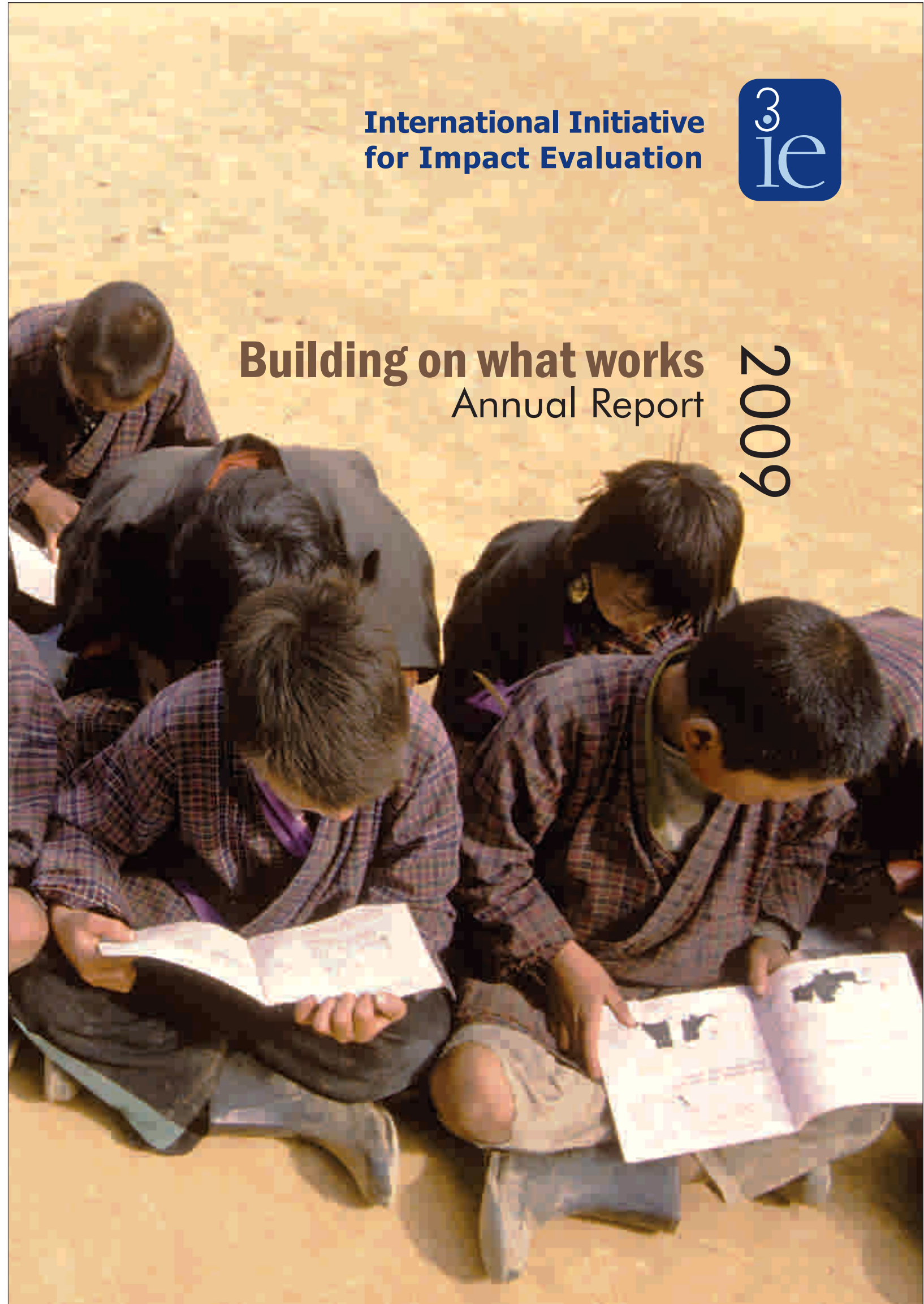


**International Initiative  
for Impact Evaluation**



**Building on what works**  
Annual Report

2009



## Building on what works



High-quality impact evaluations measure the net change in outcomes that can be attributed to a specific program. It informs policy as to what works, what does not, and why.





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## Our Mission

**Impacting policies and programs to increase development effectiveness through better use of evidence in developing countries**

To achieve our mission, we:

- Generate new evidence from impact evaluation
- Synthesize and disseminate existing evidence
- Build a culture of informed policy using new and existing evidence in the development and implementation of programs
- Develop the capacity to promote, use and undertake impact evaluations and systematic reviews

## How we work

We believe in:

- Rigorous analysis
- Independence and objectivity
- Flexibility in methodological approach, using qualitative and quantitative methods
- Policy-relevance in selection of research topic and study design based on the specific context
- Developing country representation and involvement
- Promoting strict ethical standards in data collection

## Our Board

- Chairman: **Paul Gertler**, Professor at University of California, Berkeley
- **Sulley Gariba**, Executive Director of the Institute for Policy Alternatives, Ghana, and former President of the International Development Evaluation Association
- **Gonzalo Hernandez Licona**, Executive Secretary of the Consejo Nacional de Evaluación, Mexico
- **Karen Jorgensen**, Head of the Division of Development Co-operation Directorate at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
- **Carol Medlin**, Senior Program Officer at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
- **Nafis Sadik**, UN Special Envoy on HIV/AIDS in Asia and former head of the UN Population Fund
- **Lyn Squire**, Editor of the Middle East Development Journal and former President of the Global Development Network
- **Thilde Stevens**, Director of Strategic Information and Monitoring support at the South African Department of Social Development





