Call for Proposal – Advancing Local Leadership, Innovation and Network (ALL-IN) Research Grant

Background

The Advancing Local Leadership, Innovation and Networks (ALL-IN) program, a collaborative research grant program between [The Feed the Future Market Risk and Resilience Innovation Lab (MRR)](#) and the [International Center for Evaluation and Development (ICED)](#)[1] and funded by USAID announces a call for research proposals from researchers at African institutions (defined below) to advance host country leadership in defining and implementing research projects.

Selected research projects will further the mission of the MRR Innovation Lab to *generate and transfer into action innovations that will bolster resilience, keeping rural individuals, households, communities and markets in positions of economic viability from which they can sustain and accelerate a path of inclusive agricultural growth.*

Effectively meeting the mission described above requires shifting the locus of research control to economists in African countries. ALL-IN is designed to provide the historically under-resourced African economic research community the resources it needs to fully engage and further develop and to fully utilize local institutions' clear pathways to local policy impacts. African researchers will take the lead in defining priorities and will then draw on US university-based mentors for support as needed to enhance their capacity in implementation and management of large-scale research projects.

We invite researchers and institutions that have the skills, talents and ideas for impactful research, even if lacking in experience implementing and managing large-scale research projects. As part of this award, the ALL-IN collaborative team will provide, as needed and appropriate, support to researchers and their project managers in developing the capacity to manage and lead this award and others of a similar nature in the future. This award is intended to provide the opportunity to institutions – both researchers and staff – to learn by doing, in collaboration with mentors and peers at the ALL-IN management institutions.

All selected recipients of research funding under ALL-IN will be onboarded as an independent cohort and then become part of the MRR Innovation Lab's virtual research consortium, which will meet annually for peer review and feedback on projects. These meetings, along with other ad-hoc meetings as appropriate, will provide the opportunity to further enhance capacity, create opportunities for future areas of inquiry and both broaden and deepen research networks for all participants.

Question and Answer Session #1[2]   16 July, 4 p.m. EAT

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[1] For brief descriptions of both the MRR Innovation Lab and ICED, please refer to the end of this RFP and the information provided on the websites found via the hyperlinks.

[2] The Question and Answer Sessions will both be held on Twitter via Twitter Chats. Follow @ICED_THINKTANK and @MRRInnovLab to stay engaged and join the chat. For those not able to join the chat, the questions and answers will all be posted on the ALL-IN Solicitation website after the chat.

Expressions of Interest Deadline: 1 August 2020

Question and Answer Session #2 20 August, 4 p.m.

EAT Proposal Deadline: 31 August 2020

We anticipate that 9-12 awards will be made under this request for proposals with a maximum award amount of $450,000.

In order to encourage researchers with ideas that are promising, but not yet fully developed, we will offer a seed grant funding window. Seed grants will provide modest funding (~$5000) and other support to allow development of a full proposal in time for submission in November 2020.

Scope of Research and Geographic Focus

ALL-IN calls for researchers at African institutions to take the lead in defining priorities within the following thematic areas:

- **Resilient Escapes from Poverty**: Bundled programs that can have a bigger and more lasting impact on persistent poverty than the sum of their parts.

- **Financial and Agronomic Innovations for Inclusive Growth and Resilience**: Expanding the potential of insurance, stress-tolerant seeds and other tools to manage the risk of drought, flood or other disasters.

- **Resilient Systems for Broadly-based Agricultural Growth**: Ensuring that markets and other social systems are competitive and do not bypass women and young people.

The grant selection committee will prioritize proposals that will allow contribute to local policy-relevant research questions in the thematic areas above. For examples of potential research topics, please see appendices 1 and 2. Across all our research priorities, we also encourage projects that include deliberate learning objectives related to gender, youth and nutrition either as a primary focus of the research or as a relevant cross-cutting issue(s).

Research proposals should ultimately be focused on achieving global and/or regional impacts. While some exceptions may be made, field-based research activities should take place in Feed the Future target[3], resilience focus countries[4] or Feed the Future aligned[5] as indicated by USAID (with top favorability to feed the future target countries, then resilience focus countries, then aligned as the least favored of the three categories).

