



Impact Evaluation in Practice (World Bank Training Series)

By Paul J. Gertler, Sebastian Martinez, Patrick Premand, Laura B. Rawlings, Christel M. J. Vermeersch

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This book offers an accessible introduction to the topic of impact evaluation and its practice in development. While the book is geared principally towards development practitioners and policymakers designing prospective impact evaluations, we trust that it will be a valuable resource for students and others interested in using impact evaluation. Prospective impact evaluations should be used selectively to assess whether or not a program has achieved its intended results, or to test alternatives for achieving those results. We consider that more and better impact evaluation will help strengthen the evidence base for development policies and programs around the world. If governments and development practitioners can make policy decisions based on evidence - including evidence generated through impact evaluation - our hope is that development resources will be spent more effectively, and ultimately have a greater impact on reducing poverty and improving people's lives. The three chapters in this handbook provide a non-technical introduction to impact evaluations, including "Why Evaluate" in Chapter 1, "How to Evaluate" in Chapter 2 and "How to Implement Impact Evaluations" in Chapter 3. These elements are the basic 'tools' needed in order to successfully carry out an impact evaluation.

From a methodological standpoint our approach to impact evaluation is largely pragmatic: we think that the most appropriate methods should be identified to fit the operational context, and not the other way around. This is best achieved at the outset of the program, through the design of prospective impact evaluation that can be built into the project's implementation. We argue that gaining consensus between key stakeholders and identifying an evaluation design that fits the political and operational context is as important as the method itself. We also believe strongly that impact evaluations should be upfront about their limitations and caveats. Finally, we strongly encourage policymakers and program managers to consider impact evaluations in a logical framework that clearly sets out the causal pathways by which the program works to produce outputs and influence final outcomes, and to combine impact evaluations with monitoring and selected

complementary evaluation approach to gain a full picture of performance.

This book builds on a core set of teaching materials developed for the “Turning Promises to Evidence” workshops organized by the office of the Chief Economist for Human Development (HDNCE) in partnership with regional units and the Development Economics Research Group (DECRG) at the World Bank.

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Editorial Review

Review

"The aim of this book is to provide an accessible, comprehensive, and clear guide to impact evaluation. The material, ranging from motivating impact evaluation, to the advantages of different methodologies, to power calculations and costs, is explained very clearly and the coverage is impressive. This book will become a much consulted and used guide and will affect policy making for years to come." --Orazio Attanasio , Professor of Economics, University College London; Director, Centre for the Evaluation of Development Policies, Institute for Fiscal Studies, United Kingdom

"This is a valuable resource for those seeking to conduct impact evaluations in the developing world, covering both the conceptual and practical issues involved, and illustrated with examples from recent practice." --Michael Kremer , Gates Professor of Developing Societies, Department of Economics, Harvard University, United States

"The main ingredients for good public evaluations are (a) appropriate methodologies; (b) the ability to solve practical problems such as collecting data, working within low budgets, and writing the final report; and (c) accountable governments. This book not only describes solid technical methodologies for measuring the impact of public programs, but also provides several examples and takes us into the real world of implementing evaluations, from convincing policy makers to disseminating results. If more practitioners and policy makers read this handbook, we will have better policies and results in many countries. If governments improve accountability, the impact of this handbook would be even larger. --Gonzalo Hernández Licona, Executive Secretary, National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (CONEVAL), Mexico

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