## What we do



## 3ie in numbers

As of Decembers 31, 2009

### Funding research



- **18 evaluations** with potential for high policy impact funded
- **11 synthetic reviews** and **8 proposal preparation grants** funded
- **4 issues** of the Journal of Development Effectiveness
- **2 synthetic reviews** completed
- **5 working papers**
- **1 study on institutionalizing evaluation**

### Informing debate



- **Largest impact evaluation conference** ever organised with over **700 experts** – Cairo 2009
- **About 3,000 people** attending our conference, seminars and impact evaluations workshops and presentations.
- **More than a 100** features, news release and postings on key evaluation and development list serves
- **A news update every two months**
- **7 policy briefs**

### Sharing knowledge



- **69 associate members**
- **20 members**
- **4 strategic partners**
- **First expert roster** on impact evaluation
- **An online database of over 150 impact studies**
- **Over 4.5 million hits and over 60,000 visits** on [www.3ieimpact.org](http://www.3ieimpact.org)
- **Over 1,800 downloads** from 3ie website
- **More than 500** members on our social network
- **A mailing list of over 2,100 people**
- **8 staff and 2 full-time consultants**

## Director's view



“We are now known as a key player in international evaluation circles.”

Billions of dollars are spent each year on development programs to improve the quality of life of poor people in the developing world. The last fifteen years have seen a growing demand to show results. And as many countries seem set not to reach the Millennium Development Goals we have to face the questions: which development programs work, which do not and how can we make them work better and more cost effectively?

3ie was created to help answer those questions. In our first year we have laid a solid foundation to build the evidence base and help policy makers and development agencies invest more in effective programs and less in interventions that do not work. We are now known as a key player in international evaluation circles. A major step in this direction was the conference 'Perspectives on Impact Evaluation' in Cairo last March, where, in partnership with the African Evaluation Association, the Network of Networks on Impact Evaluation, and UNICEF (Egypt), we succeeded in influencing the debate and promoting the value of evaluations aimed at determining the causal effects of programs to over 700 leading experts and practitioners. As our reputation grows, so do our resources. In the last 12 months we have mobilized resources for the coming four to five years: US\$50 million in signed agreements, but with the expectation that that figure will increase substantially over the next two years.

And we are already spending that money to improve the quantity and quality of evidence to inform policy. We have established a review process of our grants which conforms to international best practice. We have also initiated small grants to help developing country researchers design and carry out evaluation.

If most of our resources are devoted to financing new impact studies, 3ie is not just a grant making body. Our main rationale is to change policy to increase the impact of development spending. We already aim to achieve this is by encouraging more developing country-led applications and international partnerships of researchers. But in the coming year we will engage yet more closely with developing country policymakers around policy messages from study findings and to identify priority areas for new studies.

I am encouraged by a growing awareness of the importance of evidence for policy-making, with a number of countries, including China and India, taking steps to institutionalize evaluation. In such a climate, the future is promising for 3ie to take a big role in drawing on lessons learned and key insights to build on what works and provide solutions adapted to local realities. This Annual report explains how we are moving forward in this direction and constantly learning to do better.

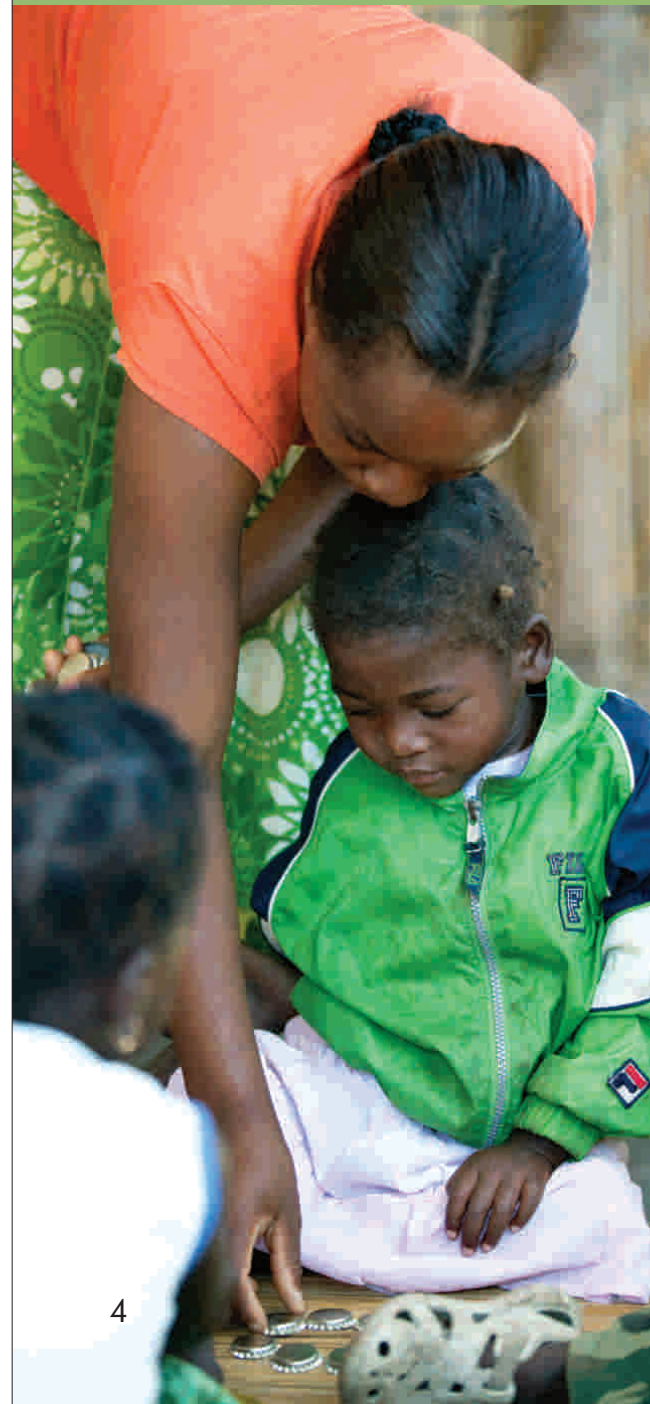
## What can we give the developing world for the New Year?

