Today I am pleased to announce the release of new study led by The Lugar Center (TLC) in partnership with the Modernizing Foreign Assistance Network (MFAN). The study, From Evidence to Learning: Recommendations to Improve U.S. Foreign Assistance Evaluation, examines the current role that evaluation and learning play in assessing foreign assistance programs for maximum impact. The project reflects on the 16 year evolution of improvements to foreign aid programs over the President George W. Bush and Barak Obama Administrations in this area and makes recommendations for how the policies now in place can continue to improve accountability of our scarce foreign assistance dollars to both U.S. taxpayers and recipients of our programs in developing countries.

Of note is the finding that these agencies – the State Department, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) - all now have evaluation policies in place and are following these policies by conducting evaluations of programs. It is important to put the results of these findings to work by creating a learning culture, however, in order to improve future programming. This learning component is key to improving accountability. The study found that agencies must improve upon this important step and recommends that Congress, agency leadership, and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) remain highly engaged to ensure that evaluations serve the purpose of designing and changing programs for maximum effectiveness.

The Lugar Center appreciates the support of the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation which allowed us to undertake this project. In our work at the Center, we continue to emphasize the critical role that monitoring, evaluation, and learning must play for greater foreign aid effectiveness. We are grateful to have had the opportunity to highlight the next steps for both Congress and the Trump Administration in deepening this accountability. Aid done well serves as an important step toward achieving as safer, more prosperous and stable world.