

The Role of Impact Evaluation in National Policy: the case of Colombia's SINERGIA system

Bertha Briceño
Director for Evaluation of Public Policy
National Planning Department
Colombia

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Origins of the external push for IE

An increased attention to “aid ineffectiveness”

- ✓ The Meltzer Commission, 1998:
 - *“the interventions have not been associated, in average, with any clear economic gains to recipient countries”*
 - *“Rewards were closely related to the volume of lending, not to a project’s value or program accomplishments”*
- ✓ WB’s Assessing Aid report, 1998: *“money by itself is not enough to trigger development”*
- ✓ Politicians/High level officials: *“Poor countries have received “trillions of dollars of aid” and “precious little” to show for it. He wants evidence of what works”*

(The Economist on Paul O’ Neill, 2002)

Origins of the external push for IE

An increased attention to “aid ineffectiveness”

✓ Academia:

- *“The World Bank’s wide exposure to a number of highly indebted countries in the 1980s gave it a stronger stake in preventing those countries’ insolvency than in promoting policy reform” .*

(Making foreign aid work, Graham et al. 1997)

- ✓ *“ultimately, aid is not financing the development projects but the whole public sector at the margin”*

(Aid, the incentive regime and poverty reduction, Burnside and Dollar, 1998)

Origins of the external push for IE

Over all, there has been a tremendous need for evidence on whether development programs work since the late 90s..

In this context, IE comes as the adequate tool to assess development effectiveness. At the micro-level, IE solves the attribution problem.

- ✓ First conditional cash transfer –CCT- programs' evaluations: Progresa (1998)
- ✓ Millennium Challenge Account (announced in 2002)
- ✓ WB's The Case for Aid (2002)
- ✓ WB's Task force on impact evaluation (Oct. 2004)
- ✓ CGD' s Evaluation Gap Initiative (2004).

The external push meets promising internal conditions

Where does this wave find Colombia?

- ✓ In the early 90s, Colombia started building its current M&E institutions:
 - SINERGIA's inception was embedded in a broader process that redefined the role and character of the State before its citizens, resulting in the 1991 Constitution.
 - The Constitution and Law 152 of 1994 gave DNP the mandate of evaluation.
- ✓ Conceptualization began in the mid-90s, initially comprising two modules: performance self-evaluations and external evaluation of strategic topics, the latter providing a first conceptual basis of the current evaluations group.

The external push meets promising internal conditions

Where all this took us?

- ✓ By the late 90's:
 - The M&E's legal and conceptual frameworks were in place
 - A unit within DNP was established –*Directorate for Evaluation of Public Policies and Management for Results, DEPP.*
 - But experience implementing the early tools showed mixed results.

- ✓ Between 1994 and 2001:
 - There was an early focus on monitoring the performance of central institutions
 - But the systems' tools suffered from proliferation of indicators, low visibility, and limited political support.

The external push meets promising internal conditions

Where all this took us?

- ✓ Expansion to evaluation:
 - In 2000, a safety net strategy to offset the economic crisis was launched -*Red de Apoyo Social (RAS)*.
 - With multilateral support, the RAS social programs were seen as key interventions to be evaluated.

The RAS' IEs underpinned SINERGIA's evaluation pillar

- ✓ Independent IEs were proposed for the main 3 programs of the RAS, with a 1% budget allocation, and this was included in the loan documents.
- ✓ To guide the IE processes, a special group within DNP-DEPP was conformed.
- ✓ *Familias* (2001) would become the landmark example for spreading IE in Colombia.
- ✓ To support decisions related to the RAS' IEs, a Technical Committee was created.
- ✓ Role of DEPP's evaluation group as intermediary and technical coordinator of evaluations began.

The RAS' IEs underpinned SINERGIA's evaluation pillar

- ✓ On the monitoring side, since taking office in 2002, President Uribe has been the key champion of the new system of goals monitoring and of the subsequent accountability exercises.
- ✓ The Counselor Ministry Office has played a key political role.

Organizational Structure (2002 – present)

National Planning Department (DNP)

Monitoring & results based-management Group

- Reports on NDP goals' monitoring
- Annual Report to the Congress
- SIBOG system of goals

Evaluations Group

- **IMPACT EVALUATIONS**
- Operations Evaluations
- Quick Evaluations (E² evaluations)

DEPP:
SINERGIA's
technical
secretariat

Public Information & Accountability Group

- Diffusion of Evaluations and RBM's groups work
- Promote consensus and foundations for a Public Information Policy
- Promotion of alliances with civil society organizations
- Distribution of reports and other material



Impact of Impact Evaluations in Colombia (2002-2007)

The primary case of Familias en Acción IE

The evaluation of *Familias en Acción* had a tremendous demonstrative effect of the relevance of evaluation in the public sector in Colombia. Why was so influential?