“The question we ask today is not whether our government is too big or too small, but whether it works, whether it helps families find jobs at a decent wage, care they can afford, a retirement that is dignified. Where the answer is yes, we intend to move forward. Where the answer is no, programs will end.” President Barak Obama, 20 January, 2009 Inaugural Address.

- ❑ **1 in 4 Mexican – 5 million families** – are now benefiting from the Progresa/oportunidades program following its proven success.
- ❑ Over **17 countries** from Latin America and around the world have then followed the Mexican experience and are now implementing similar programs. Bangladesh, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Indonesia, Jamaica, Malawi, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Palestine, Panama, and Paraguay, as well as New York City have a Mexican model cash transfer program.
- ❑ In India, Pratham raised funding for a massive scale up of their “Read India” program, which already benefits **20 million children** based in part on strong evidence of effectiveness from a Jameel Poverty Action Lab impact study.
- ❑ **3 million** Kenyan children are being dewormed this year as a result of a study which proved deworming is the most cost-effective way of increasing education. The World Food Program has committed to add deworming to all their school feeding programs in areas that have high intestinal worm loads, and the microfinance organization SKS is due to launch a program to deworm **1 million** children in Andra Pradesh.



## 2008-09 in brief



# 2008

“The global crisis is squeezing resources for all. It is an opportunity to seek innovative ways to finance development assistance and focusing resources on investments with known benefits. Impact evaluation is well situated for learning what works in development, why, why not, under which circumstances, and to what costs” Nick York, NONIE Chair and head of DFID's evaluation department.

## 2008

Howard White, Executive Director of 3ie comes on board

Mar

3ie website launched

Jul

Partnership agreement with the Global Development Network (GDN) as 3ie host institution.

Nov

Dec

First grant awarded by 3ie. The Institute of Statistical, Social & Economic Research in Ghana receives a proposal preparation grant to make a significant contribution to climate change policies and design a study on "The Impact of Energy Efficient Technology on Energy Consumption in Ghana".

The first batch of synthetic reviews awarded. The topics include: water quality, microfinance, school enrolment policies, day-care programs, social cohesion policies in Africa, community based interventions on maternal health, and behavioural mechanism to prevent HIV.

## 2009

Official launch of 3ie at the 10<sup>th</sup> annual global development conference on "Natural resources and development" in Kuwait.

Jan

Feb

First Annual Members' Conference

Launch of the Delhi seminar series with Ms. Sunayana Walia from the International Center for Research on Women presenting her findings on Improving Reproductive Health of Married and Unmarried Youth in India.

3ie's Board of Commissioners is formed and meets for the first time.

First 3ie Synthetic Review shows hand-washing, sanitation and point of use treatment interventions are most effective in improving health outcomes. However, it is difficult to influence sustainable behaviour changes to ensure that water treatment at source translates into long-term health benefits.

New impact evaluation database and expert roster live on [3ieimpact.org](http://3ieimpact.org)

# 2009

Over 700 policy makers, development practitioners and evaluators discussed how to address the evaluation gap at a global conference co-hosted by 3ie, AfrEA, NONIE and UNICEF.

Mar

Launch of the first issue of the Journal of Development Effectiveness "The Journal of Development Effectiveness will help attain the potential for evaluative research to inform development policy making," said Martin Ravallion from the World Bank at the launch in Cairo.

Apr

3ie organized a session at the Campbell Collaboration Colloquium presenting new evidence on how better access to water and sanitation can save lives through better child health.

May

3ie announced its first round grants of US\$4.3 million for better evidence and development effectiveness. More than half of the 18 funded studies are in Africa featuring innovative and rigorous evaluation that tracks the impact of technology, in-kind and financial incentives, and the level of community participation on the effectiveness of interventions in education, health, agriculture, social protection, and environmental sectors.

Jun

Two synthetic reviews on slum upgrading interventions and genital mutilation awarded under the second round.

Aug

Second call for proposals under the Open Window is made, up to US\$10 million to be awarded in robust and innovative research.

Oct

Nov

## View point: Making evaluation valuable for leaders and citizens

“Policy-makers are experimenting with billions of people's lives on a daily basis without informed consent, and without rigorous evidence that what they do works, has no substantive adverse effects, and could not be achieved more efficiently”  
Marie Gaarder, 3ie Deputy Director.



How can results be maximized given the scarce resources allocated to development interventions? And how to find new ways of improving performance to produce better results? These are key questions political leaders and development practitioners want answers to.

Today, success in improving the effectiveness of anti-poverty programs is crucial. **Policy makers around the world have now started recognizing the importance of learning from experience, and basing their decisions on the evidence of what works in order to improve the lives of millions of people.**

Mexico was the first country to introduce mandatory impact evaluation for all its social programs. This was, in part, a result of the lessons learnt from the first evaluation of the Government flagship program Progresa/ Oportunidades. The program provides cash transfers conditional upon regular school attendance, health clinic visits and nutritional support to children. By rigorously demonstrating success in reducing children's malnutrition rates and child labor, as well as increasing boys and girls' enrolment in secondary school through independent evaluations, the program survived a change of government and was scaled up.

A 3ie report on **“Institutionalizing Evaluation”** released at an international conference on evaluation hosted by the Indian Planning Commission concludes that there is no unique model for strengthening and institutionalizing a monitoring and evaluation system. It all depends on strong political will to ensure that results are being used to improve performance. It also requires having a clear powerful stakeholder, such as the Congress, the Ministry of Finance, or the President to champion the process.

