Title of initiative to be proposed:
International Development, Risk, and Adaptive Aid

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One-paragraph description of area to be proposed, including research questions to be investigated, if applicable (word limit is approximately 300):

SGIS has launched a program of strategic hiring in the area of international development, aid, and foreign investment. To build on this initiative, we propose a two-part project: We will create a subnational, multi-dimensional indicator of risk and then develop a conceptual framework for assessing aid and investment effectiveness based on project responsiveness to dynamic contexts and the capacity to adapt. The development community has increasingly recognized the importance of small-scale, context-specific projects given the limited success of bilateral and multilateral transfers to national governments. However, donors and practitioners still need tools for evaluating whether these projects will be effective. Effective aid and investment efforts are locally oriented, contextually specific, and temporally adaptive, which suggests that national level and static characteristics are unlikely to provide sufficient guidance on how to best adapt aid programs and delivery to local needs. Development assistance organizations have struggled to learn from past interventions that foundered either by failing to account for multi-dimensional risk, or adjusting too slowly to changing circumstances. Our research will generate an indicator of risk that includes the following dimensions: political, security, economic, environmental, and socio-cultural. This will be a subnational metric, constructed using geographic information systems (GIS) to allow levels of risk to vary over space within a country. Building on the risk indicator, our project will identify effective, adaptive projects: assistance and investment that can react and adapt to dynamic and changing contexts (reflected in the risk measure) and incorporate immediate and ongoing feedback on the ground. This program will position IU at the forefront of development research and practice, because it will reshape the ways in which international development projects are designed, implemented, measured, and assessed.

Please submit by email to earprogram@indiana.edu.