

mSTAR: Mobile Solutions Technical Assistance and Research

Leveraging technology for social and economic change



mSTAR is a broad, flexible, and responsive technical assistance and action learning program that will foster the rapid adoption and scale-up of digital finance, digital inclusion, and mobile data in developing countries. Ultimately, mSTAR seeks to increase access to and the availability and use of mobile technologies by the poor, civil society, local government institutions, and private sector stakeholders. By the end of 2017, the vision of success for mSTAR includes significant progress in the three key, inter-related work streams.

> **DIGITAL FINANCE.** With the push of a button, and often through a simple mobile phone, inclusive electronic payments can eliminate the corruption, inefficiencies, and security risks of cash payments. New “branchless” banking models, enabled by the broad reach of mobile phone infrastructure, are reinventing financial services—once the exclusive domain of the rich—and offer the 2.5 billion unbanked people worldwide the opportunity to take control of their finances.

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> **DATA FOR DECISION-MAKING.** Mobile data tools empower decision makers to constantly adjust their programs based on what is and is not working. Not only can programs see results in real time, mobile tools can rapidly clean, aggregate and share information, eliminate errors associated with collecting and transcribing paper forms, and perform powerful analysis and visualization.

mSTAR supports USAID in identifying ways to fund innovative mobile data demonstration cases designed for scale, change policy and contract language to incorporate mobile data solutions into USAID programs, and promote learning on mobile data among USAID staff and implementers.

> **DIGITAL INCLUSION.** Access to technology is the foundation upon which transformational products and services are built. Digital inclusion means more than an available mobile connection. It also means an individual's ability to afford the services provided, value them, and have the ability to use them.

mSTAR will support USAID in their goals of building partnerships to create enabling policy and regulatory environments, create new business models, and provide relevant local content to make technology accessible to underserved populations; collaborate with USAID Missions to understand and address barriers to mobile access in order to strengthen their M4D investments; and design toolkits, provide research, and build business cases for different actors in the mobile ecosystem to help them better understand the landscape in emerging markets.



mSTAR at Work:

These are illustrative examples of programs and activities that are currently supported by mSTAR.

RDMA

mSTAR is working with USAID's Regional Development Mission for Asia (RDMA) to promote the appropriate and effective use of mobile technologies in development (M4D). In January 2014, mSTAR organized a one-day M4D forum in Bangkok for USAID staff, practitioners, and technologists, followed by a four-day course for USAID staff on integrating mobiles into development projects. To supplement the course, mSTAR also wrote a detailed, yet practical handbook on M4D written for USAID staff.

Bangladesh

mSTAR is supporting USAID implementing partners in their transition from cash to electronic payments through a four-pronged approach focused on awareness raising, technical assistance, dialogue facilitation, and research. mSTAR's training workshops have provided valuable information to nearly 50 different IPs and MFS providers. This overall initiative initially supports projects working in USAID's health and agriculture portfolios, accounting for about two-thirds of USAID's investments in Bangladesh.

Afghanistan

In 2013, mSTAR conducted a landscape assessment and provided recommendations for strengthening and scaling mobile solutions programming and applications throughout USAID's portfolio in Afghanistan.

Mozambique

To combat child mortality from vaccine-preventable diseases, Vodafone and partners have introduced the mVacciNation application to overcome obstacles around data capture, patient compliance, and supply chain failures for vaccines using mobile phones. Supported by USAID, GAVI, and Vodafone, a three-year evaluation of this application will measure its impact on vaccination coverage rates and vaccine stock levels; assess efficacy and quality of SMS and voice call reminders; calculate cost-effectiveness of the application; and assess impact of the application on health system processes.

Burma

In Burma, mSTAR is conducting a mapping activity to demonstrate how to best integrate digital financial services (DFS) into the agriculture sector. This assessment will focus on evaluating and supporting policy through USAID to the local DFS actors.

DFS into FTF Frameworks

mSTAR will identify how digital financial services (DFS) can accelerate the outcomes of Feed the Future (FTF) programming globally by initially focusing on creating strategic frameworks for four countries: Haiti, Ghana, Uganda, and Tanzania. The analysis will yield multiple resources including: brief overviews of the state of the DFS ecosystem in each country, action plans and analytical framework for identifying and implementing DFS solutions into current and anticipated agricultural FTF programming, and the production of various knowledge products.

Knowledge Products

mSTAR has produced 45 learning documents, toolkits and handbooks. Highlights include a Mobiles for Development handbook which was downloaded by over 1,000 practitioners and the DFS Handbook which has served as an invaluable tool for USAID staff. The project has also hosted over 20 internal/external events and webinars such as an ICT4D Principles campaign, a 'Lessons Learned' series, regional forums and workshops.

mSTAR Partners and Funders:

mSTAR currently works or has worked with these organizations:

- Enclude (formerly Shorebank)
- Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA)
- Dalberg
- OpenRevolution
- University of Cape Town
- TechChange
- WorldFish
- Dnet
- Social Marketing Company (SMC)
- GAVI
- Vodafone
- J-PAL Africa

Streamlined Award-Making:

The mSTAR mechanism is in place to rapidly engage the full breadth and depth of mSTAR partners, as well as other international and local organizations as needed, to design and implement tailored



programs that meet

the objectives of USAID Missions. Accessing mSTAR is simple:

Step 1: A Mission or operating unit works with Joe Duncan (jduncan@usaid.gov), the mSTAR Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR), to co-create a scope of work.

Step 2: mSTAR works with USAID to refine the scope of work and select a team of specialists to implement it.

Step 3: Once the SOW is finalized, implementation begins. Depending on the complexity of the assignment, mSTAR endeavors to be on the ground and implementing within one to two months of a finalized scope of work.

Learn more about mSTAR's Resources at:

<https://www.microlinks.org/library/mstar-mobile-solutions-technical-assistance-and-research>

This product is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the responsibility of FHI 360 and do not reflect the views of USAID or the US Government.

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