last held in 2018, invited submissions of images that portrayed resilience and innovation in food security. Photographers from around the

world submitted more than 150 pictures. The entries illuminated diverse narratives, ranging from sustainable practices to the impact of technological advancements in farming communities.

The winners, celebrated in a [blog post](#), an [e-blast newsletter](#), and on social media, encapsulated stories of transformation, collaboration, and sustainable agricultural practice. A jury of USAID staff selected the winning images. The KDLT team was thrilled to offer a cash prize for this initiative, with awards ranging from \$25 for the runner-up photos to \$250 for the winner. The photo contest served as a visual celebration of agricultural development and a powerful tool for advocacy and awareness.

## Surfacing User Needs to Orient Agrilinks Redesigns

In each year of the contract, KDLT led a dedicated effort to update and modernize the Agrilinks site. Starting with the homepage, blogs, events, and activity pages, then ending with “[Topics and Theme Months](#)” and “[Tools and Training](#).” Based on extensive user research, content strategy work, and collaboration with USAID on objectives of the redesign, KDLT’s web development and digital communications team transformed these sections into vibrant and engaging pages. To guide the redesign process, the team used a human-centered design (HCD) approach that was grounded in a deep understanding of user needs. This involved interviewing stakeholders and users, generating personas, conducting comparative analyses of similar websites, and applying UX heuristics that evaluated the sections’ usability.

## Responding to Crisis Driven Information Needs with an Online Hub

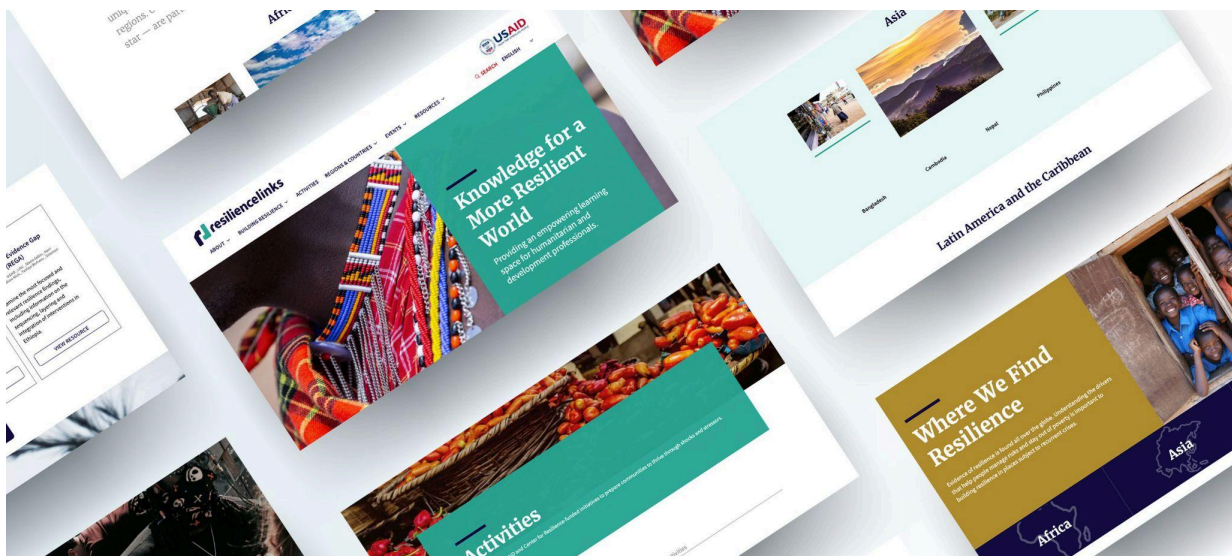
KDLT created the [COVID-19 Hub](#) on Agrilinks in response to the pandemic’s profound impact on global food systems. Recognizing the urgent need for resources and information, Agrilinks, in collaboration with the Bureau for Resilience, Environment, and Food Security (REFS), established this hub as a repository for the latest information on the global crisis. It served as a central hub for agricultural practitioners, policymakers, and researchers seeking guidance on navigating the challenges posed by COVID-19. The hub aggregated valuable insights, best practices, and data to aid stakeholders in mitigating the pandemic’s effects on food security, resilience, and agriculture. Users could view all posts related to COVID-19 and a curated selection of USAID submissions. By

consolidating diverse expertise and fostering knowledge exchanges, KDLT played a crucial role in supporting a resilient response to the challenges posed by the pandemic in the realm of global food security.

### ***Growing Global Resilience Knowledge through a Strengthened ResilienceLinks Website***

In March 2020, the KDLT team began to work with REFS's CR to host and manage CR's flagship knowledge-sharing site, ResilienceLinks. First created in late 2019, ResilienceLinks is a knowledge management (KM) platform for international development and humanitarian response professionals to learn how to apply resilience approaches to their work and improve outcomes through dialogue and evidence sharing. KDLT was tasked with strengthening the site and implementing engaging strategies to foster dialogue and learning for resilience stakeholders around the world. Over three years, KDLT's efforts helped ResilienceLinks become a dynamic, informative, and engaging knowledge platform.

Working closely with CR, KDLT began reshaping ResilienceLinks to align its content and UX with CR's goals and users' learning needs. To this end, KDLT started by reorganizing the information architecture of the site, employing user research and testing to guide and validate the changes. Through iterative workshops with CR stakeholders, along with background research, KDLT redesigned the ResilienceLinks brand, creating a new logo, color scheme, vision, and mission. In addition to the visible rebranding efforts, KDLT launched a content and communications strategy, working with CR stakeholders to ensure a constant flow of new users and trustworthy information to the site. The upgraded ResilienceLinks site publicly launched in June 2021, along with a refreshed newsletter, X (formerly known as Twitter) channel, YouTube channel, and the introduction of theme months and webinars.



*Image: ResilienceLinks website design.*

KDLT conducted a number of major web enhancements, including the creation of activity pages, which the team designed to provide an online home for USAID- and CR-funded initiatives. KDLT conducted KILs with activity page stakeholders, integrating the stakeholders into the design process to ensure the pages were designed to meet their needs. The final pages were accompanied by a management process that allowed for activities to easily update their content. KDLT piloted the activity page feature with the [Sahel Collaboration and Communication \(SCC\) Activity](#) and the [Somalia Resilience Population-Level Measurement \(RPM\) Activity](#). After their initial success, KDLT launched a page for the [Ethiopia Resilience Learning Activity \(RLA\)](#) and [the Resilience Evaluation, Analysis, and Learning \(REAL\) Award](#).

Other major enhancements to the site involved highlighting and differentiating Resilience Focus Country (RFC) content to better communicate USAID's priorities and approaches to strengthening resilience capacities in varying contexts (see [Improving ResilienceLinks through Rigorous Research and Testing](#)), and updating the "Building Resilience" section to better align with CR priorities.

In addition to the significant web enhancements, KDLT created the ResilienceLinks theme month strategy, which engages experts across sectors, highlights relevant resources, and helps users understand why resilience matters. As part of the theme month strategy, KDLT redesigned the vision, process, and design for the monthly ResilienceLinks newsletter and introduced theme month webinars. There were 17 webinars over the past two years, which attracted 3,127 attendees and generated 4,733 newsletter subscribers. Newsletter subscriptions grew more than 282 percent since June 2021. KDLT added nearly 150 new theme month-related resources to the site.

KDLT further enhanced engagement with the launch of the ResilienceLinks LinkedIn page in November 2021. The page shared resilience resources and events with more than 1,400 followers. KDLT further expanded ResilienceLinks' impact through X (formerly known as Twitter), with 500 followers, and through YouTube, where the ResilienceLinks channel has more than 14,000 views.

*"We are at a point where we have the organization to take our webinars to the next level and that is due to the great work of [the communications team] and the events team. These webinars give our technical experts a rare platform to share their work with an engaged audience."*

—A client on ResilienceLinks  
theme month webinar

Through these efforts, KDLT supported USAID to effectively communicate its dedication to building resilience in communities globally through the ResilienceLinks platform.

## Improving ResilienceLinks through Rigorous Research and Testing

In each year of managing ResilienceLinks, the KDLT team conducted major upgrades to the site and worked to strengthen the usability, inclusivity, and visual narrative of important components of the ResilienceLinks website to improve the UX and better communicate USAID's priorities and approaches to strengthening resilience capacities in varying contexts.

One example of this work was KDLT's collaboration with USAID to improve how the site highlights RFCs. KDLT's efforts included significant research on user needs and USAID priorities. Based on stakeholder and user feedback, KDLT created an interactive map that illustrated USAID's resilience work and more clearly distinguished RFCs from other countries where USAID works.

As part of this effort, KDLT redesigned the [ResilienceLinks Regions and Countries landing page](#) and country detail pages. KDLT conducted interviews with users and stakeholders to guide the redesign. During these interviews, users shared that the information featured on country pages was too general. Users wanted access to fact sheets, country-level strategy information, news, and country-specific programs. Based on this feedback, KDLT incorporated these types of links into country pages and reviewed existing country pages to ensure the information presented was timely and relevant.