Eligibility & Definition of African Research Institution

This solicitation's eligibility is limited to researchers from local African Institutions who are interested in advancing the research agenda of MRR and ALL-IN especially those in Feed the Future target, Feed the Future aligned or resilience-focus countries in Africa as indicated by USAID.

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[3] Feed the Future target countries in Africa include: Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Uganda.

[4] Resilience countries include: Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, Uganda, Zimbabwe.

[5] "Aligned countries" are those in which the U.S. Government supports ongoing agricultural development programs but are not designated as target countries. This can be determined through a review of the relevant USAID mission strategy.

Following USAID practice, we define a local African institution as 1) majority African owned and/or managed and 2) majority African board of directors composition. If you have questions about the eligibility of your institution, please contact ICED at info@iced-eval.org .

Each proposal must identify the lead-PI from the Africa-based research institution and have an identified mentor from a US-based university. If you have difficulty identifying a mentor or would like assistance getting in touch with a mentor you think may be appropriate, please contact the ALL-IN team through ICED and we will facilitate the contact.

Support of USAID Objectives and Initiatives

The MRR Innovation Lab is funded in support of the US Government's [Feed the Future](#) Initiative and the related [Global Food Security Act (GFSA) of 2016](#). The [Global Food Security Research Strategy](#) calls for a "pipeline of innovations, tools and approaches designed to improve agriculture, food security, resilience and nutrition priorities in the face of complex, dynamic challenges." Because USAID and Feed the Future are the source of funding for these awards, projects are expected to contribute to the goals and objectives as outlined in the GFSA and the Global Food Security Research Strategy. Projects might also connect with non-Feed the Future USAID initiatives (such as PEPFAR).

Each USAID mission has its own set of strategic objectives, priority value chains and programming. We encourage you to explore your proposed country of study on the USAID website and the individual mission website to show how your activities relate to ongoing work at mission. A clear plan of outreach to and interaction with the mission throughout the life of the project is required.

Funding Ceilings

- Maximum request amount: $450,000

- Funding for seed grants and feasibility studies: We anticipate that most seed grants will be approximately $5,000, however this is not a firm maximum.

Application Deadlines

Expression of Interest Deadline: 1 August 2020

These expressions of interest (EOIs) are used for the purposes of identifying the appropriate number of external reviewers with appropriate expertise.   EOIs will not be screened, and every team that submits an EOI is eligible to submit a full proposal as described below. You MUST submit an EOI as a condition for submitting a full proposal.

Expressions of interest must include the following:

- Lead PI (including institution and email address)
- Tentative Proposal Title
- Collaborator & mentor information (if known at this time; optional)

- A brief (short paragraph) description of the research that will be proposed
- If you do not have a mentor committed but have a mentor in mind and would like assistance making the connection, please also note that in short paragraph description for the EOI and the ALL-IN team will try to assist. You may list more than one potential mentor.

Expressions of interest must be submitted at the following link: https://mrr.piestar-rfx.com/opportunities/all/rfp/100

Submission Deadline for Full Proposals: 31 August 2020 (requirements described

below) **Grant Duration**: Up to 3 years

Application Process for Seed Proposals

ALL PROPOSALS SHOULD BE SUBMITTED VIA: https://mrr.piestar-rfx.com/opportunities/all/rfp/102

Applications should include the following elements:

Requirement	Description
Title Page	List Principal Investigators (include name, title, institutional address, phone, fax, and email), total project budget, and funds requested. Please also list the identified mentor if a commitment has been made.
Abstract	Not to exceed 200 words.
Narrative Description	Not to exceed 10 double-spaced pages. In addition to detailing the intellectual context and proposed research methodology, the narrative description should take care to describe the policy relevance of the research and how the project will contribute to host country research capacity. It should also detail how the project contributes to USAID objectives and initiatives as discussed above.
Budget	A budget for the life of the proposal that gives detail for each institution as well as an overall budget summary.
Curricula Vitae	Curricula Vitae for Principal Investigators.

