



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Latest Trends in Evaluation: Interviews with Industry Leaders

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WHAT IS IMPACT ASSESSMENT, ANYWAY?

<h2>Performance Monitoring</h2>	<h2>Project Evaluation</h2>	<h2>Impact Assessment</h2>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Tracking of program outputs & outcomes as indicators of project progress➤ Not a measure of impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Assessment of project implementation➤ Measured against targets & deliverables➤ Often without benefit of a baseline➤ Cannot attribute (prove) impact to project operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Analysis of whether program goals were achieved➤ Seeks to establish <i>counterfactual</i>➤ Purpose to <i>attribute</i> impacts to program operations

WHY WE DID THE INTERVIEWS

- USAID interest in IA waned from 1990s on but is reviving now
- GAO and Congress are calling for evidence-based programming
- Other donors placing increasing attention on IA
 - Resurgent interest in *methodology*
 - Significant investments in *institutionalization*
 - New networks and *new players*...often with opposing views
- Time to take stock

WHOM WE MET

U.S. Government

Department of State
USAID
MCC

Multilateral Institutions

World Bank
IADB
IMF
Int'l Food Policy Research Institute
Global Environment Facility

IA Implementers

IRIS Center
Action for Enterprise
MIT / Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL)

Policy Groups & Networks

Center for Global Development/ 3IE
Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy

WHAT WE LEARNED

- DEMAND
- FUNDING
- METHODOLOGY
- INSTITUTIONALIZATION

DEMAND FOR IA

- For USAID and State:
 - Administrator's interest has varied
 - The Hill: more good evaluation might curb demand for proliferation of indicators
 - Transition offers opportunity
- For WB, some leaders want IA
- CGD, J-PAL, others create outside pressure
- Decision makers need IA
- Project managers need performance monitoring, resist IA

FUNDING

- Some reject IA as costly and failure prone – don't try
- Others advocate budgeting up to 10% for evaluation
- Who should pay?
 - Funding sometimes embedded in projects, but trend is toward central, institutionalized funding

METHODOLOGY

Randomized Control Trials (RCT) vs. Quasi-experimental Approaches

- RCT: the gold standard?
- Diverging views
 - J-PAL, other academics strongly prefer RCT
 - WB, MCC, Coalition for Evidence Based Policy also like it
 - Others skeptical/critical (e.g., GEF)
 - Some question all classic IA methodologies
- Debate overemphasizes internal validity vs. external validity and other dimensions of 'rigor'

Questions should dictate methodology, not the reverse

METHODOLOGY: OTHER KEY ISSUES

- Importance of counterfactual
- Varying forms and degrees of treatment
- Entry into and departure from treatment group
- Selection of control group
- Spillover effects: good for projects but complicate studies
- Presence of other actors
- Timing of follow-up (Does impact rise over time?)

MOST IMPORTANT POINTS

- Interest in evaluation increasing
- IA can be a valuable tool for top administrators and strategic planners
- IA must be built into project design from the start
- IA is best funded centrally & strategically
- IA methodologies should be selected to fit the questions being asked, not the reverse
- IAs are best designed by independent professionals in consultation with project personnel
- IA results are valuable only if they are used to improve programming

INSTITUTIONALIZING EVALUATION: A STRATEGY

- Admit that IA is for project designers, agency leaders, and agency watchdogs – not for project managers
 - Evaluation strategy must be centrally owned and funded
- Evaluate selectively to answer the most important questions – **need not be expensive!**
 - Perhaps 10 – 15% of projects need IAs
 - All projects should have solid monitoring, based on a sound causal model
 - Other forms of evaluation applied as needed
- Choose from a range of methodologies that offer both rigor and flexibility

DEGREES OF EVIDENCE FRAMEWORK

- Methodological rigor depends on multiple criteria
- Methodological validity
 - Internal validity – necessary but not sufficient
 - External validity – general applicability
 - Construct validity – operationalizing the theoretical model
 - Statistical conclusion validity – correct analysis
- Use of mixed methods provides triangulation
- Sound data collection is vital (selection, training and supervision of enumerators)



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THANK YOU!

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