Gains for the executing agency:

- ✓ The program got protected from government transition.
- ✓ There was a need for a proven successful program that underpinned social policy. The IE strongly determined the decision to choose *Familias*.
- ✓ The program got enormous visibility by the extensive diffusion of the evaluation's results –in academia, government, multilaterals' circles.

Impact of Impact Evaluations in Colombia (2002-2007)

The primary case of Familias en Acción IE

- ✓ The subsequent expansion of the program was justified using the evaluation's results.
- ✓ The results of the *Familias IE*, as well as those of other CCTs evaluations, helped shaping the program's design:
 - Removing non-eligibility of municipalities without banking
 - Removing non-eligibility of HCB beneficiaries
 - Removing non-eligibility of newly-born children
 - Reducing subsidy amount for primary education (urban)
 - Introducing gradually increased amounts for secondary subsidies in 2 different schemes (urban)
 - Introducing prizes for secondary graduation (urban)

Impact of Impact Evaluations in Colombia (2002-2007)

The case of Familias en Acción IE

In addition:

- ✓ *Familias* Database is a regular source of information for technicians in the social sector.
- ✓ *Familias* IE evidence has been cited in theme studies aimed at building knowledge on CCT programs.
- ✓ *Familias* Database, as well as other databases collected, is publicly available on DNP's website. We encourage external use of these databases.

Impact of Impact Evaluations in Colombia (2002-2007)

Other Examples: *Empleo en Acción IE*

The evaluation of *Empleo en Acción* could not be carried out as expected, mainly due to unforeseen problems in design and implementation of the program (2000-2004)

- ✓ It was a public work –or workfare- program intended to response to the 98-99 economic crisis.
- ✓ Resources were allocated but there were significant delays in program implementation (started in 2001), at the same time economic conditions improved. Targeting/subsidy amount designs did not prove successful.
- ✓ Demand was lower than expected, affecting the feasibility of random assignment to create treatment and control groups.
- ✓ The program was terminated in early 2004, the evaluation was completed in the same year, and will mainly add to the knowledge-base available for future public works programs.

Impact of Impact Evaluations in Colombia (2002-2007)

Other Examples: Jóvenes en Acción IE

The evaluation of *Jóvenes en Acción* did not feed as expected into policy-making, mainly because the program underwent considerable changes despite favorable evidence of the original design.

- ✓ It was a training program targeted to urban youth unemployed (2001-2005). Particular in that the training was provided by private agencies.
- ✓ Random IE design, assigned among those who chose to apply for training and would be selected as suitable by private training agencies (selecting 50% over real capacity).
- ✓ The IE evidences strong impacts, especially for women (↑probability of paid employment, formality, wages and days and hours worked).

Impact of Impact Evaluations in Colombia (2002-2007)

Other Examples: Jóvenes en Acción IE

- ✓ However, the expansion brought considerable changes into the program's operation:
 - Targeted population changed (age limit raised from 25 to 30, and priority to African descendant over two lowest income deciles)
 - Type of courses are no longer determined by private entities, although still provided by them. The types of courses offered are now guided by demand studies conducted by the government provider.
 - Program extended to rural areas with public provision.
- ✓ These changes implied that the current programs have not been evaluated. The IE will mainly add to the knowledge-base available for design of future training programs.

The construction of a national evaluation agenda (NEA)

Inception

- ✓ The construction of a NEA is embedded within an ambitious reform of the state prompted by the difficult fiscal stance of the early 00's. Monitoring and results-oriented performance are guiding principles of this reform.
- ✓ After the RAS' experience, it was decided to have a group dedicated exclusively to evaluation. The DEPP group took the role of informing and coordinating the evaluations after the RAS.
- ✓ A Committee with representatives from the Finance Ministry, DNP, Social Protection Ministry and other agencies, began to meet on an ad-hoc basis.
- ✓ The new conceptualization of the M&E system was formalized in a 2004 policy statement (CONPES 3264).