Application Process for Full Proposals

ALL PROPOSALS SHOULD BE SUBMITTED VIA: https://mrr.piestar-rfx.com/opportunities/all/rfp/102

Applications should include the following elements:

Requirement	Description
Title Page	List Principal Investigators (include name, title, institutional address, phone, fax, and email), total project budget, and funds requested. Please also list the identified mentor if a commitment has been made.
Abstract	Not to exceed 200 words.
Narrative Description	Not to exceed 20 double-spaced pages. In addition to detailing the intellectual context and proposed research methodology, the narrative description should take care to describe the policy relevance of the research and how the project will contribute to host country research capacity. It should also detail how the project contributes to USAID objectives and initiatives as discussed above.
Anticipated Outputs	Including dissemination activities targeted at policy makers as well as academic publications.
Anticipated Impacts	Focus on measurable indicators of the potential development impact of the research. Please also including brief description of anticipated impacts on researcher/institutional capacity (including, as appropriate, any inclusion of students/trainees and/or stakeholder training).
Timeline	A schedule or timeline of activities over the life of the project.
Budget	A budget for the life of the proposal that gives detail for each institution as well as an overall budget summary.
Curricula Vitae	Curricula Vitae for Principal Investigators.
Letter of Commitment from Mentor	A letter of commitment from the US-based mentor for the research project.

Budget Guidelines

An indicative budget must be submitted using the template provided at www.iced-eval.org/ALL-IN . Line items are provided as guidelines but are not comprehensive. The budget must be broken out by yearly expenditures. Each proposal must include a budget for each institution participating in the activity, providing accurate institutional costs and negotiated administrative rates. Individual institutional budgets are necessary to monitor US-based and host-country expenses. Please be sure to include an Excel or similar formatted version of the budget that allows the review committee to view the formulas used in the calculations.

Travel to Annual Technical Committee Meetings

At the start of the award, all ALL-IN PIs will be invited to Nairobi, Kenya for introductory activities, including introductions to the requirements of the award.

This will occur prior to the Year 1 BASIS Technical Committee meeting described below. Please budget for this trip to Nairobi for PIs (excluding mentors) in the first year of the award.

All project PIs will be members of the BASIS Technical Committee, which meets once per year. The purpose of these meetings is to provide peer feedback on BASIS research, and to lay the foundation for synthetic activities that draw together the policy messages from the different BASIS projects. All research budgets need to provide for annual travel expenses for both host country PIs and their mentors. In practice the meetings will be held in either the US or another country, depending on the location of PIs and visa, cost and other considerations. For budget estimation purposes, budget for three technical meetings - two in Washington DC and one in London over the life of the award (one in each year of the award).

Open Data Requirements

[ADS 579 USAID Development Data](#) discusses requirements, roles and responsibilities regarding the submission of datasets in machine readable format to USAID's Development Data Library. Recipients will be required to develop and maintain a process to ensure that data identified for release under this mandate are vetted for legality of release, removal of personally identifiable information and other security considerations. Please make sure to account for costs required to meet for these responsibilities in your proposed budget.

Professional Development

Proposals may use up to 10-15 percent of funds for professional development activities. This can be used to acquire technical skills required to effectively lead and implement the research, including (but not limited to) specialized courses, travel to work with collaborators and/or mentors on key skills, etc. A broad variety of professional development activities will be considered if appropriate to the proposed research activities and the required capacities.

Indirect/Overhead Costs

Proposals may not charge more than 12% indirect cost recovery rates. If there are any additional administrative costs that are directly related to implementation of this specific research project, those may be included in the budget line items (as relevant this may include appropriate administrative personnel time, supplies, etc.). Exceptions to this limitation will be given to institutions that have a negotiated NICRA rate with the United States government, in which case they may apply the negotiated NICRA rate.

Research Grant Selection

Depending on the number of proposals received, proposals may be pre-screened by the ALL-IN team using the criterion listed below to be sure the proposals meet minimum qualifications. All proposals that pass this preliminary screening will be assessed by two external reviewers, who will evaluate proposals based on technical merit and potential for policy integration and adoption. The reviewers will be asked to provide detailed commentary and recommendations in their reviews.

These reviews will be prepared anonymously and be submitted to an advisory committee, which will make the final selection decisions.

