

Synthetic reviews examine the existing
evidence. what helps? what harms?
based on what evidence?

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International Initiative
For Impact Evaluation
Membership development

3ie Mission/Goals

3ie seeks to improve the lives of poor people in low- and middle-income countries by providing, and summarizing, evidence of what works, when, why and for how much.

3ie's work will address the enduring questions of development. Evidence will be collected from synthetic reviews of existing evidence, updated as new evidence appears. 3ie operates a grant program, financing impact studies in low- and middle-income countries, and supports quality impact evaluation through its quality assurance services.

Origins of 3ie

- Increased attention to impact evaluation arose out of increasing pressure to show results from public spending. It was soon realized that outcome monitoring said nothing about how an agency's programs were affecting those outcomes – the attribution problem. When it came to attribution, there was shockingly little concrete evidence about what worked and what didn't – a fact highlighted in the work of the Evaluation Gap Working Group, initiated by the Center for Global Development (CGD), and the Group's report When will we ever learn? The Working Group recommended the establishment of a new entity to fill this gap. The idea for what was to become 3ie was born.

Evaluation Gap working group

- The CGD Evaluation Gap Working Group launched their report, When will we ever learn? Improving lives through impact evaluation (2006). Working group co-chairs **Ruth Levine**, Director of Programs and Senior Fellow, Center for Global Development, **William D. Savedoff**, Senior Partner, Social Insight and **Nancy Birdsall** the Center for Global Development's founding president.
- **Members included:** François Bourguignon, Esther Duflo, Paul Gertler, Judith Gueron, Indrani Gupta, Jean Habicht, Dean Jamison, Daniel Kress, Patience Kuruneri, David I. Levine, Richard Manning, Stephen Quick, Blair Sachs, Raj Shah, Smita Singh, Miguel Szekel, Cesar Victora
- **Project coordinator** - Jessica Gottlieb

When Will We Ever Learn? Improving Lives Through Impact Evaluation

This report by the Evaluation Gap Working Group provides a strategic solution to this problem addressing this gap, and systematically building evidence about what works in social development, proving it is possible to improve the effectiveness of domestic spending and development assistance by bringing vital knowledge into the service of policymaking and program design.

Impact Evaluation Gap

An evaluation gap exists because there are too few incentives to conduct good impact evaluations and too many obstacles reported by **William D. Savedoff & Ruth Levine (2006)**.



The solution to this problem is twofold:

Enhance existing efforts, and create a new approach that directly addresses the lack of incentives to undertake impact evaluations.

Governments and agencies need to be encouraged to

1. strengthen existing initiatives to conduct impact evaluations (3ie open window)
2. build and share rigorous evidence(JODE)
3. synthesize studies (3ie with partnerships)
4. build research capacity in developing countries (Cairo Conf.)
5. link researchers, policymakers, and project managers in an effective system for generating and using information (workshops and website)