The existence of a democratic system where citizens have the right to information and the right to participate in decision-making is another key factor.

In terms of structure, the oversight body should have a degree of independence, which translates into higher external credibility. There is a trade-off, however, as the gains from institutional independent may come at the cost of lower capabilities to enforce the adoption of the recommendations. This can be addressed with strong political and legal mandate, and by generating ownership of evaluation by the policy implementers.

Indeed, the sustainability and success of the Monitoring and Evaluation M&E system depends on its usage and its relevance to the client's interests and needs. Impact evaluation needs to be immersed into broader M&E systems with complimentary instruments. Evaluation needs to be an integral part of the programs since their inception.

## Seven key measures for an effective evaluation framework

Institutionalizing Evaluation: A review of international experience (Bertha Briceno and Marie Gaarder, 2009)

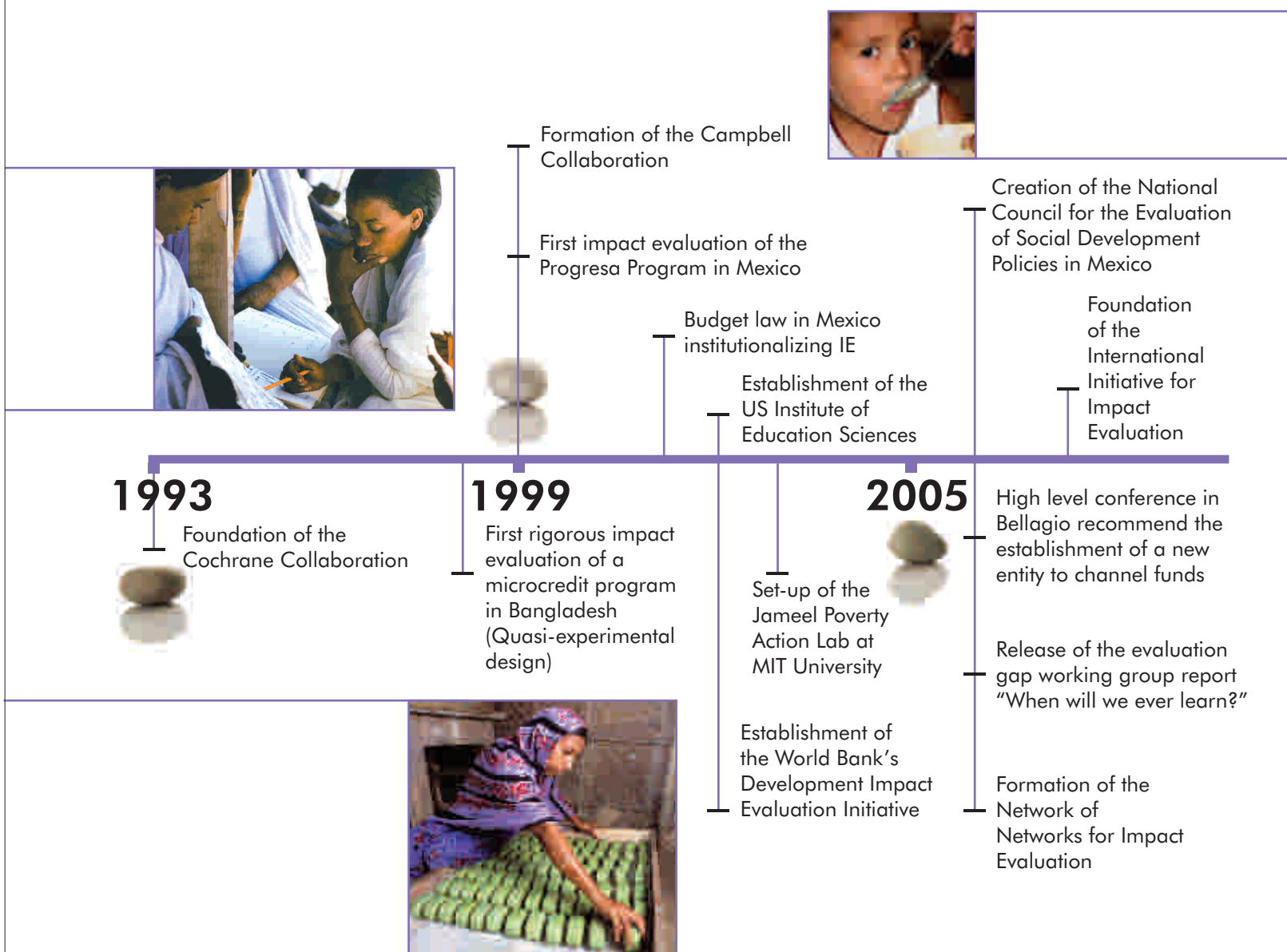
- Focus on usage and clarity on a client or set of clients that are to be served, and what their interests are;
- Have a unique and broad legal mandate for evaluation;
- Immerse all impact evaluations into broader M&E systems with complimentary monitoring and evaluation instruments;
- Build local technical capacity among relevant Ministry officials, program implementers, and local researchers.
- Strengthen data collection and processing systems in order to ensure high quality of data;
- Ensure that evaluation is an integral part of programs since their inception;
- Guarantee full public disclosure through legislation on access to public information or transparency.

