

# Challenges in Impact Evaluations and Institutional Responses

Perspectives from:

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and  
International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie)

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# The foundation's approach to evaluation is based on an understanding of 'Actionable Measurement'



We measure the results of our work to improve what we do and, ultimately, to improve more people's lives.

# The Actionable Measurement Matrix

	Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impacts
Strategy				Measure changes in populations and systems	
Initiative	Measure progress toward targets, test assumptions, identify what works, how, and why				
Sub-Initiative					
Grant	Track implementation and progress toward targets				
Sub-Grant					

# Foundation's Global Health Investment Opportunities for IE

- **Individual grant level to evaluate health interventions**
  - Experimental design to evaluate the impact of provider franchising on health outcome and impact measures (diarrhea, pneumonia, TB)
- **Initiative level: how does a collection of individual grants add up to population-level changes in health outcomes within and sometimes beyond the focus geographies?**
  - Maternal, newborn, child health (MNCH) team to test its theory of change in 3 focus geographies
- **Institution-building investments**
  - Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME)
  - International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie)

# 3ie

- **Vision: improving lives through impact evaluation**
- **Mission: increase development effectiveness through better use of evidence in developing countries**
- **Major Activities**
  - **Promote the generation of new evidence from impact evaluations relevant to program design and implementation**
  - **Synthesize and disseminate existing evidence**
  - **Promote a culture of using evidence in the development and implementation of policies and programs**
  - **Build capacity to promote, use, and undertake impact evaluations**

# Institutional Challenges (foundation perspective)

- **Size of mandate to available resources**
  - all regions of the developing world
  - all social and development sectors
  - approximately \$10 million/year in new grant money
- **Pace of institutional growth**
  - HQ in New Delhi (and now London and DC)
- **Uncertain LT funding prospects**
- **Ongoing debates over rigorous evaluation methodologies**
  - Northern academics versus some African evaluation communities
  - Importance of local knowledge – an IE in every country?
- **Difficulty demonstrating evidence to impact linkages**

# 3ie response: experiment with different funding windows

- **Open Windows: fund quality impact evaluations of interventions; any sector**
- **3 funding rounds as of 2010**
  - Round 1, 17 awards
  - Round 2, 30 awards (\$14.6 million)
  - Round 3, 16 awards (\$6.1 million)
- **Evolution in scoring criteria:**
  - Impact evaluations of large-scale programs having a high probability of influencing policy
  - Close partnership with implementing agency
  - Developing country investigators on evaluation team
  - Evaluation designs based on a clearly articulated theory of change

# 3ie response: experiment with different funding windows

- **Policy Window opened in 2010**
- **Designed to target policy makers and implementing agencies in developing countries**
- **Operates as a 2 step process**
  - **First, a call is made to policy makers and program managers in developing countries to propose interventions to be evaluated**
  - **Second, once the interventions have been selected, 3ie issues a request for proposals to researchers and evaluators. The proposals are screened by a panel of technical experts**
- **Challenges:**
  - **Low capacity among implementing agencies for defining the research question**
  - **Policy impact may be greater if local research teams are selected, but the technical quality of the evaluation may be lower**

# 3ie response: experiment with different funding windows

- **Thematic windows (proposed)**
  - Would fund multiple and perhaps coordinated studies around a single theme
  - An obvious fund-raising strategy
  - DFID will provide funding support for a thematic window on social protection in 2011
  - Gates foundation may provide additional funds for a thematic window on water and sanitation
- **Intervention design window (proposed)**
  - Would still pair a research team and an implementing agency
  - But the implementing agency would commit to scaling up the most cost-effective intervention design based on the trial

# Common themes

- **Elusive pathway between evidence generation and dissemination to policy and practice**
- **Difficult to justify high costs of evaluation (in terms of time and money) even in evidence-based friendly environments**
- **Difficult for research teams to achieve trust and coordination with the implementing agency while at the same time maintaining independence**

# Thank You

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