We recognize that the experience of researchers that might apply will be highly variable. While strong proposals will be awarded immediately, we anticipate to receive proposals that identify promising ideas with specific gaps in the initial proposal. These researchers may be 1) invited to revise and resubmit based on the feedback provided by the anonymous external reviews and 2) draw in additional research capacity as needed to supplement the researchers' skills, talents and ideas. Proposals receiving a revise and resubmit will be invited to submit a revised full proposal during the same review as seed grant recipients (November 2020). Researchers invited to revise and resubmit will be eligible to request proposal development funding of approximately $5000.

If necessary and appropriate, the ALL-IN management teams will assist in making appropriate connections to draw in the additional research capacity that may be required to revise the proposals for resubmission and for project implementation.

The following criteria will be used to evaluate each proposal.

Criterion	Possible Score
Technical Merit of Proposal[6]	30 Points
Broader Applicability and Synthesis in Broader Literature and Research on this Subject	10 Points
Anticipated Impacts on Capacity of Both the Researcher and Host Institution (and students, if applicable)	10 Points
Policy Integration and Outreach	20 Points
Contribution to Feed the Future Objectives and Initiatives	15 Points
Potential for Development Impact	15 Points

Award Management

Selected research activities are expected to come from researchers at institutions with a wide variety of experience and capacity to manage large awards, especially to meet the requirements of US federal funds. For those institutions with proven experience in large award management, ICED may make subcontracts directly to the institution that hosts the researcher and apply standard subaward management processes and procedures. On the other hand, for those researchers who come from institutions with little or no experience with large awards and that may be poorly equipped to effectively manage the funds, ICED may directly manage the award funds for the researcher. After a proposal is selected, the ALL-IN team will work with the researcher to determine the best form of award management.

Project Implementation

In addition to funding research, ALL-IN supports policy-oriented outreach activities that integrate the themes and findings of its research projects into a coherent, evidence-based voice about policy

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[6] Contribution to policy-oriented poverty alleviation research, contribution to identified research themes; relevance of sites chosen for themes/topics selected; appropriateness of research methodology; qualification of researchers, and feasibility of research design, schedule and budget.

priorities and programming options. Proposals must demonstrate the capacity and a tentative plan to engage with local policymakers and work toward the adoption of policies that emerge from the research findings. The proposal should also explain the anticipated outreach strategy, including targeted audiences, specific activities, timeline, and benchmarks for measuring impact.

Additional expectations of selected grantees:

- At the initiation of each project, the PI will be responsible for coordinating with the ALL-IN team to prepare a short brief that summarizes his or her project for a lay audience. As results emerge, PIs will be expected to cooperate on at least one additional brief.
- Researchers will participate when possible at ALL-IN dissemination events (1-2 over the life of the project). ALL-IN will be responsible for event associated costs, so they do not need to be included in the proposal budget. Examples of such events include webinars and workshops.
- Researchers will attend annual technical committee meetings (details below under "Budget Guidelines"). Expenses related to these meetings should be included in your proposal budget.
- Researchers will comply with USAID's Open Data Policies and include expenses related to compliance in their proposal budget[7].

After a selection decision has been made, all selected proposals will be subject to a brief review by USAID headquarters to confirm appropriate budget and that the proposal's scope is within the overall ALL-IN and MRR Innovation Lab mandate. In addition, all selected proposals must be submitted to the relevant USAID mission offices for their review, feedback, and concurrence. Activities will not be allowed to begin until we have received mission concurrence. These are requirements of USAID the funding organization for these activities. We invite you to, as appropriate, engage USAID missions during the proposal preparation process to ensure buy-in.

While these approvals are being acquired (which we anticipate will take an estimated 30 days from date of selection, though it varies by country), research teams will be expected to cooperate with the MRR Innovation Lab's dedicated Policy Engagement Coordinator to conduct stakeholder mapping, theory of change identification and creation of a stakeholder engagement plan. This plan will likely include activities throughout the life of the project, including regular workshops and meetings with stakeholders and outreach events at the conclusion of the research. The research team will be expected to conduct outreach activities in the country of the research. All of this planning will be done with the direct guidance and support of the Policy Engagement Coordinator and any others on the ALL-IN management teams, as appropriate.