**Building an evaluation culture takes time and the real challenge is to encourage policy makers and practitioners to evaluate the impact of their policies and programs and adopt informed policies and programs.**

## Milestones in the production and use of impact evaluation



## OPERATIONS



**Funding** Research

**Informing** debate

**Sharing** knowledge



# 1. Funding Research

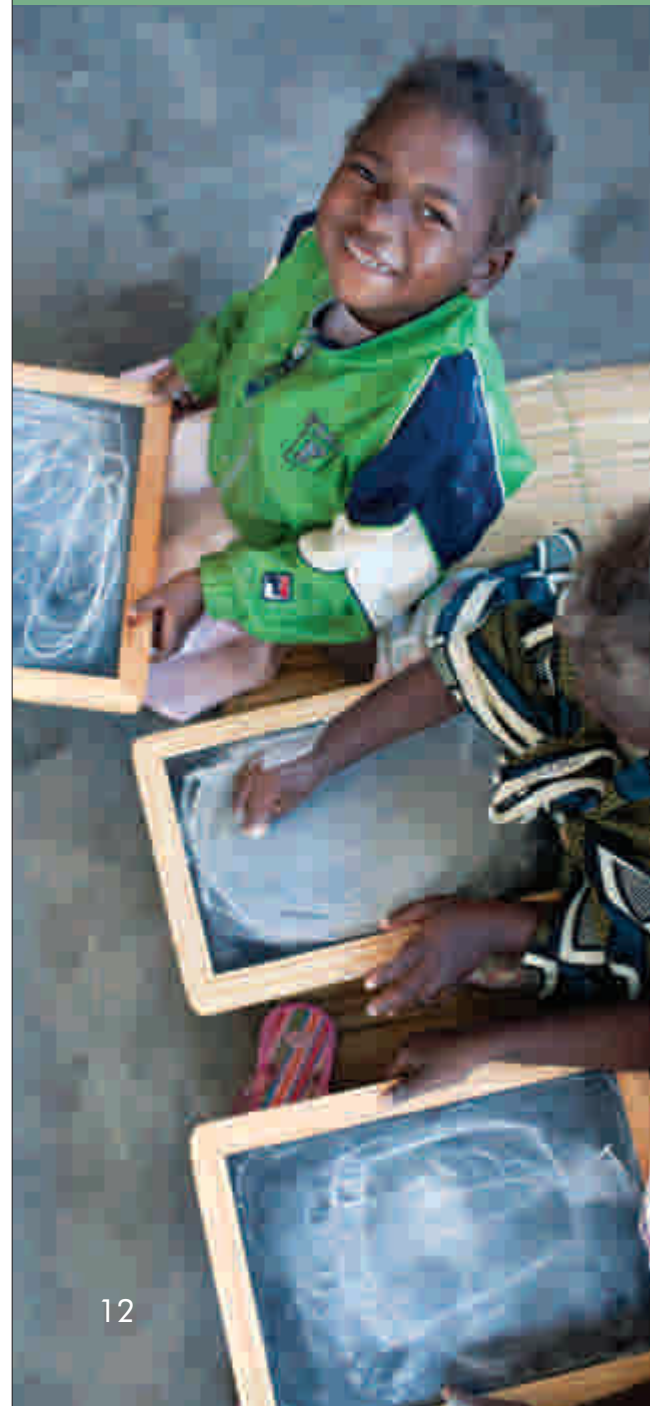
**78 proposals received, reviewed by a panel of 11 reviewers of world class experience. 18 innovative and high quality studies awarded. More than half of the research projects in Africa. 11 Synthetic Reviews and additional quality assurance services.**

## How we work

3ie is about pioneering new approaches and funding quality studies that will have a real policy impact and affect many lives. 3ie encourages studies which utilize innovative methodologies, or apply quality impact evaluation to areas or questions which have not been the subject of previous research. Priority is given to proposals responding to a clear demand from policy makers and grantees are expected to ensure full cooperation from implementing agencies, and other interested actors.

**3ie embraces a range of evaluation methods and approaches to address the evaluation gap. We are guided by a commitment to five core principles:**

- ❑ Rigorous analysis
- ❑ Independence and objectivity
- ❑ Flexibility in methodological approach, using qualitative and quantitative methods
- ❑ Policy-relevance in selection of research topic and study design based on the specific context
- ❑ Developing country representation and involvement
- ❑ Promoting strict ethical standards in data collection



## What we do

Primarily, 3ie operates as a grant program with different windows and request for proposals. We fund:

- ❑ **Impact evaluations** using new or existing data to evaluate the impact of social and economic development interventions in low and middle income countries. Impact evaluations are currently funded under the **Open Window**, which accepts proposals related to any sector. Future windows may be more targeted.
- ❑ **Proposal preparation grants** which help developing country institutions design high quality proposals with the technical assistance of an international expert in impact evaluation. Proposal Preparation Grants are reviewed on a continuous basis throughout the year.
- ❑ **Synthetic reviews** of social and economic development interventions in low and middle income countries which examine existing evidence on the impacts of a particular intervention or program. All reviews are carried out in accordance with Campbell Collaboration guidelines and procedures. Calls for proposals to conduct reviews are issued twice a year.
- ❑ Other calls for papers are made from time to time on specific themes.



## 1.1 Funding research to improve people's lives

“The increased emphasis on results - that is asking if development spending makes a difference to people's lives – boils down to using impact evaluations to inform policy and program design. Only quality impact evaluations which tackle attribution can say if an intervention worked, and why” Howard White, 3ie Executive Director.