The meaning of impact evaluation: two definitions

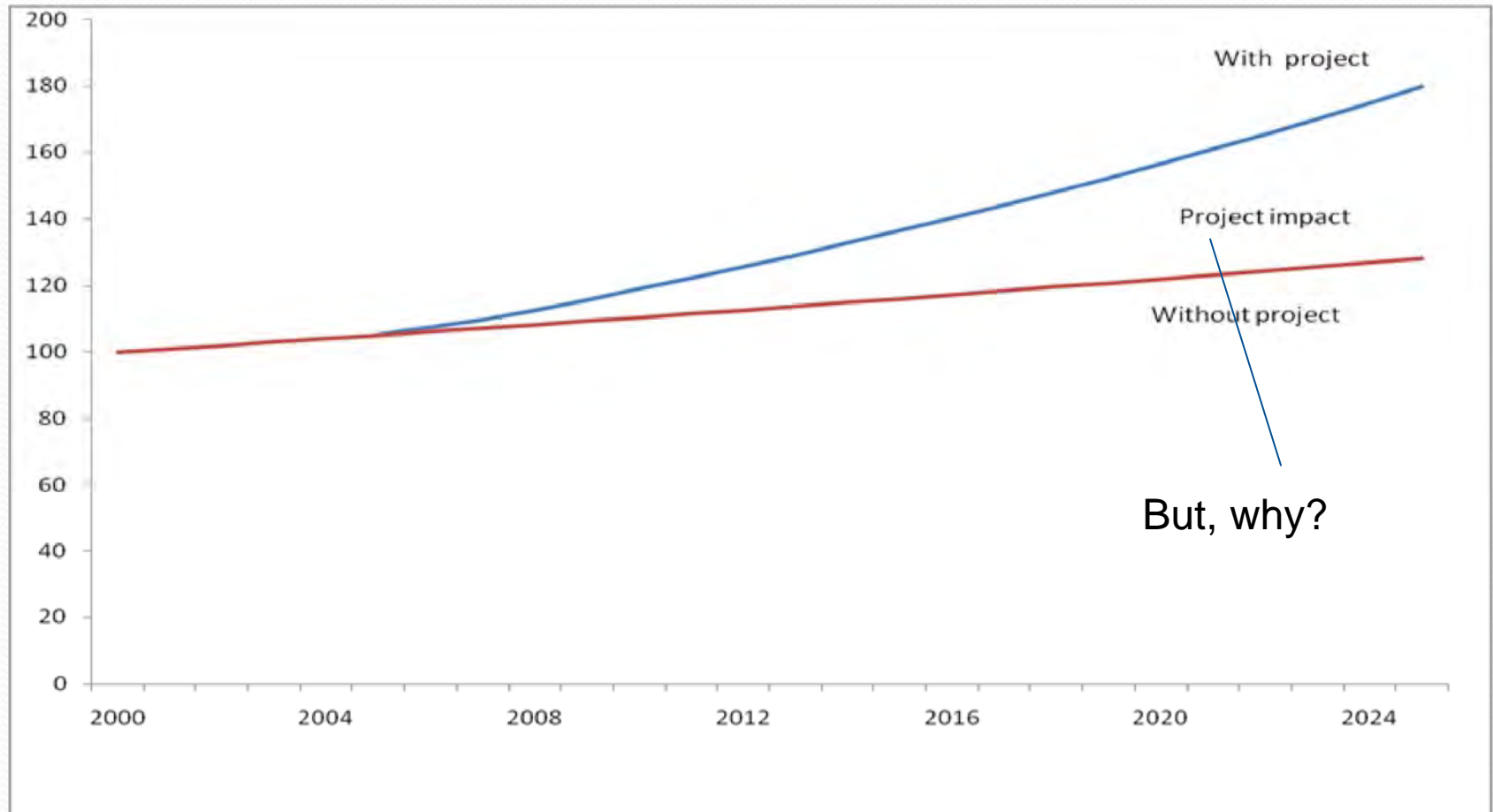
- DAC definition: ‘positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended’
- ‘Economists’ definition’: = $Y_1 - Y_0$, i.e. attribution

More definitions

Definition used here: Impact evaluation is an analysis of the role the intervention played in the change in outcomes – attribution analysis (with versus without, or counterfactual).

Theory-based impact evaluation – does not just focus on outcomes but on the whole causal chain from inputs, through outputs to outcomes; thus helps explanation.

Factual and counterfactual



“In my eyes, Americans as well as other tax payers are quite ready to show more generosity. But one must convince them that their generosity will bear fruit, that there will be results.”

—Paul Wolfowitz, President, World Bank

“Aid evaluation plays an essential role in the efforts to enhance the quality of development co-operation.”

—Development Assistance Committee,
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development,
Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance

“As long as we are willing to continue investing in experimentation, research, and evaluation and build on this knowledge base, we will be able to meet the development challenge.”

—Nicholas Stern, Second Permanent Secretary,
HM Treasury, United Kingdom

“The Development Committee recognizes the need to increase its focus on performance by ensuring that development results are reviewed through clear and measurable indicators.”

—Trevor Manuel, Minister of Finance, South Africa

“Success depends on knowing what works.”

—Bill Gates, Co-Chair, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

“We urge the [multilateral development banks] to continue to increase their collaboration and the effectiveness of their assistance, including through increased priority on improving governance in recipient countries, an enhanced focus on measurable results, and greater transparency in program decisions.”

—G-7 Finance Ministers

“In particular, there is a need for the multilateral and bilateral financial and development institutions to intensify efforts to . . . [i]mprove [official development assistance] targeting to the poor, coordination of aid, and measurement of results.”

—Monterrey Consensus

“If development projects are transparent, productive, and efficiently run, I believe that they will enjoy broad support. If they are not, they are likely to fare poorly when placed in competition with domestic priorities or more tangible security-related expenditures.”

—Richard G. Lugar, United States Senator

and Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee

DFID-Evidence Informed Policy

- Decisions based on the careful use of the most up-to-date evidence.
- Making policies and decisions in this way increases the success of policies, their value for money and their impact by basing decisions on what we know. This is important in development, where limited funds are targeted at some of the world's most pressing problems (DFID, 2010).

What is the issue?

- There is currently an obstacle to developing evidence informed policy in International Development. While there is a lot of primary evidence, this is not being systematically and neutrally laid out and mediated to decision makers. The fact is policy makers and practitioners do not have the time to assess the evidence base for each policy or practice in questions, so they rely on single studies, well-placed experts or traditional and unsystematic scoping studies or literature reviews (DFID, 2010).

Addressing the issue with Systematic Reviews

- Systematic reviewing describes an approach to methodologically mapping out the available evidence, critically appraising the evidence and synthesizing the results.

