



Staff Spotlight: Emily Blynn

Innovation Advisor
Center for Innovation and Impact, USAID



Q: What is your role at USAID?

A: I am an Innovation Advisor with CII's Innovation team, where we seek to scale innovations with the greatest potential for impact, support the Global Health Bureau and USAID Missions to identify and deploy these innovations, and provide guidance on emerging technologies for global health.

Q: What did you do prior to joining CII?

A: I have focused my career at the intersection of global health, business, and innovation. Prior to joining CII, I was a Project Manager at Dalberg Advisors, a global development strategy and advisory firm, where I supported public, private, and philanthropic clients to develop strategies for impact in areas including health, gender, financial inclusion, and others. Prior to Dalberg, I obtained a dual MPH/MBA from Johns Hopkins University, where I collaborated on several digital health research projects including an assessment of the sustainability and scale potential of a digital health innovation in Nicaragua. I also have experience with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, where I explored sustainable financing models for immunization programs of Gavi transition countries. I began my career at Accenture, implementing supply chain and financial management systems for federal agencies.

Q: What makes you passionate about your work?

A: I'm passionate about identifying and supporting innovations that strengthen health systems, allowing health care workers to do their jobs better, and consumers to more easily access quality care. A few years ago I visited a "last mile" primary health facility in Kenya. We met a cadre of volunteer CHWs who showed us the detailed hand drawn maps they used to locate homes of patients in their catchment area. Despite these efforts and sometimes after traveling on foot for hours, patients had often moved on when the CHWs visited, given the migratory nature of the Maasai population they served. If only the CHWs had the tools to locate and connect with their patients remotely, they could save time and effort, and get care to those that need it at the right time. Seeing the deep commitment of these men to the health of their community despite constant challenges in turn motivates me to identify and scale innovations to allow them to do their jobs better and improve the health of the people they serve.

Q: What do you like to do outside of work?

A: Most evenings you can find me on long walks or runs around the National Mall and along the river, usually while listening to my favorite podcasts like Public Health on Call, Heavyweight, and the Daily. I enjoy exploring the DC restaurant scene and am always searching for new places to try. When I'm not traveling for work or for fun, I like to foster kittens through Wolf Trap Animal Rescue.

Favorite Book

My favorite book is usually the last one I've read - it's too hard to choose! However, I've read *Salt, Fat, Acid, Heat* by Samin Nosrat cover to cover and it's one I keep coming back to. It's more of a treatise on food than a cookbook and contains beautiful illustrations.