Throughout these new designs, the team incorporated best practices in UX. For example, KDLT worked to make country detail pages more consistent and used "chunking" strategies, such as bulleted lists, to make the content easier to scan and understand. Furthermore, the design approach focused on a commitment to accessibility and inclusion. By emphasizing accessibility, the team ensured that the design refresh was universally usable. This work underscored KDLT's commitment to continuous improvement and the team's goal to ensure that USAID's digital spaces were accessible, understandable, and supported improved development work across the globe.

### Developing Online Platforms and Tools

In addition to the team's work on Agrilinks and ResilienceLinks, KDLT used skills in digital service development and multimedia design to produce other digital products, including the Private Sector Engagement Hub website, and podcasts for two REFS offices.

#### *Using Expertise in Digital Design to Build the Private Sector Engagement Hub Website*

In 2022, KDLT began working with USAID's Private Sector Engagement (PSE) Hub within the Bureau for Inclusive Growth, Partnerships, and Innovation (IPI) to design and build a website to support private



sector entities interested in exploring collaborative relationships with USAID. KDLT designed the site to enable this audience to connect with USAID, demonstrate the value of collaboration with USAID, and illustrate ways in which that collaboration could take place. The [Corporate Partnering Portal](#) launched in January 2024; the process KDLT undertook to bring the site to life highlighted the team's deep collaboration and partnership with USAID and contributed to KDLT's aim to maintain, grow, and improve USAID web platforms and databases.

KDLT engaged in a comprehensive scoping process to develop the website. Drawing on the team's experience with UX design and digital service delivery, KDLT launched a series of activities to better understand the motivations, needs, and interests of the private sector community and the perceived barriers to doing business with USAID. By understanding how the private sector would engage with USAID, KDLT developed a website structure and narrative flow that would resonate with the intended audience. KDLT then developed "personas" that represented the site's intended users; these were leveraged as a foundational reference when making design and content decisions. The team articulated the user journey for the personas' envisioned digital experiences. The team also led a content strategy process to inventory existing content of interest to the private sector and conducted user testing of proposed language.

With the user experience and content strategy defined for the website, the team turned to the site information architecture and worked on entryways and navigation structure on the site. KDLT's web developers built the new pages within the [workwithusaid.gov](#) environment. KDLT worked with the PSE Hub team on a communications strategy and engagement plan for the site launch. In early 2024, KDLT began collecting user analytics to understand its digital experience. This information will help the PSE Hub understand what their private sector partners need and will inform continued improvements to the website. Through its extensive and collaborative partnership with the PSE Hub, KDLT leveraged its skills in human-centered digital service design, communications, web development, and content strategy to launch an effective and targeted site.

### ***Center for Nutrition and DEIA Podcasts: Reaching Audiences through Personal Narratives and Compelling Content***

KDLT used multimedia to expand outreach and engage audiences in compelling ways over the course of the contract. The podcasts for USAID's CN and USAID's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) team demonstrated KDLT's success in reaching audiences with diverse stories and viewpoints.

KDLT partnered with CN to produce "[USAID's Kitchen Sink: A Food Loss and Waste Podcast](#)." This public-facing podcast featured experts discussing approaches to solving the critical issue of food loss and waste in a series of 18 episodes. The podcast received more than 2,900 listens and over 2,200 views

since its launch in December 2022. In April 2023, KDLT launched an internal USAID DEIA podcast, “Valued, Seen, and Heard,” that served as a platform for USAID and REFS to facilitate open dialogue among colleagues within the Agency, build relationships, and explore topics related to DEIA. One client commented that the “Valued, Seen, and Heard” podcast “is the best employee engagement tool” they have seen.



*Image: USAID's Kitchen Sink: A Food Loss and Waste Podcast and the USAID DEIA podcast, “Valued, Seen, and Heard,” logos.*

## Promoting Data-Driven Decision-Making through Tools And Analysis

### Creating a Culture of Data-Driven Decision-Making: Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning on KDLT

KDLT’s monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) work spanned internal indicator tracking and several client-facing initiatives, from custom client dashboards to KIs; evaluations of training courses; and recurring analytical support. KDLT partnered with REFS to build data capacity and contribute to a culture of data-driven decision-making. Using Tableau, Excel, Google Sheets, and Google Data Studio, KDLT created numerous visualizations and dashboards to allow staff and clients to visualize the progress of various activities and make evidence-based decisions.

KDLT created the MEL Plan to be a living document that could evolve with the project. In 2021, KDLT undertook a significant revision process to improve indicators and better track activity progress. Originally visualized in Tableau, KDLT built dashboards in Google Data Studio to allow for live access to indicator data, both by reporting month and longitudinally across the life of the project. Additionally, KDLT created dashboards specific to Agrilinks and ResilienceLinks to visualize website, social media, webinar, and other relevant metrics for improved decision-making.

KDLT's contributions to achieving USAID's MEL needs helped to foster the culture of data for decision-making within the Agency. By enhancing capabilities for data analysis and visualization, KDLT made relevant information more available to core audiences and improved stakeholder capacity to use and exchange knowledge.

### ***REFS Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Plan Development***

In 2021, KDLT partnered with REFS Program Office (PO) staff to support the development of a REFS-wide MEL Plan that would help the Bureau measure progress against the REFS functional strategy and build indicators and learning into Bureau operations. Contributing MEL and process consultation support, KDLT helped REFS build on existing MEL work to date to establish revised indicators and sub-intermediate results for the results framework, as well as incorporate evaluation further into REFS's MEL Plan approach. KDLT worked with the PO to consult REFS centers and offices to ground-truth the proposed framework and indicators. As part of this process, KDLT helped REFS consider how it wanted to define and measure progress against the functional strategy. KDLT worked with REFS to “think outside the typical MEL box” and use a mix of right-sized and innovative approaches to achieve results. The PO finalized the MEL Plan in December 2021.

### ***Counting Innovations to Understand Impact: The Center for Agriculture-Led Growth Research Rack Up***

KDLT administered and supported the Center for Agriculture-Led Growth (CA) Research Rack Up (RRU) data collection process during each year of the contract's implementation. The RRU tool, built in the Alchemer survey platform, complemented the Feed the Future Development Information Solution (DIS). It provided context to the Feed the Future indicator EG.3.2-7 which captures the number of technologies, practices, and approaches under various phases of research, development, and uptake. Through this effort, KDLT tracked and analyzed more than 25 REFS-funded research projects to highlight successful research outputs and identify opportunities for learning and adaptation. REFS used these findings to understand the number of innovations developed and deployed, and the degree to which partners adopted innovations.

Each year, KDLT applied lessons learned from previous rounds of data collection to improve the overall process and minimize data entry errors, resulting in better inputs from Agreement Officer's Representatives (AORs) and implementing partners (IPs) and, thus, a more complete picture of research impacts. KDLT visualized and presented results from the RRU to CA and to the Feed the Future Innovation Labs Directors Meeting to serve as a springboard for conversations around opportunities for evidence-based decision-making.

### ***Using Data to Understand the Impact of Global Shocks***

KDLT completed analyses of data on two major global shocks that profoundly affected USAID during the contract period: the COVID-19 and Russia's war on Ukraine. These analyses provided crucial insights into how USAID's operating units (OUs) and IPs responded and adapted and helped inform the Agency's decision-making and programming.

The COVID-19 pandemic had massive impacts on how USAID partners across all sectors implemented their activities. In 2021 and 2022, USAID asked KDLT to analyze how IPs reported the effects of the pandemic and how they adapted or pivoted in response. KDLT conducted analyses of the qualitative narratives that IPs submitted each year; these narratives included exploration of key issues, such as biodiversity, gender, and, in recent years, the pandemic. KDLT analyzed 386 performance narratives in 2021 and 465 narratives in 2022, with a focus on the COVID-19 impact sections of these narratives. KDLT's two analytical reports highlighted major pivots, such as increased digitalization, adopting new health safety protocols, and strategic expansion of certain programs and services in response to the new COVID-19-related challenges.

REFS asked KDLT to undertake a secondary analysis of the data later in 2022 to explore whether IPs also adjusted access to finance. The analysis found that unconditional, but not conditional, cash transfers were implemented in response to COVID-19, among other changes. The Bureau for Planning, Learning, and Resource Management (PLR) integrated the analysis into its efforts to create tailored, utilization-focused knowledge products to guide programming, operations, and preparedness for future responses.

KDLT completed four quarterly analyses of the impact of Ukraine supplemental funding on Feed the Future-funded initiatives, leveraging processes and learning from the COVID-19 efforts described above. The comprehensive analysis of hundreds of Ukraine-related narratives from IPs working with 40 USAID Missions highlighted KDLT's ability to use data analysis to inform learning and evidence-based decision-making. Starting in mid-2022, Missions and IPs received supplemental funds from USAID/Washington to spend on mitigating the effects of Russia's war on Ukraine, specifically rising global fertilizer, fuel, and food prices. These OUs typically received between \$1 million and \$10 million each. KDLT designed the analyses of qualitative data to surface successes, challenges, common interventions, and programming gaps. KDLT based the analytical tools on the team's previously created, user-friendly Google Sheets dashboard template, aligning with KDLT's goal to provide accessible, modern resources for shared learning.