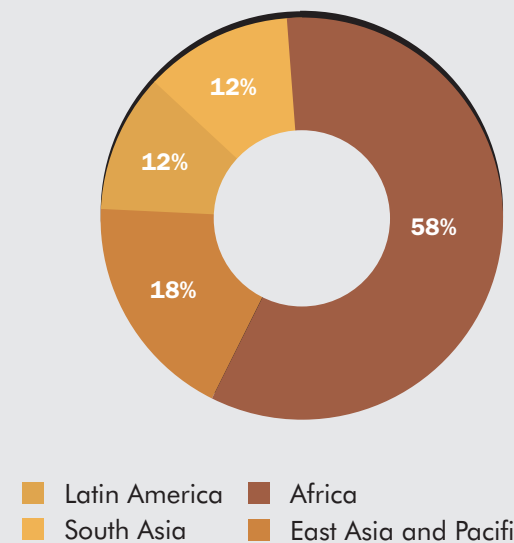
This year, the first round of open window grants were awarded in June and 18 cutting edge research proposals were selected. Over half of them are based in Africa, a third in Asia and the remaining in Latin America. These cover a variety of sectors, including: agriculture, education, governance, health, microcredit, social protection and water.



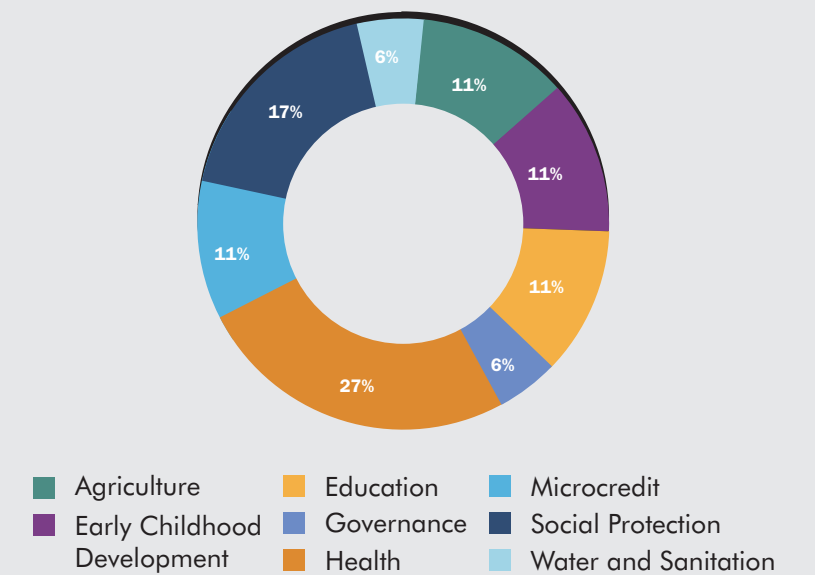
A young child shows his name to the teacher on the board at a Save the Children early childhood centre in Mozambique

**Early Childhood Development Centres to provide access to critical healthcare and psychological support in Mozambique.** Programs to provide care and protection to children at an early stage of life are critical in Africa where children face the risks of diseases, malnutrition, conflict and low-quality education. More than half a million children orphaned by HIV/AIDS have access to those centres. The findings will help inform the Government national strategy to strengthen children's learning and create a pre-primary school year for five-year-olds.  
**Lead researcher:** Chloe OGara, Save the Children, US

Awards distributed by regions



Awards distributed by sectors



**Texting disease away in Pakistan.** The treatment for tuberculosis is long, complicated and can cause uncomfortable side-effects. As a result, about 40 per cent of patients worldwide do not complete the full course of treatment and we are now facing the rapid emergence of drug resistant bacteria. A mobile phone based health project in Karachi will help monitor patients' compliance to Tuberculosis treatment by having them text their daily urine test results to a central database in exchange for phone credits.

**Lead researcher:** Shama Mohammed, InterActive Research and Development



Adolescent girls queuing for the distribution of cooking oil in Bangladesh

**Distributing cooking oil to compensate for dowry to delay adolescent marriage in remote parts of Bangladesh.** The intervention will involve 45,000 adolescent girls between the age of 10 and 17 and examine the effect of non-cash incentives on postponing the marriage and improving the girls' health and wellbeing. The effect of these incentives will be compared to those of community mobilization and educational support.

**Lead researcher:** Rachel Glennerster, Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab

**Hairdressers distributing female condoms in HIV-stricken Zambia.** In a country with one of the highest adult prevalence rate in the world of over 14 percent, non-profit and public organisations are increasingly relying on the service of community members to promote and deliver health goods. Barbers, hair stylists and other members are ideally positioned to become change agents and promote female condoms. The findings of the research will help design effective rewards and cash incentive schemes for community agents.

**Lead researcher:** Dr. Nava Ashraf, Harvard Business School

**Improved cook stoves with a microchip inbuilt to monitor usage and reduce the rate of lower respiratory infections - biggest killer disease in North Ghana.**

The intervention seeks to identify the impact of improved stoves on carbon emissions and health of the households.

**Lead researchers:** David Lavigne, Eugene E. and Catherine M. Trefeten, Regents of the University of California





**Reducing anemia of rural children in China through cash transfers.** Up to 20 to 30 million children suffer from anemia in the country. A previous trial showed that providing multivitamins in schools reduces anemia, having substantial positive impact on learning outcomes at low cost. This new study, conducted in 72 schools will explore how the program can be taken to scale.  
**Lead researcher:** Scott Rozelle, Rural Education Action Project, Stanford University

Eleven year old girl Wang Wanqing from the village of Suide in China's province of Northern Shaanxi lives with her parents and two brothers in a humble and old two-room house with mud walls carved out of the side of the hill. Wang Wanqing used to be anemic and has now recovered.



