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# Partnerships For Enhanced Engagement In Research (PEER)

PEER is an international program that funds researchers in USAID partner countries who collaborate with U.S. government-funded researchers to address global development challenges.

## OVERVIEW

The PEER program is managed by the USAID Innovation, Technology, and Research (ITR) Hub's Research Division in the Bureau for Inclusive Growth, Partnerships, and Innovation. It directly supports researchers in USAID partner countries through institutional research awards of up to \$300,000. Research projects are used to fill critical evidence gaps or use implementation research to test how to scale processes that result in improved development programming or more informed policies.

U.S. government-funded researchers work with PEER-funded scientists in partner countries through mutually beneficial collaborations that produce scientific breakthroughs, train future scientists, build scientific capacity at local higher education institutions, and translate evidence into policy.

Since its launch in 2011, PEER has awarded more than \$100 million to more than 440 projects in 60 countries. The program is implemented by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine.

PEER leverages the technical excellence and research funding of these U.S. scientific agencies:

-  National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)
-  National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
-  U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agriculture Research Service
-  USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)
-  U.S. Geological Survey (USGS)
-  National Institutes of Health (NIH)
-  National Science Foundation (NSF)
-  Smithsonian Institution
-  USDA Forest Service

# IMPACTS and SPECIAL PROJECTS

PEER keeps the Agency on the forefront of science and technology by incorporating breakthrough innovations and applying the best tools to emerging priorities

## IMPACTS

### BARCODING IN KENYA & TANZANIA

Traffickers of endangered wildlife try to obscure the identity of bushmeat to successfully evade inspectors, who lack needed evidence to prosecute the offenders despite suspicions of illegal activity. Three PEER teams sequenced, cataloged, and documented endangered wildlife DNA and converted those sequences into 161 easy to use “barcodes.” Law enforcement agencies now use the database of barcodes to prosecute traffickers.

### CERVICAL CANCER

Since 2019, the PEER Cervical Cancer Screening and Preventive Therapy award has generated evidence to inform a sustainable scale-up of cervical cancer control programs. In Malawi and Mozambique—countries with some of the highest global rates of cervical cancer—partners are working to find the most effective, affordable approaches to screen more women for cervical cancer. Partners include the University of Malawi, Universidade Eduardo Mondlane, University of North Carolina, and University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center. As a result, over 30,000 women have been screened for human papillomavirus, which can cause cervical cancer.

## SPECIAL PROJECTS

### WOMEN IN SCIENCE

Women experience particular challenges staying in the scientific workforce. The Women in Science Mentoring Program supports cohorts of women faculty at higher education institutions in USAID partner countries by providing skills training, support networks, and seed funding to allow them to remain and thrive in scientific fields. At the conclusion of the program, mentees are eligible to apply for funding to conduct a pilot research project.

### CHALLENGES RELATED TO COVID-19

The COVID-19 Research Grant Cycle provides funding for researchers from partner countries to a) deepen our understanding of how shocks like COVID-19 affect key sectors in LMICs; and b) test approaches to help communities and sectors respond to and mitigate the effects of COVID-19 or similar future shocks. Research under this cycle focuses on issues related to COVID-19 vaccine uptake, wastewater pathogen monitoring, food system resilience, and the increase in gender-based violence, among others.



PHOTO CREDIT: Marilyn Finney

## PEER BY THE NUMBERS

- Between 2011 and 2024, over 2,500 students worked on PEER research teams, 51 percent of whom were women.
- PEER researchers have contributed to over 1,000 journal articles, publishing 58 peer-reviewed articles in 2023 alone.
- More than 74 percent of PEER awardees secure further funding to continue their research.