For the third round of analysis in August 2023, REFS asked KDLT to conduct a secondary analysis to understand each activity's operational sectors; the specific challenges they faced related to access to

food, fuel, or fertilizer as a result of Russia’s war on Ukraine; and whether these were linked to pricing or supply issues. Additionally, KDLT examined the type of responses implemented by OUs (strengthening, refocusing, or pivoting programming) and the geographical distribution of these responses. The team’s Google Sheets database allowed users to quickly explore more than 800 performance narratives, providing valuable quantitative insights. KDLT coded all narrative sections, yielding themes around intersectionality, gender disparities, youth empowerment, and digital challenges. KDLT’s work surfaced regional nuances—for instance, OUs in Asia prioritized climate-smart farming, while those in East Africa focused on nutrition and resilience, and European and Eurasian OUs tackled organic fertilizer issues while promoting market growth.



### ***Encouraging Data Use through Dynamic, Accessible Data Dashboards***

The tools that KDLT used to analyze and visualize data from internal indicators evolved over the course of the project’s implementation to improve the team’s ability to use data to make decisions and manage adaptively. KDLT launched its first data dashboard during the first year using the data analysis and visualization platform Tableau to display KDLT indicator data. The transformation of the data into a dashboard allowed KDLT to communicate the progress of KDLT activities to team members and USAID clients. After two years of implementation, however, it became clear that Tableau was not the best option, as it was expensive, offered only static products, and was at times difficult to access.

As a result, in early 2022, KDLT transitioned to using Google Data Studio to visualize indicator data. This platform allowed for real-time visualization across all indicators, past and present, that was accessible at any time via a URL. With the ability to view up to 10 months of data at a time, this platform made it easier to identify trends. Staff could view a breakdown of the previous month’s data or look longitudinally at trends for every indicator. The dashboards encouraged data-based decision-making by allowing team members to efficiently identify areas of success and challenges and to adapt accordingly. KDLT transitioned to using Google Data Studio to visualize analytics from the Agrilinks and ResilienceLinks websites, including data on theme months, YouTube metrics, and social media engagement.

## **Making Qualitative Data More Accessible: The Center for Agriculture Led Growth Dashboard**

CA asked KDLT twice to conduct an analysis of narratives from Feed the Future-funded activities and OUs to identify successes, challenges, common interventions, and gaps in programming or support for Missions. This analysis helped CA answer its research questions. During the second round of support, KDLT built a searchable database in Google Sheets for CA that, for the first time, provided staff with a tool to dig into hundreds of activity performance narratives to generate specific reporting excerpts on topics of interest. By facilitating access to the Feed the Future performance narratives through a simple Google Sheets-based dashboard, KDLT contributed to achieving its outcome of creating accessible, modernized spaces and resources for shared, innovative learning.

## **Fit for Purpose: Updating KDLT Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Tools to Promote Actionable Learning**

Between 2020 and 2021, KDLT revised the project MEL Plan to reflect the increasing complexity and depth of the team's work and refine data collection methods to improve learning and the team's ability to manage adaptively. The revised MEL Plan was approved in October 2021, at which time, KDLT began collecting data against new and revised indicators (listed at the end of this report). KDLT continued to assess the indicators over the last two years of implementation and adjusted them, as needed, to capture the team's work more accurately.

In addition, KDLT reassessed the results framework and created a more effective Theory of Change (TOC) to help the team evaluate and understand how the interventions led to short- and long-term outcomes that contributed to KDLT and USAID's overarching results for this activity. The TOC reflected how the project worked across its results areas to support USAID. In addition, the TOC showcased the crosscutting nature of activities implemented by KDLT. This was a departure from the previous KDLT results framework, which, in some ways, siloed activities within their specific, primary results areas and did not reflect how each activity contributed to other results and goals.

## **Improving Stakeholder Capacity and Confidence to Use, Create, and Exchange Knowledge**

### **Cultivating Professional Growth through Capacity Building and Training Initiatives**

Over the five years of implementation, KDLT played a critical role in shaping how REFS engaged in capacity building. This work spanned delivery of USAID’s “Better Development through CLA” course, a flagship training initiative that was designed and offered in virtual and in-person formats over three years, as well as courses including “Food Systems Policy,” “Strengthening Nutrition Outcomes through Nutrition-Sensitive Programming,” “Policy to Advance Food Security and Inclusive Agricultural Growth,” and the Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) “Facilitating Consultative Processes for Decision-Making” training. KDLT adapted to the ongoing virtual work environment by spearheading online micro-learning initiatives and e-learning modules. Taken together, this work bridged critical knowledge gaps and fostered peer connections across REFS, BHA, and beyond.

KDLT served as a central hub for the support of knowledge exchange and organizational learning within REFS and BHA. KDLT led a diverse array of learning initiatives, cultivating a resilient learning ecosystem that catered to both USAID/Washington and Mission-based staff. These initiatives promoted skill building and the cross-fertilization of ideas, insights, and learning.

### ***Maintaining Learning Amid Uncertainty through Pivots to the Virtual Context***

KDLT demonstrated keen adaptability by transitioning to online learning models as the COVID-19 pandemic pushed all work to the virtual sphere. The “Food Systems Policy” course was a prime example of this rapid adaptation. Initially designed for face-to-face delivery, KDLT translated the course within weeks to an online format, engaging 73 staff from across the Agency and Missions over three deliveries. Furthermore, KDLT exemplified the team’s commitment to fostering collaborative innovation with CN’s “Strengthening Nutrition Outcomes through Nutrition-Sensitive Programming,” a legacy course that KDLT updated with gamification, curated learning materials, and facilitated small group discussions.

In partnership with the REFS Learning Team, KDLT played a pivotal role in delivering USAID’s flagship “Better Development through CLA” training, first for REFS audiences and later for staff across the Agency. KDLT worked closely with the REFS Learning Team to transition the training to an online format, which was delivered twice, and then updated the course for an in-person delivery. KDLT revised and improved the training after each delivery based on participant feedback and the results of the training team’s after-action reviews (AARs).

KDLT’s dedication to providing accessible learning opportunities in the virtual context was further demonstrated through bite-sized learning initiatives, such as the “CLA Miniseries,” the “Youth in Food

Systems and Agriculture Programming” microlearning, and two BHA brown bag sessions: After-Action Reviews (AARs) and Facilitation Skills Workshop. These concise, yet impactful, activities reflected KDLT’s mission to make organizational learning readily available for staff at all levels. KDLT collaborated with BHA to tailor the preexisting “Facilitating Consultative Processes for Decision-Making” course for both virtual and in-person delivery. More than 100 BHA staff from Washington and Missions have completed the course, which was supplemented by microlearning resources to reinforce learning objectives. KDLT’s goals of being responsive to change while ensuring quality service delivery modeled a dynamic and adaptable learning ecosystem.

### **Building Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting Skills through Engaging Learning Opportunities**

KDLT designed and implemented four deliveries of the USAID course “Better Development through CLA,” reaching a total of more than 70 participants from REFS and around the Agency. KDLT’s first virtual delivery for REFS in August 2021 marked the first time PLR authorized another Bureau to deliver its flagship Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA) training. KDLT partnered with PLR staff and the REFS Learning Team to refine and improve the course in virtual and in-person formats over the duration of the mechanism.

Participants were asked to come to the course with a current objective from their portfolios and, throughout the training, they applied the CLA tools and approaches discussed in the course to their objective. This adult learning approach helped them to see how these practices could contribute to better results and ensured that the course was relevant, practical, and personally compelling. KDLT invited CLA “champions” from USAID to share real-world stories highlighting the many ways that CLA practices can improve development outcomes. KDLT employed a variety of capacity-building approaches—including gamification, small group tasks, individual reflection, and case study analysis—to engage learners of all types. The successful delivery of this key course further solidified KDLT’s role as a hub for learning within USAID.

In the final year of implementation, KDLT supported a series of six, monthly “deep dive” webinars called the “CLA Miniseries.” Each session focused on one of the six components of USAID’s CLA Framework and provided recommendations, tools, and stories from USAID staff to help participants understand each component and apply it in their day-to-day work.



## Online Gathering to Spark Connection and Productivity for New Staff

From October 2022 to March 2023, KDLT and the REFS Learning Team launched a series of 11 New Employee Experience (NEE) webinars. Enhancing standard onboarding for REFS staff, these sessions aimed to align new hires with the Bureau's mission and encourage peer learning. The NEE included two parallel tracks: Express Lane and Spotlight Series. Express Lane webinars offered hands-on training on common USAID tools, such as Google Workspace, and practical topics, including managing hybrid meetings. The Spotlight Series presented deep-dives with REFS experts on key issues, such as understanding environmental compliance, and an orientation to REFS guiding policies. These recorded sessions formed a vital resource library that was shared with all REFS staff. This initiative strengthened networking and clarified roles and responsibilities for new staff, amplifying the Bureau's commitment to knowledge sharing.