The construction of a national evaluation agenda (NEA)

The concept

- ✓ DNP's General Deputy Director presides the IEC. DEPP acts as its technical secretariat.
- ✓ The Intersectoral Committee of Evaluation (IEC) have quarterly meetings where the advances and results from the ongoing evaluations are presented to high-level officials.
- ✓ In addition, this is the space where both DEPP's evaluation group and high officials from other institutions suggest programs to be evaluated.
- ✓ The IEC approves and defines the priority of the programs and sets up the national agenda for the period. This agenda is presented and revised at the beginning of each year.

The construction of a national evaluation agenda (NEA)

The challenges

- ✓ The Intersectoral Evaluation Committee needs to be strengthened.
- ✓ The universe of programs to evaluate is not clearly defined (absence of budget programmatic structure and institutional constraints)
- ✓ Budget limitations.
 - ✓ But support from the multilaterals has helped us earmark resources for evaluation (in the loans).
- ✓ The system can reinforce more supply-driven evaluations
- ✓ Need to increase diffusion of evaluations' results

The construction of a national evaluation agenda (NEA)

Completed Evaluations	On-going Evaluations
Familias en Acción – rural CCT IE	Familias en acción – CCT in major cities IE
Jóvenes en Acción – job training IE	Hogares Comunitarios - Child home daycare program IE
Empleo en Acción – workfare program	System of Fiscal transfers (SGP) PETS, IE, Institutional
Programa de Renovación de la Administración pública (PRAP) – Modernization of State Inst	<i>Red Juntos - IE, operations.</i>
Vivienda de Interés Social (VIS) – housing subsidies program IE	Laboratorios de Paz - sustainable development program in conflict areas IE
Programa de Apoyo Directo al Empleo (PADE)	Agro Ingreso Seguro – Agricultural Investment funding & technology transfer IE
Fund for Support of MSME (Fomipyme)	Public Services Stratification Cluster analysis
Red de Seguridad Alimentaria (RESA) - IE	Familias en acción for displaced population IE
	Programas para adulto mayor – support for the elderly

Colombia: On-going developments

Monitoring, Evaluation and Information (M&E&I) Loan

With support from the World Bank

Four components with a holistic approach to consolidate our M&E system –SINERGIA- so that:

- *It feeds further into policy-making*
 - Incentives for active involvement in the IEC
 - Expanding findings to high-level reach
 - Creating sectoral knowledge-base (compiling, classifying and quality-grading internal & external evaluations)
- *It informs policy-making in a more systematic way*
 - Gradually increasing coverage while safeguarding quality, (introducing rapid M&E tools such as E2 evaluations)
 - Building sectoral agendas and inventories of potential programs to be evaluated

Colombia: On-going developments

...Monitoring, Evaluation and Information (M&E&I) Loan

With support from the World Bank

Four components with a holistic approach to consolidate our M&E system –SINERGIA- so that:

- *It informs policy-making in a more reliable way.*
 - Increasing quality of information that feeds into M&E (audits for goals' system info, quality certification of public information databases, mapping of information flows between entities and establishing information sharing standards)
 - Increasing quality of M&E's outputs (consultant's certification process & directory, strengthening reports' peer reviewing)

Colombia: On-going developments

...Monitoring, Evaluation and Information (M&E&I) Loan

With support from the World Bank

Four components with a holistic approach to consolidate our M&E system –SINERGIA- so that:

- *It is more accountable*
 - Measuring clients' satisfaction (regular surveys, interviews, 2-year in-depth review of the system)
 - Following up changes that evaluations generate (database of evaluations' findings and recommendations adopted)
 - Following up diffusion (presentations, reports distributed, internet downloads)
 - Reviewing degree of influence achieved (citations)

Closing Remarks on IE

- ✓ IE has made a huge contribution against “anecdotic culture”, non evidence-based evaluation and judgments.
- ✓ Still there are quality constraints for IEs
 - Difficult to randomize
 - Quality heterogeneity within non-experimental IEs.
- ✓ IE by measuring the effects of an intervention makes a huge contribution to improve the accountability of *both* governments and donors.

Closing Remarks on IE

- ✓ But the WHAT is not enough,
- ✓ Policy-makers have big expectations on the HOW / WHY
- ✓ Sustained demand for IE rests highly on meeting those expectations.
- ✓ Thus, we need to reinforce:
 - Early piloting for variations in design
 - Simulations –caveat of parameters-
 - And development of structural models.

Closing Remarks on IE

- ✓ We also need to better understand replicability and extrapolation of results, both over time and across environments.
- ✓ Impacts take time, decision-makers often do not wait long. This stresses the importance of complementary type of evaluations –rapid assessments, desk reviews. Often, baselines' analysis prove useful.
- ✓ IE's results inform, do not replace political decisions.