**Analyzing the effects of Mexico's new daycare program.** The research will examine the impact on employment and earnings of mothers and family members, and how daycare access affects the children's development.  
**Lead researcher:** Paola Gadsden de la Peza, Instituto Nacional de Salud Publica, Mexico

**600 students in Ghana to receive a 4-year scholarship to attend senior secondary school.** Ghana set a goal to achieve universal access to senior secondary education by 2020. The project will track 1,800 students for 10 years with the help of cell-phones, and will help the government reshape the scholarship scheme and provide information about the benefits of scholarships on future labour market and health outcomes.  
**Lead researcher:** Esther Duflo, Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Innovations for Poverty Action Affiliate



**High-quality low-cost housing provided to 400 slum dwellers in Peru.** The research will evaluate whether slum-housing upgrading should be considered as a cost-effective policy to improve the living conditions, health and welfare of the poor.  
**Lead researcher:** Paul Gertler, University of California, Berkeley

**Innovative evaluation to measure the level of participation in a community driven development pilot in post-conflict Sierra Leone.** The evaluation will examine to what extent decisions in a community are participatory by offering a choice between public and private good gifts, and help the democratisation of decision making at the community level.  
**Lead researcher:** Tristan Reed, Regents of the University of California



**First assessment of Indonesia's unconditional cash transfer to help poor families recover from the massive reduction in fuel subsidies.** A team of local researchers will fill the gap in understanding the effectiveness and impact of the policy.  
**Lead researcher:** Sudarno Sumarto, SMERU Research Institute

**Scaling up of chlorine dispensers to reduce diarrhea in Kenya.** Less than 10% of Kenyans are using chlorine for water treatment.  
**Lead researcher:** Vivian Hoffmann, Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab



**Estimating the effectiveness of a food supplementation intervention amongst people living with HIV in Uganda.** Food and nutrition security are increasingly being recognized as fundamental to the prevention, care and treatment of HIV and AIDS. International Organizations such as WHO, UNAIDS, WFP and FAO have recommended integration of food assistance into AIDS care and treatment programs. This will be the first time such interventions get tested.  
**Lead researcher:** Robert Ochai, The AIDS Support Organization, Uganda

**600 micro-entrepreneurs in Western Kenya receiving access to financial services.** The experiment will bring answers as to how do rural micro-enterprises function, and how can one identify savings and credit interventions to enable entrepreneurship and improve living standards in Africa.  
**Lead researcher:** Pascaline Dupas, University of California, Los Angeles and Innovations for Poverty Action Affiliat

**Using Geographical Information System (GIS) tracking to investigate the impact of the Thai Government irrigation projects in North-West Thailand.** This will be the first rigorous impact evaluation done on irrigation  
**Lead researcher:** Tiwaporn Sutthiwongse, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, Royal Thai Government





## Have your say **voice from one of our grantees**

“ **Separate funding for impact evaluations increases the probability of rigorous and objective research. Few organizations that fund programs are interested in “diverting” resources into good research design, analysis, and interpretation. A complementary mandate like 3ie’s is very important to improve the quality and utility of evidence, particularly in underserved regions and program areas. I hope also that 3ie will entertain innovative approaches to evaluation, embracing qualitative as well as quantitative designs, and helping the broader community improve qualitative methods and effective communication of results**”  
Chloe O’Gara, Save the Children



**Rigorous assessment of micro-credits in Ecuador.** Despite widespread enthusiasm about micro-credits, solid empirical evidence about its impact on economic development and poverty reduction is hard to come by. This project evaluates the mechanisms and impact of the government’s micro-credit program in Ecuador.

**Lead researcher:** Hessel Oosterbeek, University of Amsterdam

**Low cost treadle pumps and other productive assets adapted for poor farmers in Africa.** The research will increase the capacity of the NGO KickStart international to monitor and assess the impacts of its product on household income, education and the environment and will help develop a state-of-art impact assessment system for market-led and private sector poverty reduction programs.

**Lead researcher:** Martin J. Fisher, KickStart International

**Surveying over 2,000 out-of-school youths to analyse the impacts of vocational trainings on employment, migration, fertility and other life outcomes.** This will be the first randomized impact evaluation of its kind on vocational education, building on ten years of uniquely detailed educational, health and cognitive information for over 5,000 Kenyan adolescents contained in the Kenyan Life Panel Survey.

**Lead researcher:** Edward Miguel, Centre of Evaluation for Global Action

## **Viewpoint: Conditional Cash Transfers and health**

Conditional Cash Transfer (CCTs) programs where governments transfer cash to households who meet certain conditions, including regular school attendance, and health check-ups for children at the clinic, are spreading rapidly throughout the developing world. Seven countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have implemented and evaluated CCT programs with health and nutrition components since 1997. These kind of interventions related to health behaviour have also been subject to recent evaluations in Asia, Africa and the Middle East will be the subject of a forthcoming paper in the Journal for Development Effectiveness.



The question that has emerged from this review is: **do conditional cash transfer interventions improve health and people’s nutritional outcomes, and which components of the programs, or combination thereof, are important in achieving these?** These impacts could be due to increased use of preventive and prenatal care services, increased immunization rates, improved quality of care, the purchase of higher quality of food and medicines, the investment in household materials and equipment that could reduce exposure to infections, improved psychological well-being of family members or increased knowledge in topics covered by the health information lectures (such as proper hygiene and food preparation, best practices for breastfeeding and treatment of diarrhoea). Understanding the role of such factors in influencing outcomes is critical for developing more effective programs.

There is strong evidence that financial incentives work to increase utilization of key health services by the poor. However, this increase in access to health services does not necessarily translate into improvements in the level of vaccination, nutritional status and, where we have data, adult health and morbidity and mortality. This puts into question the cost-effectiveness of encouraging utilization when services are of poor quality. However, recent findings from Mexico indicate that the beneficiaries are demanding better quality of services, forcing service providers to improve their performance.

Other studies from Mexico indicate that although the health benefits from increase use of healthcare services are mixed, there may be additional benefits resulting from the monetary transfers, including improved life style choices and mental health.