## Using Multiple Learning Approaches to Build Core Competencies

KDLT supported USAID's Agricultural Foreign Service Officers over the course of 2023 and early 2024 with a series of learning activities designed to strengthen the officers' knowledge of the core competencies of their role and to build community within their group. This was the first new training opportunity for Mission-based agricultural officers in several years. The work kicked off with KDLT designing and facilitating a collaborative, interactive learning event in July 2023 that reviewed the competencies and new expectations around integrating DEIA concepts and practices into their work.

KDLT designed a series of four training webinars on the competencies prioritized by agricultural officers. The work came to a close with a final competency webinar learning exchange in January 2024. Each training webinar featured subject matter experts who shared a scenario involving two of the core competencies. That story served as the basis for further discussion and reflection. Participants said they appreciated the real-world scenarios and hearing from speakers with different views. The officers had the chance to practice how they could demonstrate meeting the competencies in their written performance evaluations. KDLT also developed a video that incorporated elements from each webinar to create a lasting training resource for agricultural officers. KDLT's ability to incorporate multiple learning approaches, from dialogue to case studies and application, allowed all agricultural officers to find ways to meaningfully engage in learning.

## **Building Knowledge Management Skills and Tools through Systems and Relationships**

Over the duration of the contract, KDLT developed and refined a number of KM tools, processes, and protocols to strengthen REFS learning. KDLT partnered with REFS offices on KM assessments and plans, retreat design and facilitation, and digital repositories. The team grounded these initiatives in a deep understanding of REFS' needs, priorities, and people, as well as KM best practices and principles. The team embedded HCD principles within all aspects of KDLT's support.

### ***Sticky Knowledge: The REFS Youth Knowledge Management Plan***

KDLT worked closely with the REFS Youth Team over the course of 2022 to create a KM plan with the goal of increasing the strategic use, application, and uptake of relevant knowledge by the Youth Team and key stakeholders. In addition to identifying 12 action steps to make applied knowledge about youth programming “stickier” (e.g., more accessible, relevant, and practical), the plan embedded foundational elements of organizational learning systems in the report to make it a learning resource, as well as a functional product.

*“The collaboration with KDLT has been dynamic, enlightening, and productive.”*

—A key contributor on the collaboration between KDLT and the REFS Youth Team

### ***Promoting Knowledge Sharing for the Center for Agriculture-Led Growth and Center for Nutrition***

KDLT engaged in limited secondment of staff during the contract's tenure, notably to CA and CN to support specific initiatives and promote multilevel knowledge sharing. Secondment enabled KDLT to build strong, consistent relationships; gain immediate access to information through regular staff and team meetings; and relay relevant, timely knowledge to KDLT colleagues. Effective knowledge sharing relies on opportunistic, just-in-time interaction and providing the right support at the right time in the right way. For CA, embeddedness allowed KDLT to design and deliver coherent and complementary retreats for the leadership team, the Production Division staff, and the entire staff through quarterly retreats throughout 2021. Learning from the CA secondment informed KDLT's subsequent design and implementation of retreats for CN and CR.

In addition to retreat design and delivery, REFS asked KDLT to assess the state of the KM landscape in CA and CN, then identify priorities and concrete actions to improve knowledge sharing. KDLT used the HCD approach in the CA to elicit challenges, possible solutions, and next steps from staff and leaders. This led to the identification of core priorities around finding and using key resources, and eventually to the completion of a Google Drive optimization project for CA. KDLT helped CN to surface and prioritize KM challenges that it wanted to address, and to identify concrete steps staff could take.

Following this exercise, CN asked KDLT to articulate an effective solution to the challenge of sharing resources in the USAID context. KDLT leveraged existing examples used by other teams and created an accessible repository of resources in a Google Doc. The product proved so responsive to the user experience that the REFS Youth Team requested support to implement a similar plan.

### **KDLT and BHA: Sharing Knowledge and Stories to Promote Dialogue, Capacity Building, and Utilization of Evidence**

KDLT worked closely with staff from BHA to design multiple tools, fora, and communications channels to facilitate connection, learning, and a shared sense of mission among Bureau staff. Over the past five years, KDLT provided analytical support and research and produced reports and learning briefs that aimed to deepen understanding of various aspects of BHA's work. This buy-in highlighted some of KDLT's most extensive knowledge synthesis and dissemination efforts during the contract's tenure.

#### ***BHA Research Round-Ups***

BHA's Applied Learning Team (ALT) requested KDLT support to produce a "Research Round-Up," an internal USAID compendium that summarized key learnings and insights from recent research studies. Each summary included the evidence gap the study addressed, research questions, key findings (where available), and implications for BHA programming. The Round-Up brought together rich knowledge that was previously dispersed across many lengthy and dense publications. The Round-Up provided BHA staff with a clearer entry point to better understand key research findings across the Bureau's diverse portfolio of implementation and operations research. KDLT completed two editions of these compilations. The first edition of the Research Round-Up included summaries of 27 studies; the second edition included summaries of 45 studies. In December 2023, KDLT designed and professionally printed a hard copy version of the final Research Round-Up.

#### ***BHA Evidence and Learning Newsletter and Compendium***

For five years, KDLT partnered with BHA ALT on the development of the BHA Evidence and Learning e-newsletter, an important communication channel for BHA to share research, studies, training, formal and informal learning, and resources with staff. KDLT helped draft content for the newsletter and participated in the newsletter review. KDLT partnered with BHA ALT to prepare a year-end compendium that pulled together all the newsletter content into one visually compelling and easily navigable document. These resources provided an invaluable way of sharing insights and learning, and facilitating connection among BHA staff worldwide.

### ***BHA “Local Staff Learning Corner” Videos***

KDLT produced the BHA “Local Staff Learning Corner” series of internal USAID videos over the last three years of the contract. The series provided insights into the work of local Mission staff around the generation or application of technical or programmatic learning, and facilitated connection and learning within BHA and USAID more broadly. KDLT co-wrote the scripts and edited and produced these three- to six-minute videos that featured staff from Missions in Zimbabwe, Mali, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Nepal, and Kenya. Featured staff shared challenges that they faced in their work, lessons learned from these experiences, and recommendations for other staff. Finally, KDLT developed a YouTube playlist of the videos to allow USAID staff to easily access and view the series.

### ***Building BHA Staff Competencies in Essential Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting Skills***

Over a three-year period, KDLT collaborated with BHA ALT to design and deliver workshops for BHA staff in skills central to collaboration and learning, including facilitation and leading AARs. The goal of these virtual, live one- to two-hour trainings was to make KM and organizational learning “everyone’s job” by strengthening staff skills to integrate CLA into their day-to-day work. The sessions provided opportunities for BHA staff to learn new skills and techniques and engage with colleagues on shared interests and concerns. They also contributed to BHA’s growing portfolio of professional development resources on learning and adaptive management.

For instance, KDLT created the virtual “After-Action Review: A How-To Session on Applying this Simple Approach to Your Own Work” session to provide BHA staff with an understanding of the purpose of AARs, share examples and simple processes that could be used with internal teams/divisions, and create space for discussion. AARs allow team members and leaders to convene following an activity, milestone, or process to uncover what happened and why, reassess direction, and review successes and challenges. While they have long been standard practice for BHA and its predecessor offices—the Office of Food for Peace and the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance—in recent years, fewer BHA staff used this approach within their own teams or in smaller settings. Since 2021, KDLT has delivered this training six times to more than 150 people.

While many BHA staff practice facilitation formally and informally, they have few opportunities for structured professional development focused on facilitation or to practice in contexts that provide an opportunity for reflection and peer-to-peer feedback. To meet this need, KDLT designed the virtual “Facilitation Skills Workshop” to solicit participant experience and challenges with facilitation and to share essential techniques for facilitation, including managing heated moments and difficult interpersonal dynamics. Small group exercises allowed participants to practice using tools to mitigate these challenges, including example discussion topics and a worksheet to plan a facilitative intervention. This experiential

learning opportunity let staff explore these often intimidating problems in a low-stakes environment. KDLT delivered this training five times to over 150 people.

In 2023, KDLT began translating the live, synchronous trainings into asynchronous e-modules to increase the accessibility of the course content and allow staff to take refresher trainings. KDLT completed the e-module of the AAR training in September 2023 and the module for the “Best Practices in Facilitation” training in February 2024. The BHA Academy hosted the modules, which served as learning opportunities for BHA staff beyond the life of the KDLT contract.

### ***BHA Building Understanding of Complex Development Topics in Development and Humanitarian Assistance***

#### **Community Visioning**

KDLT worked with BHA ALT to create a learning brief that captured lessons learned from community visioning (CV), a type of engagement strategy that BHA promoted to empower local communities. KDLT conducted a desk review and KIIs to take stock of the current landscape and provided an honest “state of” community engagement strategies across BHA programming, with a focus on CV. KDLT produced a learning brief that documented BHA and IP staff perspectives on the benefits, successes, challenges, and lessons emerging from these community engagement efforts and the gaps that need to be addressed to meaningfully advance the Bureau’s efforts to amplify local voices.

