



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



# THE RESEARCH TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER

## BRIDGING THE EVIDENCE GAP BETWEEN ACADEMIA AND USAID

From 2018-2024, the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID's) Research Technical Assistance Center (RTAC) supported USAID Missions, Bureaus, and Independent Offices (M/B/IOs) to make evidence-based decisions. Through a global network of university-affiliated researchers and development experts, RTAC enhanced the impact of USAID's work by conducting demand-driven research and translating research evidence into actionable steps to inform policy and programming. Technical assistance from RTAC enhanced USAID's ability to make nimble and data-driven programming decisions by harnessing the technical expertise of the global higher education community.

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By working with over  
**1,000 academics  
and researchers across  
the globe**, RTAC  
boosted local research  
and amplified emerging  
evidence from low- and  
middle-income countries.

# RTAC'S UNIQUE MODEL

A unique feature of the RTAC contract mechanism was the breadth of its objectives and partnerships. Through the RTAC network, the project established direct relationships with over 1,000 U.S. and international researchers, who were available to support critical USAID research needs across geographies and sectors. In turn, those researchers received important services from RTAC, including capacity-strengthening webinars and opportunities to promote their research. By collaborating with an ever-expanding pool of experts, RTAC brought excellence, diversity, and competition to support a wide range of USAID initiatives. This mechanism helped USAID to advance equity by broadening the pool of implementing partners working

with USAID, facilitating the localization of research in low- and middle-income countries, and amplifying voices from minority serving institutions, universities in developing countries, and women researchers.

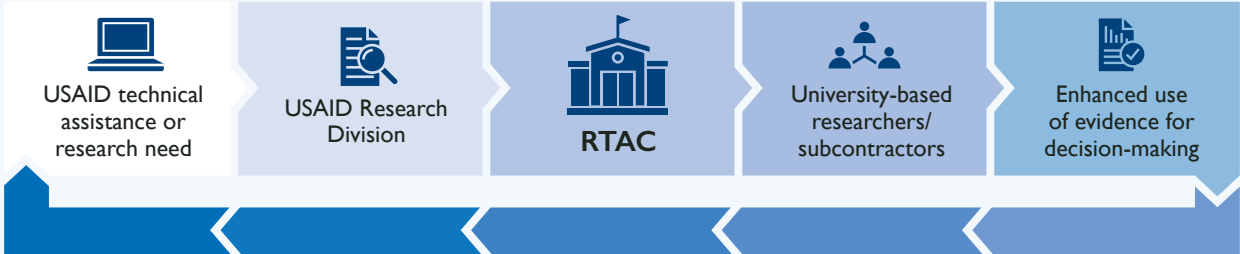
The RTAC consortium (Figure 1), led by NORC at the University of Chicago, was comprised of academic, research, development, and small business partners. Through RTAC, M/B/IOs gained access to a vast network of university-affiliated researchers with the skills and expertise to undertake research and technical assistance activities to address global challenges and support USAID programming decisions (Figure 2).

**FIGURE 1**  
**RTAC Consortium**



**FIGURE 2**  
**RTAC Process**

In response to Agency needs identified by USAID's Research Division, RTAC engaged university-based researchers and consortium partners to implement a broad array of activities, from carrying out data analyses to leading capacity-strengthening workshops. In providing USAID with rapid response, on-demand research expertise, RTAC helped the Agency make evidence-based decisions and improve global programming.



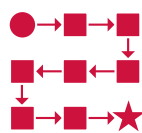
# USING RESEARCH EVIDENCE TO ENHANCE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES



**Conducted research and provided technical assistance**, including carrying out literature reviews, secondary data analysis, consulting on activity design, and developing and refining research questions.



**Convened expert panels and agenda-setting consultations** around emerging and priority development topics to identify critical research concepts, generate potential solutions, and develop policy recommendations.



**Translated findings into actionable recommendations**, using an innovative research-to-action planning process to maximize the policy and programmatic impact of USAID-funded research.



**Communicated and disseminated evidence generated by research teams** in compelling and accessible formats to reach target audiences, including policymakers, other decision-makers, and communities.



