

## HIGHER EDUCATION SOLUTIONS NETWORK

### Connecting to Accelerate Global Development

The challenges in international development are immense, yet donors' resources are limited, and systems and models are often outdated. In developing countries, innovators in the field are discovering inspired approaches to development problems. At universities around the world, professors and students are cultivating methods that could both create and expand those innovations dramatically. USAID is trying a new approach to bring these communities together — funding the creation of “Development Labs” inside leading universities working directly to evaluate and strengthen real-world innovations in development.

### The Innovative Approach

In November 2012, the United States Agency for International Development announced the creation of the Higher Education Solutions Network, a multidisciplinary research and development effort led by seven world-class universities working directly to evaluate and strengthen real-world innovations in development.

Leveraging nearly equal investments from the institutions, the universities established eight Development Labs, collaborating with a network that extends beyond 400 partner institutions in academia, the private sector, civil society, and government across 66 countries.

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*I am always struck by the depth of engagement I see at universities, where young people — more than anyone else — believe we should tackle big unanswered questions and solve tough problems.*

Dr. Rajiv Shah, USAID Administrator

This network is creating a vibrant framework of cooperation between development professionals and academia by harnessing the ingenuity and passion of scientists, students, faculty, and entrepreneurs to solve some of the world's most pressing development challenges. By tapping into and connecting the talent of this ecosystem of individuals, the Development Labs allow researchers, innovators, and institutions to directly engage in the redefinition of problems and identification



Consortium member Nadia Elkordy gets her hands dirty spreading clay inside an air-tight grain storage structure during the MIT Design Summit in Zambia. Photo: Bianca Anderson



of new solutions. Within HESN, interdisciplinary teams are working on the creation of reliable development related databases, new ways to evaluate “what works,” and accelerating the creation, testing, and scaling of high-impact technologies and approaches.

**Each Development Lab has a distinct focus:**



The **College of William & Mary’s AidData Center for Development Policy** is enabling the international development community to more effectively target, coordinate, deliver, and evaluate aid investments through geospatial mapping.

**University of California, Berkeley’s Development Impact Lab** is improving the way universities design technology for development and apply it on a large scale in fields including energy, health, information technology, and communications.



**Duke University’s Social Entrepreneurship Accelerator** and the International Partnership for Innovative Healthcare Delivery find successful innovators in health care and help them expand.

**Makerere University’s ResilientAfrica Network**, anchored in Uganda, works with universities in Ethiopia, Ghana, and South Africa to find innovative local solutions to overcome the shocks and stresses of poverty, conflict, displacement, disease, and drought.



**Massachusetts Institute of Technology** leads two programs: the **Comprehensive Initiative on Technology Evaluation** is designing a system for evaluating technological solutions to development challenges. The **International Development Innovation Network** is linking local innovators around the world who are using technology to address issues facing people living in poverty.



**Michigan State University’s Global Center for Food Systems Innovation** addresses critical pressures on the world’s food supply by creating, testing and enabling the expansion of solutions.



**Texas A&M University’s ConDev** will inform practitioners how to design development programs with a better chance of building peace in conflict-prone countries.

**Work with the Higher Education Solutions Network**



Each of the 8 HESN Development Labs have the ability to accept buy-ins from USAID Operating Units. Operating Units are encouraged to explore potential partnerships with HESN. For more information, or to explore opportunities for collaboration, please email: [hesn@usaid.gov](mailto:hesn@usaid.gov)

To learn more about HESN on the web, visit: <http://www.usaid.gov/hesn> or sign up for our newsletter, the HESN Connector, at <http://tinyurl.com/kaz2kck>.