#### **Lessons Learned from Implementing Inclusive Humanitarian Responses**

BHA observed that planning of the Ukraine war-related humanitarian response interventions by IPs appeared unusually inclusive of people living with disabilities, elderly populations, gender, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI+) populations. The team asked KDLT to complete an assessment surveying donors and organizations working on the Ukraine response to understand perceptions of the inclusivity of the assistance provided. KDLT wrote a case study based on the findings from that assessment, which included a literature review and 27 KIIs. KDLT conducted KIIs with a diverse array of stakeholders in the United States and in Ukraine. Key informants included people within the U.S. government, including members of the USAID Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART), United Nations organizations and cluster leads, international nongovernmental organizations working in Ukraine, and local Ukrainian organizations that provided services to, or were managed and operated by, vulnerable populations, including the elderly, people living with disabilities, Roma populations, the LGBTQI+ community, and women and children. Although unique in many ways, the assessment, finalized in early 2024, found that the Ukraine experience offered lessons learned about the opportunities and challenges of designing and implementing inclusive humanitarian responses.

## **Learning from Humanitarian-Development-Peace Coherence Initiatives**

In early 2023, KDLT supported BHA and REFS to develop a survey for USAID Missions on their needs, interests, and challenges around humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) coherence; produced a graphic slidedeck; and facilitated two webinars to share out and validate the results. KDLT then supported deep-dive learning efforts into how Missions effectively put HDP coherence into action. KDLT worked closely with BHA to interview USAID and other key informants in three RFCs—Kenya, Ethiopia, and Mali—and drafted narratives that unpacked how the HDP approach came together, including accompanying challenges and recommendations for other Missions. Additionally, KDLT developed a series of visual graphics designed to support a joint BHA–REFS effort to promote dialogues and learning around common constraints to HPD coherence, especially relevant to RFC Missions.

### ***BHA Creating Dialogue to Enhance Third-Party Monitoring***

KDLT created BHA’s Third-Party Monitoring (TPM) Learning Series in collaboration with BHA’s Design, Monitoring, Evaluation, and Applied Learning (DMEAL) Division to strengthen the quality of TPM carried out for BHA. The series created a vital and needed space for contractors and BHA staff, across countries, to discuss topics of common concern, exchange information, and build relationships. KDLT supported six sessions between October 2022 and November 2023 through agenda design, facilitation, event production, and learning product development. Topics included TPM measurement and utilization, TPM purposes (oversight, accountability to affected populations, and learning), adapting to shocks and disruptions, data utilization, the role of TPM when assistance is diverted from intended use, and ensuring safe and accountable programming.

The TPM Learning Series was the first of its kind to bring stakeholders together on TPM to make connections between BHA and contractor staff, share experiences and lessons learned across country programs, and discuss timely issues. KDLT launched the series through an in-person event in October 2022, and continued the series as virtual events that engaged more than 100 global TPM practitioners. Participants indicated that these events supported TPM staff in making programmatic decisions, broke down silos, and created a community where none existed before.

The TPM Learning Series established a forum where TPM staff could benefit by hearing about diverse experiences that were otherwise unavailable to them. By involving BHA and external contractor staff, common concerns could be addressed through discussion with various perspectives and solutions. These discussions also provided an opportunity to fill evidence gaps within USAID and to engage other Missions, Bureaus, and independent offices, such as PLR, around similar exercises. Ultimately, the TPM learning events created a bridge to foster greater connection and knowledge sharing around critical topics.

### ***BHA Participatory Learning Resources***

KDLT worked with BHA ALT to format and finalize a series of nine participatory learning resources for BHA staff. The series collected important learning resources on topics, including how to design learning-focused presentations and applying adaptive management techniques into a central location, with a common look and feel, to reinforce the connections between the resources. KDLT formatted and edited existing files and shared the final products with BHA ALT. KDLT also designed a template for the documents and created a branding resource library for BHA to use when developing future participatory learning resources.

## **Promoting a Greater Culture of Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting**

### **Creating Learning Events that Inspire Action and Connection**

KDLT partnered with a number of centers and offices within REFS and BHA to design large learning events and retreats, both in person and virtual, that motivated and inspired participants, fostered active dialogue on application of technical evidence, and created opportunities to build and strengthen connections among colleagues. Drawing on the team's expertise in HCD, KDLT planned learner-centered sessions and agenda designs and used a variety of facilitation techniques to engage diverse participants with varied learning and participation styles. In addition to designing and facilitating these events, KDLT managed all aspects of event production—from logistics, slide and material creation, and event registration to video production, event promotion, and post-event knowledge sharing.



KDLT designed the bulk of the learning-focused retreats for CN, the DEIA Council, and CR. KDLT also designed and implemented large learning events, such as the 2022 Inclusive Development Learning Summit, 2023 Gender Global Learning and Evidence Exchange (GLEE), and global conferences for CR that convened large groups of stakeholders and created powerful moments of connection and knowledge exchange.

## *Leveraging Learning-Focused Retreats to Build Alignment and Connections*

### Center for Nutrition

CN requested KDLT support for the design and delivery of several learning events. These co-design opportunities built the capacity of CN staff to incorporate new tools and approaches to design, including methodologies for ideation, iteration, and prototyping. During the summer of 2022, KDLT helped the Food Safety division organize internal processes to draft and improve its TOC, a product that informed the division's programming and priorities. KDLT also provided additional methods to improve existing key messages that were shared with colleagues in Missions and across REFS.

In December 2022, KDLT supported CN with its first in-person staff retreat since the COVID-19 pandemic began. KDLT utilized several participatory structures to help meet the team's objectives. The gathering of 18 people provided opportunities for staff to discuss strategic planning drafts in progress, utilized small group activities to build rapport across teams, and featured a cross-walk of strategic goals and indicators with the mechanisms managed by CN staff.

Prior to the event, KDLT engaged staff in a story-sharing exercise to illuminate their "peak experiences" with respect to learning in large groups. Many of the approaches and elements named in staff stories provided direction for retreat planners, in many cases leading to the unearthing of existing tools and templates to aid facilitation. KDLT experimented with knowledge-sharing structures like "5x5," in which participants take five minutes to respond to specific prompts in a shared online document, and then five minutes to review one another's responses. This tool was first used during a periodic CN partners meeting; staff enjoyed it so much that they asked for it to be part of the retreat design. KDLT's design and facilitation expertise helped to surface and leverage the technical knowledge that CN staff brought to the table to achieve greater staff alignment and improved knowledge outcomes.

### Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility

KDLT co-designed, facilitated, and produced several retreats and sessions focused on advancing DEIA within REFS over the course of the contract. KDLT supported two DEIA Council retreats (October 2021 and July 2023) and one REFS-wide DEIA retreat (March 2022). These events were designed to enhance connection within REFS around DEIA efforts, increase engagement and participation from USAID staff, and clarify strategic directions and commitments. In all cases, KDLT



worked as a thought partner with the DEIA team to create a relaxed and welcoming mood conducive to exchange and openness, while ensuring a productive use of time.

KDLT used an HCD approach for the 2022 REFS-wide DEIA retreat to create a different kind of all-staff gathering. This online event attracted approximately 140 participants and KDLT intentionally designed the event to create a positive environment for a large group by steering away from a one-way provision of information to an emphasis on building connections. Activities included a welcoming “coffee shop” slide that invited interaction, an inclusive icebreaker, and a writing exercise in which team members explored their understanding of and commitments to implementing DEIA principles in their work. The event contributed to greater awareness of the DEIA Council’s work and DEIA principles, as well as closer connections between colleagues.

KDLT’s support for these retreats connected to one of the key outcomes: to create modernized and accessible learning spaces.

*“I would like to take a moment to recognize [KDLT] for a fantastic job with producing the RFS Retreat today. Their hard work and dedication helped us put on a professional and engaging event. Not only did they both do excellent/quality work for the DEIA Secretariat, but their work allowed us to continue to engage and ignite DEIA within all of RFS/USAID.”*

—A USAID partner on their perspective on KDLT’s partnership

## Center for Resilience Retreats

After years of all-virtual interactions, including three virtual retreats in 2020 and 2021, CR developed a strong desire to gather in person, especially given the team’s growth over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic. In early 2023, CR engaged KDLT to support the design and delivery of a two-day, in-person retreat in Washington, D.C., to improve staff alignment around core goals and build personal and professional connections. The April 2023 retreat successfully surfaced areas of alignment and difference and built connections between staff. One staff member reported that they “almost didn’t want to leave” the retreat. Among the outcomes were three core workstreams that would define CR’s work for the coming year: simplified messaging, capacity building for key stakeholders, and refining CR priorities.