**Designed and implemented in-person and virtual training series** tailored for researchers, USAID staff, and implementing partners on priority development topics such as research translation.

## RTAC SUCCESS STORIES

### National Land Policy Reform

Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

After participating in an RTAC capacity-strengthening research-to-action workshop and receiving technical assistance in the form of a communications product, a research team at Christian Bilingual University of Congo, in partnership with Texas A&M University, was tasked by the national government to facilitate multi-stakeholder consultation workshops to revise the National Land Policy for the DRC. The Minister of the Interior and Decentralization invited the research team to implement their recommendations using the team's Sharing the Land process to help clarify disputed land boundaries for three administrative entities in North Kivu.

### Food Production Analysis Mozambique

Under an RTAC buy-in through the Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance, the University of Notre Dame and in-country partners generated a market analysis that provided a robust evidence base on domestic food production and the availability of storage facilities in Mozambique. The findings informed USAID's discussions with the Mozambican government regarding the import of in-kind nutrition commodities.



PHOTO: ILRI/MANN

# RTAC'S LEGACY

## LINKING A ROBUST NETWORK OF RESEARCHERS TO USAID

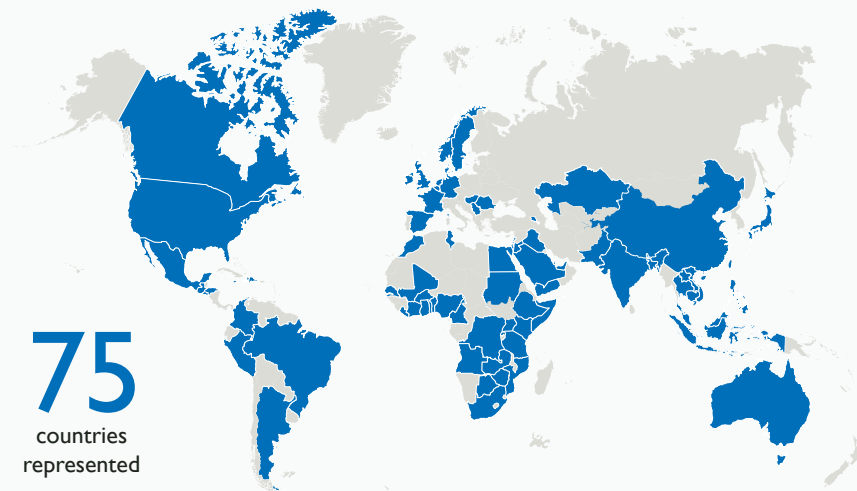
 **1,048**

Faculty, graduate students, and postdoctoral researchers

**397** women researchers

**121** researchers at minority serving institutions

**519** researchers affiliated with academic institutions in developing countries



**468** universities represented



**49%** located in low-or-middle income countries

## BUILDING GEOGRAPHIC DIVERSITY IN RESEARCH TRANSLATION

Research partners conducted field-based and desk research to support USAID's work in **30 countries** in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Middle East.

Despite the formal closure of the RTAC contract, the services provided by the project laid the foundation for future work within the Agency.

Thanks to RTAC, USAID is now better equipped to support scientific researchers across the globe, strengthen research translation capacity, and leverage research networks in future programming.

## AMPLIFYING THE IMPACT OF RESEARCH AND EVIDENCE



Developed **97 targeted communications products**, in multiple languages and on diverse research topics, which research teams and experts used to facilitate research translation to communicate their findings to a broader audience of policy stakeholders.

Hosted **51 capacity-strengthening workshops**



with local research teams and members of the Research Network to support them in research translation and peer-to-peer learning.



Led **13 demand-driven, publicly-available convenings and webinar series** to attract and inform a global audience around policy issues of interest to USAID and the broader development community.

Partnered with over **40 universities and specialized development partners**



from around the world to implement more than 30 demand-driven research studies and technical assistance activities on behalf of USAID.

### USAID RESEARCH DIVISION

➤ [USAID.GOV/RESEARCH](https://www.usaid.gov/research)

✕ [USAID\\_INNOVATES](https://www.usaid.gov/innovation)

f [USAIDInnovates](https://www.usaid.gov/innovation)

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