



THE DEVELOPMENT IMPACT EVALUATION (DIME) INITIATIVE

Background

The Development Impact Evaluation (DIME) initiative is a Bank-wide collaborative effort involving thematic networks, regional units and the research group under the guidance of the World Bank's Chief Economist. It is oriented toward:

1. Increasing the number of World Bank-supported impact evaluations, particularly in strategic areas and themes;
2. Increasing the ability of staff to design and carry out such evaluations in close collaboration with government agencies in developing countries; and
3. Building a process of systematic learning on effective development interventions based on lessons learned from completed evaluations.

Impact evaluations compare the outcomes of a program against a counterfactual that shows what would have happened to beneficiaries *without* the program. Unlike other forms of evaluation, they permit the attribution of observed changes in outcomes to the program being evaluated by following experimental and quasi-experimental designs.

Results from impact evaluations powerfully contribute to our knowledge of 'what works' to produce key development outcomes. Such information is critical not only for the policymakers directly in charge of the program evaluated, but also for others who consider adapting its approach for use in their own circumstances. Particularly when used strategically to test the effectiveness of specific approaches in addressing key development challenges, impact evaluations constitute the preferred approach to assessing results. Furthermore, they can also provide critical inputs for cost-benefit estimates not just for the programs being evaluated but for other programs following similar designs. The knowledge generated by these evaluations is an international public good from which the entire international development community benefits. DIME aims to advance the role of the World Bank in the generation of such knowledge. Together with other analytical work, impact evaluations have the potential to improve the quality and relevance of Bank operations and the policy advice the Bank offers to developing countries.

Thematic clusters of priority evaluations

A key aspect of the initiative is to organize clusters of impact evaluations of priority interventions in a coordinated fashion across countries in different regions of the world. This focused approach enables the comparison of the effectiveness of specific interventions in different settings (e.g. countries, regions, etc.) and across alternative designs (e.g. private vs. public provision of a specific service) and thus provide a unique opportunity to demonstrate the learning power of impact evaluation efforts both in terms of identifying 'what works and does not work' and obtaining robust measures of performance to be expected from successful programs.

The current list of themes includes: early childhood development, education service delivery reforms, conditional cash transfers, HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment, local development, malaria control programs, pay-for-performance in health, rural roads, rural electrification, urban upgrading, and youth employment and service programs. Each cluster envisions a series of coordinated but independent program evaluations under the leadership of the respective operational teams, typically with the technical support or leadership from experts from thematic



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network anchors, the research group and/or academics. Evaluations involve the participation of the relevant government agency as well as local researchers. This is important not only in terms of ensuring ownership but as a way of building local capacity in this important field using a ‘learning by doing’ approach.

Support to teams to carry out impact evaluations

A second aspect of the overall initiative involves supporting staff and their government counterparts in the process of designing and implementing impact evaluations. Joint staff-client training workshops are periodically organized by groups of Bank experts, typically for several project teams at the early stages of planning an impact evaluation. The workshops follow a common approach that combines training and hands-on technical assistance to conceptualize the impact evaluation strategy and prepare a detailed action plan. Just-in-time clinics are also available to provide technical guidance to teams considering an impact evaluation, and are often followed up by the participation of teams in the more structured workshops.

Staff has access to a series of online resources including a searchable database of completed impact evaluations studies, a database of evaluation experts/consultants, and technical reports on a range of methodological and operational issues related to the implementation of impact evaluations.¹

Furthermore, impact evaluation is increasingly recognized within the Bank as a self-standing activity within country programs. In that regard, [guidelines](#) have been issued to orient staff in their use. Bank-supported impact evaluations (irrespective of whether they involve Bank-financed programs) are registered in a database and their implementation is monitored and updated periodically.

Learning from completed impact evaluations

The initiative involves both the analysis of results from impact evaluations and their dissemination. An Impact Evaluation Work Paper Series was established as a means to disseminate findings from individual evaluation studies supported by the World Bank. Papers are accessible through the Bank’s external website.

Beyond the individual evaluations, DIME pursues the systematic review of evidence of impact across programs and countries. For each of the evaluation clusters, a synthesis report is planned drawing on evidence from available impact evaluations. The first such synthesis report focuses on conditional cash transfer programs to be followed by a report on education service delivery.

¹ The site is part of the PovertyNet (maintained by the Poverty Reduction Department) and accessible through the Bank’s external website (www.worldbank.org/impactevaluation).