



## CII Spotlight: Marissa Leffler

Innovation Team Lead  
Center for Accelerating Innovation and Impact



### **Q: What is your role at USAID?**

A: I serve as the Innovation Team Lead in the Bureau for Global Health's Center for Accelerating Innovation and Impact (CII). In this role I work with an awesome team to source innovations to solve some of the toughest global health challenges, from poor maternal and newborn health outcomes to the spread of infectious diseases like Ebola and Zika.

### **Q: How did you end up at USAID?**

A: As a Presidential Management Fellowship (PMF) finalist, I traveled to Washington, D.C. to participate in the PMF Career Fair. At the Fair, I stopped first at the USAID table, where I quickly honed in on a position description for a role in the Policy, Evaluation, and Communication Division within the Office of Population and Reproductive Health. As someone passionate about women's access to contraception, with a policy degree (almost) in hand and an interest in public service, it was pretty much my dream job. I interviewed for the job that day and the rest is history! Ten years later I am still here.

### **Q: What makes you passionate about your job?**

A: I believe 100% in what we are doing. I believe that innovations can save lives, but only if used at some meaningful scale, and they don't scale by themselves – it takes thoughtful product design, thoughtful introduction planning from the earliest stages, and thoughtful execution to bring an innovation to scale. The Center is helping to promote and integrate this approach into all of our work in global health, and in particular into the work of our innovators.

### **Q: What topic(s) in global health interest(s) you the most and why?**

A: It's all interesting! That's one of the things that I have enjoyed the most about my work in CII – it has exposed me to so many different pressing health issues and enabled me to learn so much about things I never would have expected to know. But women's health, holistically, always has been and will continue to be a core interest of mine. I am a firm believer that a healthy woman is an empowered woman!