As a follow-on to the April retreat, CR leadership asked KDLT to convene monthly “mini retreats” for up to six months to support alignment of staff activities, foster productive and strategic action, and cultivate a vigorous *esprit de corps*. These monthly gatherings, held between July 2023 and January 2024, constituted a positive forcing function for dedicated staff and leadership to take action on the core workstreams. KDLT led a consistent design and preparation process with CR staff to maximize their participation before, during, and after each mini retreat. For example, the July 2023 mini retreat coincided with the submission of a revised resilience policy for USAID. Staff leading the messaging workstream curated select excerpts from the draft and other seminal materials to share with staff during the retreat. This approach helped staff align on resilience definitions and goals and gave CR staff ownership of their own retreats. Finally, KDLT supported CR in taking an approach that aimed not for perfect action steps to emerge from the mini retreats, but activities that were “roughly right” and could be more efficiently implemented. This stance continued to build staff capacity for adaptive management in service of forward movement—for instance, elements of the resilience messaging workstream informed sessions at the subsequent Resilience Coordinators’ Learning Event (RCLE) in February 2024.

### ***Adaptability Paves the Way for Effective Learning Events***

Over the past five years, KDLT implemented a range of large learning events, integrating innovation, HCD, and CLA principles within each gathering. The pivot to online events, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, demanded that KDLT staff become experts in adapting programming to the Google Meet platform and employing its associated tools. KDLT worked closely to address all technology and design needs with USAID partners to ensure that learning events were engaging, focused on objectives, and smoothly run.

KDLT supported the co-design and implementation of the following large events for USAID:

- The annual Board for International Food and Agricultural Development (BIFAD) event in June 2020.
- CR’s annual Cross-Agency Resilience Learning Events (CARLE) in March 2021 and June 2022.
- CR’s annual RCLE in December 2022 and February 2024.
- The DEIA Council Bureau-wide meeting in March 2022.
- The Inclusive Development “Pathways to InteGREATion” Learning Event in April 2022.
- The Gender GLEE held in Accra, Ghana, in November 2023.
- The CW Global Water Conference, scheduled for May 2024 (KDLT provided design support only).

All but the Gender GLEE were online events. As mentioned earlier, KDLT provided ongoing support to USAID to move what were once in-person events to the virtual space. The pivot from in-person to online events created unprecedented demands on KDLT to devise innovative and effective ways to engage online participants. KDLT piloted new meeting norms to promote inclusive participation; introduced online polling and gamification tools, such as Mentimeter and Kahoot; utilized collaborative online documents and whiteboard platforms, such as Jamboard, Miro, and Mural; and developed creative agenda designs and facilitation techniques tailored to the online context. Later in the contract, KDLT pivoted once again in response to the need for hybrid meetings as COVID-19 restrictions were lifted, yet many staff remained in a remote status, which created new challenges and opportunities.



*Image: Participants at the Gender GLEE event.*

In the spirit of continuous improvement, KDLT sought to learn from and improve the design and facilitation methods and the support the team offered to USAID. KDLT developed standardized approaches to conducting dry runs in advance of events, providing detailed guidance for presenters and performing “tech checks” to address issues with meeting technology. KDLT also created many session design templates to support streamlined planning and implementation. KDLT brought many of these lessons together to produce the *KDLT Virtual Event Guide*. Finally, KDLT helped track and respond to USAID policy developments around recording online events, administering feedback surveys, and supporting reasonable accommodations and Section 508 compliance to ensure that USAID events were properly designed and implemented.

## A Global Learning and Evidence Exchange to Promote Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

USAID last hosted a GLEE event focused on gender in 2013. In light of USAID Administrator Samantha Power's emphasis on gender equality and women's empowerment articulated in the Generating Resilience and Opportunities for Women (GROW) commitment, in early 2023 the REFS Inclusive Development Division Gender Team sought KDLT's support to design and conduct an in-person convening of Mission staff, IPs, global experts, and other field practitioners working on gender, agriculture, economic growth, water, sanitation, nutrition, and resilience. It was determined that the three-day event would take place in Accra, Ghana, in November 2023. KDLT assembled a team of specialists in learning design, operations, and communications to design, manage, and promote the event.

The KDLT team collaborated closely with USAID to plan for the event. To design and implement an interactive and participatory agenda, KDLT learning specialists launched a five-stage development process that covered discovery, design, development, practice, and delivery. The discovery stage involved probing and building on objectives, prototyping activities through design workshops, and creating an event design note based on team feedback. The team used these activities as a foundation for the development of the overarching framework for the agenda and specific sessions.

As the design work progressed, KDLT communications specialists worked with the USAID planning team to develop a suite of communications products for the event. The central tool for communication with participants was a robust [Gender GLEE landing page](#) that enabled users to access materials for each session and to add resources to a growing collection of crowdsourced resources related to gender equality and women's empowerment. The team developed a digital agenda and event materials which included a printed agenda booklet and event-branded banners to enhance the conference space. Alongside this design and communications work, KDLT operations specialists managed venue arrangements and logistics for the event.

Collaborative processes, efficient coordination, and focused planning led to a successful and dynamic event. Over three days, 130 participants took part in 24 sessions related to different aspects of gender equality and women's empowerment. KDLT stood up several knowledge-sharing structures to help participants access valuable resources before, during, and after the GLEE. The event successfully created space for collaboration between USAID Mission gender specialists, REFS

technical teams, and global stakeholders to address gender equality and women's empowerment in key program areas.

## Building Capacity and Community for USAID Resilience Practitioners

KDLT helped to design and facilitate six comprehensive knowledge-sharing events with CR over the past five years: two CARLEs and four RCLEs. The CARLE gathering, which brought together Washington, D.C.-based USAID resilience practitioners and stakeholders, and the field-focused RCLE conferences provided crucial insights for CR and the Agency into programmatic successes, shared challenges, and learning and capacity-building needs of USAID staff involved in resilience activities. For instance, the USAID Resilience Technical Working Group used learning from the 2022 CARLE to inform its annual work plan.

For each event, KDLT contributed facilitation and process consultation support, including developing processes to coordinate USAID staff from across CR and other Bureaus to help CR develop agendas, participant materials, slide decks, communications tools, and other resources. Over the past several years, KDLT refined the planning and KM tools, and the team's approach to client partnership, to improve and streamline the implementation of these events. The final KDLT-supported RCLE involved engaging, HCD approaches, such as the use of open space technology in which meeting participants generated ideas for discussion topics during the event itself.

The ongoing nature of KDLT's support for CR learning events tied to several elements of the KDLT TOC. In the short term, KDLT's approach helped to make relevant information more available for core audiences. KDLT's collaborative planning process helped to improve USAID staff capacity to create and exchange knowledge. In the longer term, the team's work over the years promoted the routine use of CLA approaches, such as AARs, adaptive management, and internal collaboration, to drive results.

## A Large Learning Event Spurs a New Resource for All

In April 2022, KDLT facilitated a large virtual learning event for Mission colleagues to share their experiences and best practices with respect to inclusion, localization, and digital communications and tools. Called the “Pathways to InteGREATion Learning Event,” the two-day gathering of more than 140 people highlighted the diverse ways in which Mission staff integrated programming to advance inclusive development, localization, and the transformative role of digital tools in agriculture-led growth, nutrition, resilience, and water security, sanitation, and hygiene. KDLT supported the planning process, designed the planning tools, and organized and facilitated planning meetings.

Seeking to capture the many lessons, processes, and tools used during the Pathways to InteGREATion Learning Event, KDLT developed a *Virtual Event Guide* for USAID staff and implementers leading events. The guide provided step-by-step instructions, tips, and checklists on the various stages of designing and implementing large, virtual events, from organizing ideas and crafting the agenda to planning sessions, leading dry runs, and following up after the event. REFS used this guide as a springboard to create a more generalized *USAID Event Design and Facilitation Guide*, designed to help USAID staff develop timelines, folder structures, capture documents, planning processes, and more. By documenting best practices learned through years of event design and implementation, KDLT strengthened internal team knowledge and practices, as well as USAID staff and implementer capacity, to lead and execute successful events.

### Driving Organizational Learning at All Levels to Improve Outcomes

KDLT designed and led several efforts across REFS and BHA centers and offices to promote organizational learning, inclusive process design, and effective change management. This support ranged from designing and facilitating retreats, listening sessions, and AARs in various organizational contexts to conducting large-scale administration of the DiSC assessment to foster connection after structural reorganizations. KDLT integrated CLA and adaptive management approaches when asked to play key roles in designing and managing complex, multistakeholder consultation processes. Taken together, KDLT’s efforts contributed to improved collaboration, reflection, and learning to drive evidence-based decision-making and enhanced CLA skills among USAID staff.

## ***Fostering Coordination, Thoughtful Decision-Making, and Adaptive Capacity to Drive Effective Strategy Revision Processes***

Over the past three years, KDLT has supported REFS and USAID with two large-scale consultative processes centered on updating flagship components of the Agency’s leadership of the U.S. government’s food security initiatives. First, from early 2021 through mid-2022, KDLT provided process consultation, facilitation and event design, logistical support, qualitative and quantitative analysis, KM, and communications support to USAID’s work to revise the [Global Food Security Strategy \(GFSS\)](#) and related [Activity Design Guidance](#) for Missions. Following on the success of that collaboration, KDLT provided similar support from mid-2023 to early 2024 for the process to reinvigorate the scope and internal implementation structure of the Feed the Future initiative, which is authorized through the GFSS. The exercise focused on surfacing how the new REFS could more effectively lead the implementation of Feed the Future. The goal of the process was to develop a series of implementation recommendations that REFS can actualize to ensure Feed the Future is “fit for purpose” for the next five years. Taken together, KDLT’s visibility into these various workstreams and integration of CLA approaches helped to drive more effective coordination, efficiency, and decision-making within USAID.