Throughout the duration of research activities, researchers and their project management teams will receive support from their mentors and the ALL-IN teams on both project implementation and award management. There will be significant time investment on both activity streams at the start of the award to ensure that appropriate infrastructure is in place to initiate activities, and there will be clearly identified points of contact on the ALL-IN teams for each researcher and administrative team members that they can reach out to for any questions or support. If necessary and appropriate, the ALL-IN team can schedule ad-hoc or quarterly calls with researchers and/or

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[7] Researchers are directed to USAID's "ADS 579 – USAID Development Data;"

project managers and administrators to discuss and resolve common issues. A needs assessment for this kind of regular check-in will be done at the start of the awards.

The PIs of approved projects will be responsible for submitting an annual report, annual work plan, and other brief reports to be approved by both ICED and the MRR Innovation Lab. Assuming satisfactory progress on the research project (including timely submission of required reports), annual funding allocations to each program will follow the budget developed at the beginning of the project. However, because the MRR Innovation Lab is itself subject to annual budgetary approval, it is possible that a change in research funding will be necessitated in the event that the core budget from USAID declines below projected levels. Such changes will be negotiated with each PI and major budget reallocations will be subject to the approval of the ALL-IN Advisory Committee.

For further information please contact us at info@iced-eval.org or visit www.iced-eval.org.

ALL-IN Managing Institutions

Core Management Institution:
The International Center for Evaluation and Development (ICED)

ICED is an international and independent think-tank, specializing in innovation and research in Monitoring and Evaluation for development. Managed and governed by highly experienced, renowned and passionate experts knowledgeable of current trends and issues in evaluation, research and development, ICED can operate effectively at the nexus between evaluation, knowledge translation and development.

This Africa based and African led organization is committed to the highest professional and ethical standards to support development in Africa in a manner that is consistent with our guiding principles. This commitment is evident in the work that we do and shared by our sponsors, partners, associates and other stakeholders.

Headquartered in Nairobi Kenya, ICED is registered in the United States, Ghana and Kenya as an international not-for-profit organization supporting evaluation research and innovation for development in Africa.

ICED's core business seek to:
- Advance evaluation research, innovation and adaptation in Monitoring and Evaluation to drive transformational development in Africa;
- Support governments, private sectors, civil societies and other institutions to strengthen monitoring and evaluation theory and practice for organizational transformation;
- Build capacity and professional development in monitoring and evaluation;
- Policy engagement, convening and knowledge management for transformational development

Collaborating Institution:
The Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Markets, Risk & Resilience

The [Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Markets, Risk and Resilience (MRR)](#) at UC Davis develops and tests financial and market innovations that take the most promising agricultural tools for families in developing economies from the lab to the field. Our mission is to generate and transfer knowledge and innovations that promote resilience and empower rural families, communities and markets to share in inclusive agricultural growth. The MRR Innovation Lab focuses the most advanced tools in development economics and related fields on three core themes:

- Resilient Escapes from Poverty: Bundled programs that can have a bigger and more lasting impact on persistent poverty than the sum of their parts.
- Financial and Agronomic Innovations for Inclusive Growth and Resilience: Expanding the potential of insurance, stress-tolerant seeds and other tools to manage the risk of drought, flood or other disasters.
- Resilient Systems for Broadly-based Agricultural Growth: Ensuring that markets and other social systems are competitive and do not bypass women and young people.

In addition to funding research and building the capacity of local institutions, we translate our work into accessible [policy documents](#) and sponsor [outreach events](#) that integrate our findings into a coherent and effective voice about priorities and options for governments, NGOs and others working to reduce poverty and increase prosperity worldwide.

The MRR Innovation Lab was established at UC Davis in 2019 by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) (cooperative agreement no. 7200AA19LE00004).

Appendix 1: Sample Research Sub-Topics

1. ***Enabling Resilient Escapes from Poverty***

   We have learned that enhancing material assets, social assets, psychological well-being or risk management can alter poverty dynamics. The next step is to learn how to exploit the synergies between these interventions in order to cost-effectively address deep-rooted rural poverty at the individual and community scales, especially in the wake of violence and civil conflict. Illustrative examples include but are not limited to:

   - Psychological dimensions of shocks and poverty and solutions that enable resilient escapes from poverty;
   - The linkage between poverty and resilience in conflict zones and/or areas of recurrent crisis;
   - The synergies between building assets and securing assets with risk reduction mechanisms;
   - Interactions between psychological and material assets and learning to effectively harness their synergies; and,
   - Breaking the intergenerational transmission of poverty through interventions that allow households to protect the human capacities of their children.