Systematic reviews are explicitly different from traditional literature reviews or expert commentaries in that they are transparent, rigorous and replicable (Badger, Nursten, Williams and Woodward, 2000).

Demands for Impact Evidence utilizing Systematic reviews

- The UK Department For International Development Research and Evidence Division (DFID)
- The American Evaluation Association (AEA)
- Private Infrastructure Development Group- development agencies of Austria, Sweden, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Ireland, the UK, Germany and the World Bank Group (currently represented by International Finance Corporation).
- The International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie) in partnership with the Campbell Collaboration (C2).

DFID: Round II Systematic reviews September 2010

- DFID will commission 20 systematic reviews focusing on five thematic area”
 1. Agriculture and Food
 2. Climate and Environment
 3. Governance and Social Development
 4. Growth
 5. Human Development

Coordinating with 3ie and AusAID

American Evaluation Association

- AEA recognizes the importance of using “evidence based” models as a basis for distributing funds available under the Affordable Care Act’s Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program.
- AEA believes that the proposed criteria and methodology for a systematic review of such models represents a thoughtful starting point for assessing evidence of their effectiveness (8/17/2010).

Private Infrastructure Development Group

- At the broad level there is clearly a link between infrastructure investment, economic growth and poverty reduction. Less clear are the links between DFI investment and the role of private sector participation in stimulating growth and poverty reduction and specifically , the additional impacts of DFI support to sector.
- Systematic Review on Private Participation in Infrastructure: Calls for Proposals August 2010

3ie in partnership with the Campbell Collaboration

- Influenced by the realist perspective, which stresses the importance to recognizing how outcomes may vary by context and the underlying behavior mechanisms at work (Van der Knapp, Leeuw, Bogaerts, Nijssen (2008)).
- 3ie will be funding new studies of the impact of development interventions, and undertake reviews of existing studies (synthetic reviews). The 2009 call invited proposals to undertake SR's of studies assessing the impact of any development-related theme.

Campbell Collaborations

C2

The Campbell Collaboration (C2) helps people make well-informed decisions by preparing, maintaining and disseminating systematic reviews in education, crime and justice, and social welfare.

How do Campbell systematic reviews differ from other systematic reviews?

- Campbell reviews must include a systematic search for unpublished reports (to avoid publication bias).
- Campbell reviews are usually international in scope.
- A protocol (project plan) for the review is developed in advance and undergoes peer review.
- Study inclusion and coding decisions are accomplished by at least two reviewers who work independently and compare results.
- Campbell reviews undergo peer review and editorial review.

Exercise

Look at the review protocol allocated to your group (table). Are the reviews going to satisfy c2 criteria? Provide examples of the c2 criteria.

Realist Perspective

- zie's approach to SR's is also influenced by the realist perspective, which stresses the importance of recognizing how outcomes may vary by context and the underlying behavior mechanisms at work.
- One important aspect of conceptual ground clearing between commissioners and reviewers is to agree on the explanatory basis for the review. A realist review cannot settle to discover whether an intervention works, but trades instead to discover Why, When and How it might succeed (Pawson, Greenhalgh, Harvey and Walshe, 2004).

Realist perspective in practice

1. Setting the outcome review in the broader context of the underlying program theory, reporting evidence on all assumptions and links in the causal chain, not only outcomes.
2. Examining the variation in reported outcomes, not only their mean.

Exercise

Look at the review protocol allocated to your group (table).

Clarify scope of review.

Identify review question/questions

Articulate key theories to be explored.

Key element is the process-

DFID

- A relevant research question developed in consultation with users.
- A search strategy to find **all** the available studies including journals, grey literature and unpublished studies.
- A set of inclusion and exclusion criteria to select studies for review(only studies of adolescents in South Asia).
- A quality appraisal strategy that is relevant to the review question and the types of studies under review.
- Methods for synthesizing the studies, according to the type of data available.

Exercise

Look at the review protocol allocated to your group (table). Write examples for the following:

Are the key elements present in the review protocol?

What types of interventions are included?

Which participants should interventions be aimed at?

What kinds of outcome data should be reported?

Are the bibliographic databases listed?

The inclusion/ exclusion criteria defined?

How do SR's contribute to evidence-informed policy?

- Systematic reviews help package evidence in a more accessible way.
- Good systematic reviews identify gaps in knowledge to help shape future research agendas and reduce duplication of research by making it clear what we know and what we need to know.
- Widely published and accessible they become an authoritative summary of the body of evidence thereby reducing the need for the traditional narrative reviews(DFID, 2010).

Exercise

Compare the review protocol and completed review allocated to your group (table).

Does the completed review meet protocol expectations?

Gaps in knowledge identified?

http://www.3ieimpact.org/useful_resources.html

Thank you and please let me know if I can assist you in anyway.