During the GFSS refresh process, KDLT staff suggested and led AARs to continuously improve the design and implementation of consultation sessions and before-action review (BAR) processes to identify and mitigate potential challenges prior to launching new tasks.

*“There have been more CLA processes incorporated throughout the past year and a half. The most significant change is that we are more efficient because we have gone through the pause and reflect process [on several occasions]. Now, when we are looking at making decisions or identifying solutions, we have a clearer path or answer because we have gone through that reflection.”*

—A client reflecting on the GFSS refresh process

KDLT partnered with USAID on a highly iterative process to revise and create 23 [GFSS Activity Design Guidance documents](#) to support Missions. KDLT also collaborated with USAID on a dissemination and promotion plan for the documents. Overall, there were more than 3,000 downloads across all of the guidance documents on Agrilinks and the Agrilinks landing page hosting the documents was viewed more than 4,000 times. The guidance on market systems approaches, advancing gender equality, and social protection were the most frequently downloaded.

USAID noted that KDLT’s ongoing support was instrumental in several ways. A USAID activity lead said that KDLT helped REFS teams stay on task and offered considerations and best practices with regard to managing complex, multistakeholder consultative processes:

*“I feel more supported and more realistically able to achieve this task I am assigned to do.  
The overall quality of the work is greater.”*

KDLT provided feedback on processes to bolster transparency and rigor and critical support to capture outcomes and decisions. This work helped REFS meet the tight deadlines set for this activity and satisfy high expectations from Agency leadership.

### ***Supporting Change and Leadership in Times of Organizational Change***

As one of KDLT’s first major efforts, the team worked with the former Bureau for Food Security (BFS) to organize and facilitate 30 internal retreats, meetings, and planning events in support of the transformation of the BFS to the Bureau for Resilience and Food Security (RFS). Attendance across these meetings represented points of engagement with 504 USAID participants. KDLT organized events for senior staff, Center and Office Transition Teams, crosscutting teams (such as the Inclusive Development Team), and specialized groups (such as one that focused on the Pesticide Evaluation Report and Safer Use Action Plans (PERSUAP)). The events involved a wide variety of activities that focused on leadership, management, organizational development, strategic planning, work planning, and team building. In January 2020, there was a shift toward helping people define their shared visions, operational priorities, and workstreams within the new structure. These interventions included significant efforts to explore culture and norms. In addition, KDLT’s work with RFS greatly expanded to include many of the newly established centers and offices.

KDLT provided extensive support to help staff of the new Bureau strengthen teamwork, communication, ways of working, and productivity. One of KDLT’s primary tools to foster this learning was the DiSC behavioral self-assessment. In August 2020, KDLT administered the DiSC assessment for more than 150 people and led DiSC workshops for every center and office during an all-staff retreat. KDLT helped staff understand their DiSC assessment results and led them through a series of activities to explore ways that they could most effectively work together. This opportunity for staff to reflect on individual and team perspectives helped them better know their colleagues and build stronger and more effective teams during a time of uncertainty and change.

In 2023, KDLT initiated support to RFS and centers from the former Bureau for Development, Democracy, and Innovation (DDI)—now IPI—as they merged to become the new Bureau, REFS. KDLT’s support included the development and roll out of a communications plan, formation of staff-led steering committees, and efforts to gauge staff needs and concerns via comprehensive pulse check surveys. After REFS became operational in September 2023, KDLT continued to support activities to help staff meet new colleagues and learn more about the centers and offices that were new to them. KDLT facilitated three leadership retreats and developed a coaching program that supported approximately 20 REFS



leaders through the reorganization process. KDLT provided key support to help staff get to know one another and more effectively navigate work relationships.

KDLT worked with leadership through many changes to allow them to better anticipate, respond to, and strategically act to keep staff engaged and motivated during times of transition. KDLT has helped to foster more adaptable mindsets and ways of working. Ultimately, KDLT's support to change management contributed to the goal of increasing adaptive management, organizational effectiveness, and CLA leadership within REFS, USAID, and the global development and humanitarian community.

### ***The Power of Innovative Participatory Structures to Promote New Learning***

KDLT shared a range of participatory methods with REFS and the larger USAID community to enhance collaboration, knowledge sharing, and the use and application of evidence.

KDLT took an early, active role in leading CLA Learning Sprints soon after the structure was introduced in the CLA Community of Practice (COP) in early 2021. Learning Sprints are short-burst activities that engage individuals to learn about and apply specific tools and approaches. With more than 800 USAID staff engaged in the online CLA COP, the sprints were successful in bringing people together for inclusive, high-energy learning. The first sprint that KDLT co-led focused on building capacity of USAID staff with respect to virtual facilitation tools. Over about two months, the approximately 15 people involved crowdsourced and shared practical tools and created the *CLA Sprint on Virtual Facilitation—Resource Deck*. This slide deck was widely accessed across USAID and was later shared in a USAID Learning Lab “Month and Learn” session. As noted by a senior MEL specialist in PLR, the deck was “so rich in resources across different topics.”

KDLT led another Learning Sprint beginning in March 2022 titled “The Mechanics of Knowledge Sharing and Evidence Use.” This sprint provided an effective structure for KM leaders in REFS and across USAID to amplify and explain how certain resources helped them to communicate effectively about evidence use and application.

In the fall of 2021, KDLT shared the 5x5 method (usually referred to as “Five and Five”), which the KDLT team had been using in internal meetings. KDLT introduced this structure in REFS in 2021 and it was used by many teams and in various events, including the REFS CA, CN, BHA/DMEAL, and REFS Nutrition Partners Meeting, as well as the USAID/Ethiopia and USAID/India Missions.

### ***BHA Process Improvement for Program Cycle Management***

KDLT designed, facilitated, and led several large-scale and comprehensive consultative processes in partnership with BHA ALT that resulted in greater leadership coordination around a set of actionable recommendations. This work involved four main activities:

1. An AAR on the internal process for developing the BHA Interim Emergency Application Guidelines (EAG),
2. Listening sessions on the EAG for IPs and internal BHA staff,
3. An application review learning process, and
4. An AAR for the BHA Annual Report review.

KDLT and BHA ALT designed the EAG AAR in 2021 to help BHA staff reflect on the first internal development process of the guidelines under the newly organized Bureau and consider how the process could be improved going forward. KDLT used multiple methods to collect feedback—KIs, surveys, and formal AAR sessions—to ensure that all participants could voice their experiences, with and without attribution. KDLT also included a prioritization exercise that allowed participants to rank recommendations in real time so that findings shared with senior leadership reflected group consensus.

To better understand the experiences of NGOs using the guidelines, KDLT worked with BHA staff to design and facilitate two rounds of listening sessions for NGO partners and internal BHA staff. These sessions captured written responses to targeted questions, as well as open discussion, and provided a forum to incorporate external partner feedback into the process.

During this same period, KDLT played a role in Application Review Learning Support sessions to deepen understanding of the application review process. The applications were based on the emergency applications, while the guidelines outlined the overall process. These facilitated discussions allowed teams to explore approaches to make the process more efficient. KDLT helped design a set of tools for teams to conduct these sessions themselves, including an Application Review Learning template, a proposed approach, and questions for discussion.

In 2022, KDLT designed and facilitated four AARs on the Annual Report review process for BHA staff. These conversations led to recommendations for improving the preparation and guidance for the reports and the report review process, including the selection of reports, roles and responsibilities, and communication.

KDLT's engagement with these AAR processes was valuable in many respects. Most notably, the AARs fostered robust adaptive management practices within BHA, as they resulted in tangible, significant changes to planned content for future iterations of the EAGs and the ideal process to create that content. They also generated recommendations for the management of emergency applications and annual results reporting reviews. The work also promoted CLA behaviors among the hundreds of participating BHA staff, who gained hands-on appreciation for the power of these processes to effect change in their day-to-day work.

### **Improving Efficiency of Technical Support to Resilience Food Security Activities**

KDLT supported BHA efforts to improve the efficiency of technical support provided by the Office of Technical Program Quality (TPQ) for Resilience Food Security Activities (RFSAs). This work involved four main activities: 1) a process map of the RFSA life cycle, 2) the triangulation of perceptions across a variety of stakeholders, 3) a final report to detail the findings, and 4) the facilitation of consensus-building dialogues to inform decision-making.

The effort started with creating a clear process map of the RFSA life cycle and the support provided by technical advisors to identify key junctures in the implementation cycle, from selection committee to closeout, where technical support is delivered. With this mapping in hand, KDLT conducted surveys and KIIs across TPQ, BHA Geographic Offices (GEO), and IPs to collect and triangulate perceptions around the nature, value, and relative effort of TPQ advisors' technical support at the various stages of the RFSA life cycle.