2. ***Financial and Agronomic Innovations for Inclusive Growth and Resilience:***

   Research bringing forward a series of index insurance innovations that can promote *Resilience-Plus*.[8] We have also learned that insurance is no magic bullet, and we need a next generation of innovations to make index insurance more effective, and to open the door to a broader set of tools that allow individuals to flexibly blend financial (savings, credit and insurance) and agronomic instruments to manage the risks that threaten their resilience. Illustrative examples include but are not limited to:

   - Better models of crop identification and predictions of crop yields and losses for use in the design of high-quality agricultural index insurance;
   - Price or revenue insurance;
   - Using insurance to unlock credit for smallholder farmers;
   - Improve the salience and availability of index insurance for women farmers;
   - Innovation and evaluation of a set of flexible financial instruments that blend indexed savings, credit and insurance contracts;
   - Develop and test instruments for managing idiosyncratic risks (especially those risks that weigh heavily against women's assets); and,
   - Explore the complementarities between on and off-farm livelihood activities, as well as financial and agronomic risk management technologies including stress tolerant seed varieties and techniques and investments in soil and water management.

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[8] *Resilience-Plus* is the notion that improved risk management can have a two-pronged impact by enabling households to: (i) Be resilient in the sense that they can manage adversity without compromising the well-being they would have had without the shock; and, (ii) Prudentially invest and improve their expected future level of well-being over what it otherwise would have been.

3. *Resilient Systems for Broadly-based Agricultural Growth*

Prior research makes clear the power of relaxing system-level constraints, and yet we also know that market and other social systems can bypass men and women in vulnerable phases of their life cycle. Finding ways to supersede these tradeoffs and create systems that are competitive and inclusive is warranted. Illustrative examples include but are not limited to:

- Tapping into social networks to resolve systemic information problems (without deepening existing disadvantages with regard to inclusiveness);
- Design and targeting of learning subsidies so that they do not bypass women and their networks;
- Using IT solutions, farmer groups and contract farming mechanisms to encourage smallholder commercialization by creating more competitive markets for small-scale farmers that offer them better prices for inputs and outputs and better-quality inputs; and,
- Stabilizing public finance, perhaps through risk facilities that integrate sovereign and individual risk, to make it more effective in stabilizing markets and communities.

Across all our research priorities, we also encourage projects that include deliberate learning objectives related to gender, youth and nutrition either as a primary focus of the research or as a relevant cross-cutting issue(s).

Appendix 2: Current MRR Research Portfolio

Do No Harm: Evaluating the Welfare Effects of Behavioral Insurance Interventions in Ethiopia
Glenn Harrison, Georgia State University

Gender, Nutrition-Sensitive Agricultural Programs and Resilience in Bangladesh
John Hoddinott, Cornell University

Reducing Adverse Selection and Moral Hazard in Digital Loans for Agriculture
Sarah Janzen, Kansas State University

Smoothing Seasonal Hunger Through Planning in Zambia
Supreet Kaur, University of California Berkeley

Better Borrowing to Promote Access to Water and Improve Dairy Farming in Kenya
Michael Kremer, Harvard University

Assessing the Resilience of Seed Systems in Uganda using Comprehensive and Supply Chain-Structured Genotyping
Travis Lybbert, University of California Davis

Trust in Financial Services for Agriculture in Ethiopia: A Field Experiment on Picture-Based Crop Monitoring
Maria Porter, Michigan State University

The Value of Linking Farmers to Maize Value Chains in Rwanda
Jonathan Robinson, University of California Santa Cruz

Irrigation, Property Rights and Land Markets for Resilient Growth in Rwanda and Senegal
Elisabeth Sadoulet, University of California Berkeley

Promoting Resilient Agricultural Growth with Area Revenue Insurance in Ghana
Ashish Shenoy, University of California Davis

Resilience in the Aftermath of Disaster in Mozambique
Dean Yang, University of Michigan