The Future of Aid: Building Knowledge Collectively

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Main Points

• All governments need to know what works
• The potential of evaluations is starting to be realized
• Aid agencies can and should help fill knowledge gaps
• The agenda ahead: adequate, predictable support for 3ie
Core Governance Challenge

- Priorities set through political processes, but governments need to know what works
  - Did the program, when implemented as designed, improve outcomes?
  - Were the improved gains large enough to be worth the cost?
  - Are the gains larger than would have been produced with alternative ways of using the same resources?”
In Other Words . . .

The ability to measure program impact is a core responsibility of good governance . . . but it’s difficult.
Messages from WWWEL

• Concentric circles of benefits
• Implementation / evaluation
• Intolerance for failure
Exponential Growth of Impact Evaluations

Figure 4.1 Impact evaluations published per year 1981-2012

Source: Cameron, Drew and Anjini Mishra. (2014). "How much have we learned? The growth of impact evaluation for international development." 3ie draft paper. Washington DC.
Beyond Numbers, What’s New in Impact Evaluation Since 2006?

+  
  - Methodological innovation
  - Broader scope of subject matter
  - Emerging signs of utility

-  
  - Hype cycle
  - Methodological debates
  - Insecure funding
What’s New in Aid Since 2006?

• Up and down (absolute)
• Rapidly shrinking (relative)
• Constantly searching
Up and Down

How much is there?
Flows from development finance institutions have grown rapidly but fluctuated since the early 2000s
US$ billions, 2000–2011

Source: Development Initiatives 2013
Rapidly Shrinking

Figure 4: International resource flows to all developing countries (US$ trillions). Source: *Investments to End Poverty*, chapter 2, pp43.
Example: Uganda (% of budget from aid)
Searching

• Concentrate in a few places (very poor, fragile)?
• Concentrate on humanitarian relief?
• Build knowledge!
Aid Is Particularly Good at Funding Impact Evaluations

• Leverage
• Insulation from corruption
• Ability to bridge communities
• Role in public sector accountability
Collective Action Advances Knowledge

- Public good
- Better studies
- Efficiencies of scale and scope
- Independence
Impact Evaluations Should Be Funded Collectively

<table>
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<th>Contributions to 3ie, 2012-2013 (USD millions)</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tr>
<td>Bill &amp; Melinda Gates Foundation</td>
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<td>The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation</td>
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<td>Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)</td>
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Note: Six other agencies contributed less than $400,000 annually

Source: 3ie Annual Report 2013
Main Points

• All governments need to know what works
• The potential of evaluations is starting to be realized
• Aid agencies can and should help fill knowledge gaps
• The agenda ahead: meaningful, predictable support for 3ie
Thank you!