KDLT analyzed the broad array of resulting information and perceptions, compiling a final report with quantitative and qualitative data detailing the perceived value of technical support, points of agreement and disagreement, and opportunities for consideration and dialogue. KDLT used the report to then support a collective reflection process within BHA where lines of inquiry identified in the review provided the structure for BHA technical staff to engage in a series of dialogues. The purpose of the dialogues was to explore the opportunities for increasing efficiencies and propose options for moving forward.

Following the review of RFSA technical support, KDLT facilitated discussions within BHA related to the adoption of the graduation approach in upcoming RFSAs. KDLT used KIIs to inform a series of consultative dialogues designed to enable BHA to explore the implications of the graduation approach for their expectations and guidance related to sustainability and the refine and implement (R&I) process. KDLT's expertise in consultative processes and collaborative partnership with BHA on the work provided BHA with valuable insights into its operations and ways to improve RFSA processes.

## Leaning into Learning and Flexibility to Maintain Excellence in Implementation

From the start, KDLT intentionally incorporated adaptive management practices into the team's internal systems and processes to foster a culture of learning, collaboration, and continuous improvement and to model effective CLA integration for clients. Over the course of five years, these practices proved critical as the project faced several challenges, including the changes wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic and changes in operational context, that demanded flexibility and openness to new ways of working.

KDLT was dedicated to modeling the same learning and adapting behavior for which it advocated. During the first year, KDLT established its MEL Plan, a living document that provided a roadmap on how to successfully implement activities in a timely and efficient manner that allowed for continuous CLA. Over the course of the project, KDLT continued to refine and update its MEL Plan to ensure it continued to capture the most important data to inform client learning and decision-making. The team also developed a new TOC that more accurately reflected KDLT's pathways to impact.

In the first year of implementation, KDLT recognized the importance of intentionally creating time and space for internal "pause-and-reflect" sessions to capture lessons from the activities being implemented, learn from these lessons, and then adapt and apply changes to new activities in the pipeline. For instance, KDLT conducted about a dozen AARs in the first year of implementation, both internally and with clients engaged in KDLT activities. Since that time, KDLT has conducted more than 30 AARs to support learning from the team's work and improve client support. Additionally, KDLT maintained a process for internal learning through monthly Knowledge is Central to KDLT Success (KICKS) meetings (see [Promoting Internal Learning and a Culture of Collaboration](#)).

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic demanded continuous adaptation across KDLT's workstreams and operations. Transitioning to a fully remote workforce, while balancing the need for coordination, led to innovations such as the application of an [Input-Process-Output framework](#) for all meetings. This structure helped the team to strategically focus meetings and cut down on wasted time. To address the challenges presented by the rapid shift and scale up of virtual events, KDLT created an events tracker that brought together otherwise separate tracking sheets to include all KDLT-supported events. KDLT staff regularly shared suggestions, lessons learned, tools, and materials with one another to help everyone improve their skills working in first a virtual, and then hybrid, environment.

KDLT developed scalable ways of working in response to changes in the team's work and operating context. Buy-ins to KDLT increased during the second year and continued to flourish over the course of KDLT's implementation—there were a total of 15 individual buy-ins by the end of the fifth year. This expansion launched KDLT's flexible staffing approach that involved creating roles that were reassignable and interchangeable for rapid response to new activities, funding streams, and other changes. This

experience helped KDLT better weather many changes in the post-COVID-19 REFS working environment, including budget shifts, REFS structural changes, and the impact of global shocks, such as Russia's war on Ukraine, on USAID programming.

Adapting to change required KDLT to leverage the team's flexible ways of working and budgeting, engage in open and frequent communication with clients and consortium partners, and deepen the use of Agile methodologies. KDLT leveraged the consortium structure to use full-time team members from across the three IPs, as well as engage surge support and consultants based on client needs and project priorities. This structure, the adaptively designed processes, and a unified, "one team" culture have been essential for KDLT to continue to be responsive and flexible to change.

### ***Promoting Internal Learning and a Culture of Collaboration***

In July 2019, KDLT launched an internal learning series called KICKS. For the first three years of the contract, KICKS was typically a monthly, one-hour meeting for the team to share a wide range of knowledge. The series was an important way for the KDLT team to establish a culture of learning from the outset and to model the knowledge-sharing and CLA behaviors that KDLT aimed to build in the team's work with REFS. All KDLT team members were invited to lead KICKS sessions; topics ranged from understanding Agile methodologies in the international development context to best practices for data visualization, client management strategies, and Section 508 compliance tips and tools. KDLT held more than 30 KICKS sessions over the course of the contract.

In the final two years of implementation, KDLT pivoted KICKS time to reflect on internal data trends for team learning. In these sessions, the team reviewed the indicator dashboard to identify workstreams that were successful and changes in the indicator results that could point to challenges that required attention. The team reflected on the TOC and how client work contributed to KDLT's objectives. KDLT's consistent focus on internal learning and knowledge sharing demonstrated the team's desire to promote leadership at all levels, continuously improve, and nurture a culture of collaboration.

## PROJECT LEARNING

Over the last five years, KDLT encountered substantial operational and contextual changes—from the COVID-19 pandemic and shift to fully remote work, to several major organizational shifts within USAID, budget uncertainties, a transition to hybrid work, and the impact of global shocks, such as the war in Ukraine. Meeting these challenges required flexibility, fortitude, and creativity, along with a strong team culture that embraced the opportunities inherent in the challenges. Here are some of the learnings that the KDLT team gathered along the way:

- In response to change, KDLT **found opportunities to innovate and experiment with new ways of learning and sharing**. The team capitalized on the cultural shifts related to remote work to explore how virtual tools could bring people together in different ways. KDLT devised new meeting facilitation techniques to bring interactivity to retreats and online gatherings. On Agrilinks, KDLT created a COVID-19 Hub for the community to share critical resources. The team developed microlearning modules to meet the varied capacity-building needs of global audiences and launched two new USAID podcasts. In these and other ways, KDLT took advantage of the shifts in work patterns and communication to seek out new means of connection.
- KDLT made **management and operational pivots** to adapt to changing organizational and budget needs at USAID. KDLT used flexible models of team staffing that allowed the team to bring on personnel with a broad range of skills and abilities to fill in roles on activities as they arose. This allowed the team to respond rapidly to tasks and cover a diverse set of skills, such as video editing, back-end web development, agenda design, data visualization, process consultation, and case study research and development. The team showed this flexibility in response to REFS shifts in programming and budgeting due to the war in Ukraine. KDLT adapted by quickly evaluating how services could augment and strengthen the REFS response. KDLT prepared a menu of services that drew on lessons learned from what was most useful over the previous three years of operating in a dynamic environment, such as process consulting, just-in-time data visualization, meeting facilitation, and KM. KDLT demonstrated agility and flexibility in pivoting to activities in support of new REFS priorities.
- KDLT **used agile methodologies and adaptive management** across workstreams to ensure better outcomes for clients and users. The team consistently integrated feedback and data throughout the process of developing website features, digital communications products, KM tools, and event design, among other products and services. In a spirit of continuous improvement, KDLT made changes to work planning, progress reporting, and financial management trackers in response to feedback. The team's ability to reprioritize and revisit

assumptions in the midst of challenges allowed KDLT to weather unexpected changes while keeping overarching goals front and center. An example of this was KDLT's work with REFS to design a process for revising and creating 23 GFSS Activity Design Guidance documents to support Missions. This effort was thoroughly iterative, as the team adapted to multiple changes involving deadlines, lead drafter needs, and interagency requests for review.

- **KDLT leveraged knowledge transfer across workstreams and buy-ins** in recognition of the value of continuous learning. KDLT used internal CLA tools, such as AARs and pause-and-reflect opportunities to share learning across team members and to document successes and areas for growth. KDLT exemplified this spirit of cross-team knowledge transfer in the development of the Corporate Partnering Portal for the IPI buy-in. The team applied successful processes and proven ways of working from KDLT's web development and UX work on the Agrilinks and ResilienceLinks websites to the design and build of the Corporate Partnering Portal.

It has been an honor to build on the legacy of learning contracts across USAID and to contribute to USAID's mission to save lives, reduce poverty, strengthen democratic governance, and help people progress beyond assistance. The KDLT team knows REFS is poised to carry the work forward in creating, disseminating, and expanding learning to continue to achieve lasting impact.

# ANNEXES

## KDLT Indicator Data

KDLT submitted the original Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Plan in June 2019. The MEL plan identified 31 custom indicators to report against the results framework and track the progress of activities (see the April 2019 to October 2021 Indicator Data). The shift from the Bureau for Food Security (BFS) to the Bureau for Resilience and Food Security (RFS) in 2019, and the evolution of KDLT's work over the first two years of implementation, required KDLT to consider adjustments to the MEL Plan to improve the team's ability to fully measure impact.

In early 2021, the KDLT team began a process of revising the MEL Plan to reflect the increasing complexity and depth of work and refine data collection methods to improve learning and the ability to manage adaptively. In October 2021, KDLT began collecting data against both new and revised indicators (see the November 2021 to January 2024 Indicator Data).

Access the indicator data collected over the five years on [Agrilinks.org](https://Agrilinks.org).

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