

Going Beyond M&E

MERLA

(Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, Learning, and Adapting)



© Nadia Todres

RTI International employs a dynamic MERLA framework (graphic at right) to guide and improve performance management through collaborative stakeholder engagement.

MERLA is the intentional application of results-focused monitoring, evaluation, and research to inform continuous learning and adaptation for improving program effectiveness and policy decision making. MERLA improves program operations when:

- Data collected through M&E systems are timely and high quality and are analyzed and used to evaluate program performance.
- M&E data are complemented and strengthened by filling gaps in evidence through operations research (OR).
- Key results and evidence from M&E and research are synthesized into learning.
- Learning is continuously incorporated into program design for improving implementation, communicating results, documenting lessons and best practices, and informing policy decisions.



About RTI

RTI is a global research institute and a leading international development organization. For nearly six decades, clients and partners have trusted us to deliver custom solutions built on evidence and driven by learning. We have successfully applied MERLA in more than 50 countries across technical sectors, including:

- Climate change and environmental sciences
- Energy
- Food security and agriculture
- Global health
- Governance
- International education
- Water

RTI is a leader in expanding the use and utility of digital tools to ensure implementation of high-quality MERLA using globally accepted Principles for Digital Development (digitalprinciples.org) We provide technical assistance to donors, governments, and civil society organizations to establish national information systems, governed by relevant policies, and enabled by locally led technology solutions.

RTI collaborates with governments and other stakeholders to:

- Use cloud-based systems to help smallholder farmers and local farmer associations access data they can turn into action.
- Develop sustainable, scalable information system technological solutions within existing national frameworks, while using open standards and open-source technology.
- Strengthen human capacity to implement, support, and use information systems for collecting, analyzing, disseminating, and using data and information.
- Value the use of information for transparency and accountability.
- Quantify the positive impact of efficient, timely, complete, and high-quality data on health point-of-care services, disease surveillance, and reporting.
- Invest in continuous capacity building by establishing and institutionalizing training programs in health informatics and related fields.



©Louise Gubb for RTI International



RTI works with reusable, scalable and community supported digital tools such as, **District Health Information Software 2 (DHIS2)** as part of national health information system strengthening efforts.

We have helped countries, including in Tanzania, Guinea, Philippines, Zimbabwe, Nepal, and Uganda, deploy DHIS2 nationally as part of a comprehensive eHealth strategy. RTI partners with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Department of Defense, national malaria control programs, and various ministries of health to strengthen their capacities to use DHIS2 effectively to improve data use, health care implementation, management, and policy at all levels. RTI has also piloted DHIS2 as a project-based M&E data management system on several international education projects.



The **USAID Governance for Local Development (GoLD)** project focuses on strengthening local government capacity, improving resource management, and increasing community participation and oversight in service delivery

management across four regions in Senegal. RTI's MERLA team conducted a quasi-experimental research study to examine the added value of an integrated governance approach compared to health interventions alone. This analysis found that integrated governance is associated with improvements in health service delivery, specifically more open health facilities, improved infrastructure, and increased staff compliance to correct procedures. This evidence highlights the importance of improving governance structures with an emphasis on social accountability. Findings were used to inform GoLD implementation and future program design.

RTI International is both a global research institute and a leading international development organization. We combine these powerful capabilities with those of our partners to co-create smart, shared solutions for a more prosperous, equitable, and resilient world. For more information visit, www.rti.org/idg.

RTI International is a trade name of Research Triangle Institute. RTI and the RTI logo are U.S. registered trademarks of Research Triangle Institute.
RTI 11315 R2_0423

Learn more about our work

merla@rti.org

www.rti.org/merla

www.rti.org/development

Follow [@RTI_INTL_DEV](https://twitter.com/RTI_INTL_DEV)