

#### Establishing **Evidence**

### Elevating **Standards**

### Enriching **Policy**



# Towards Closing the Evaluation Gap: Lessons from Three Recent Impact Evaluations in Latin America and the Caribbean

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## **Objectives**

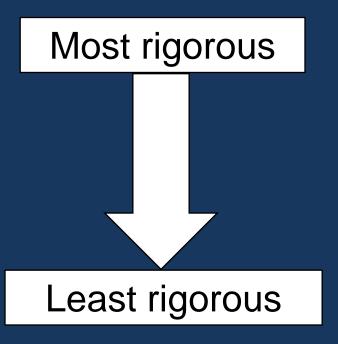
Identify barriers that prevent rigorous impact evaluations in Latin America and the Caribbean

Outline key practices for future impact evaluations in the region

### **Designs for Impact Evaluations**

Rigor is high validity, accuracy, and reliability of impacts

- Randomized control trial
- Regression discontinuity
- Matched comparison
- Non-matched comparison
- Simple pre-post



# The Evaluation Gap

- Limited demand and supply of rigorous impact evaluations
- Gradual increase in demand
  - Millennium Challenge Corporation
  - World Bank and regional development banks
  - National governments
- Limited increase in supply
  - PROGRESA-Oportunidades in Mexico and Bolsa Família in Brazil
  - Vocational education in Colombia
  - Pre-school education in Chile

# MCC Compact (El Salvador)

- Education Intervention:
  - Improvement of secondary schools, a post-secondary center, and scholarships targeted to poor youths and adults in the Northern Zone
- Productive Development Intervention:
  - Technical and material assistance, loans, and guarantees targeted to micro and small producers in the Northern Zone
- Financing: Conditional grant from MCC
- Implementation: FOMILENIO
- Evaluation mandate: Rigorous designs, according to feasibility

# PATH (Jamaica)

- Intervention: Cash transfers to participant households (conditional transfers for children; unconditional transfers for adults)
- Target population: Poor children, adults, and elderly throughout the nation
- Financing: Loan from the World Bank
- Implementation: Ministry of Labor and Social Security
- Evaluation mandate: Support for a rigorous design

# **Hábitat Program (Mexico)**

- Intervention: Funds allocated to municipalities to support urban, social and community development
- Target population: Marginalized families in cities or metropolitan areas
- Financing: Interamerican Development Bank
- Implementation: Secretaría de Desarrollo Social
- Evaluation mandate: Not defined

### **Barriers Are Multidimensional**

### 1. Lack of support for rigorous designs

- Skepticism about practicality of random assignment
- Implementation incentives misaligned with evaluation

# 2. Ambitious and unrealistic schedules for designing and implementing programs

- Evaluation started after the program was launched
- Urgency to get the program started without accounting for the evaluation design

### **Barriers Are Multidimensional**

# 3. Little or no early planning nor interest to build on lessons learned

- Unplanned pilots
- Potential interference with evaluation

### 4. Data limitations

- Availability of only secondary data
- Infeasibility of collecting independent primary data

# **Key Practices Are Evolving**

- 1. Maintaining early communication with key decision makers
  - Identify key stakeholders
  - Propose range of feasible designs
  - Identify barriers and propose alternatives
  - Set stage for future coordination
- Confirming that the evaluation will answer key questions
  - Inform implementers how and when the evaluation will answer the questions

# **Key Practices Are Evolving**

- 3. Choosing designs that fit implementation plans with minimal modifications
  - PATH evaluation
- 4. Limiting discussion of the design's technical aspects to a group of experts
- 5. Ensuring that all parties understand the evaluation's legal framework
  - MCC Compact evaluation

### Rigor vs. Feasibility of the Final Design

### For evaluators there is tension between:

- the rigor of the design
- the financial, logistical and political limitations of implementing the design
  - » PATH evaluation
  - » Hábitat evaluation
  - » MCC Compact evaluation

# Skills Required for Leading a Successful Evaluation

- In-depth understanding of each evaluation's context
- Detailed knowledge of evaluation methodology
- Excellent communication and negotiation skills
- A lot of flexibility

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