The second challenge is identifying the marginal benefit of conditioned over unconditioned transfers. If monitoring conditionality is costly, and complying with the co-responsibilities is time-consuming for the household, it is important to determine whether conditions are necessary to ensure the desired health-seeking behaviour. In some cases, it is probable that poverty was the entire problem and only increased income was needed, but this should be carefully considered in the design stage.

“ **This (experience) showed that a program to fight extreme poverty can be passed from one administration to another, and that it can even grow if it is based on systematic evaluations of empirical evidence and transparent, non-partisan operations... Today, thanks to Oportunidades, the Mexican government can make direct cash transfers to nearly all of the population living in extreme poverty**” Santiago Levy, Mexican economist, chief architect of the renowned Mexican program and Deputy Minister of Finance.

## 1.2 Boosting developing country-led evaluation through proposal preparation grants

Eight proposal preparation grants have been awarded this year.

We are committed to studying issues of interest to agencies and research institutions from developing countries and funding proposals led by their research teams. To support developing country institutions to develop quality proposals with the technical assistance of international impact evaluation experts, 3ie is providing proposal preparation grants at a flat rate of US\$5,000 and limited to one per institution. Proposals can be sent anytime. Eight proposal preparation grants have been awarded this year.

To boost developing country-led applications and ensure that they are successfully funded, our review process gives special weight to projects that include partners from developing country research institutions, policymakers and program managers.

Last November, we held a one day impact evaluation seminar in Bangkok for the staff of the Office of Agricultural Economics in Thailand and as a result the Office of Agricultural Economics submitted an application for a proposal preparation grants, choosing an expert from suggestions given by 3ie. Subsequently, they put forward a proposal for the first Open Window to evaluate a medium-scale irrigation program, which is now being funded by 3ie.



## 1.3 Promoting informed policies through synthetic reviews

Policy makers around the world have now started recognizing the importance of learning from experience, and basing their decisions on the evidence to improve the lives of fellow citizen. In the field of medicine, practitioners have a long history of systematically reviewing available evidence to give rigorous information on what works and what doesn't.

Increasingly, it is playing a big role in social policy. In the United States the What Works Clearing House summarizes evidence on education policy and programs. 3ie is partnering with the Campbell Collaboration in the production of synthetic reviews of development policies and programs in low and middle-income country.

Systematic reviews start with a comprehensive review of all available studies, grades them by quality criteria, only including in the review those which meet certain standards, and, where applicable, provide a consolidated estimate of the effectiveness of the intervention by pooling the results of all studies. Internationally the Campbell Collaboration promotes quality standards for systematic reviews in education, crime and justice and social welfare and all 3ie-supported reviews are carried out in accordance with the Campbell guidelines and procedures. In addition, we are proposing the creation of a new Campbell working group on international development and also exploring the use of mixed methods in synthetic reviews to make them more policy relevant.

**Two call for proposals were launched this year, 11 studies have been selected and the first review on Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Interventions to Combat Childhood Diarrhoea in Developing Countries was released in August.**

The topics include: Agricultural extension services; the health and social effect of slum upgrading strategies; interventions designed to reduce female genital mutilation; social cohesion in Sub-Saharan Africa; school enrolment policies in developing countries; the impact of daycare programs on child health, nutrition and development; behaviour change interventions to prevent HIV among low-income girls; based intervention package for improving maternal health; microfinance; and water and sanitation. The third call for proposals will be made in early 2010.

### Have your say: voice from one of our grantees

“ 3ie Synthetic Review grants are providing opportunities for important research to be completed so they can inform policy decisions by developing nations and guide investment decisions by international donor organizations. The assumption is that better evidence will lead to more informed decision-making, ultimately helping to implement and improve programs and policies for the very people who need them the most. Learning how to get reviews incorporated into budget decisions and research policy deliberations routinely is NOT easy, however. This requires a different kind of skill than producing reviews per se. Certainly, there are examples in which reviews have been influential, particularly in the health care sector ”

Robert F. Boruch, Claire Morgan and Anthony Petrosino, WestEd, University of Pennsylvania.

## Viewpoint: Water and sanitation to save lives

Every 15 seconds a child dies of waterborne diseases and every day 5,000 children succumb to preventable diseases caused by unsafe water and poor sanitation, such as cholera, typhoid and dysentery. Diarrhoea increases child malnutrition and premature death, and reduces school attendance.



One billion people across the world do not have access to safe drinking water, **2.5 billion** people are still without access to improved sanitation (United Nations, 2008). **One in two girls** drop-out of school because their school lacks separate toilets or access to clean water and **40 billion hours** are spent collecting water each year in Sub-Saharan Africa (DATA 2009 report). Many countries are off track with the water and sanitation targets of the Millennium Development Goals, especially for sanitation. Interventions to improve access to clean water and improved sanitation are therefore an important component of human development efforts in developing countries, and contribute to fostering better health outcomes, higher incomes, improved educational attainment and gender equity.



So, what is the most effective kind of intervention to reduce the prevalence of diarrhoea among children in developing countries? Are interventions providing water treatment at home – for example through water filters or disinfectants - or hygiene interventions such as hand-washing with soap are most cost-effective? Do water, sanitation and hygiene interventions complement or substitute each other when it comes to improving children's health?

Contrary to previous findings, the first review conducted by 3ie concludes that improving access to latrines is as effective as other water and sanitation interventions in combating diarrhoea.

**Household water treatment interventions reduce diarrhoea disease among children by 42 percent on average.** This is significantly more than interventions that provide a new or improve supply of water like a community hand pump or a well. Water supply projects do not appear to reduce diarrhoea related morbidity, although there are important benefits to improved water supply which are not assessed in the study, in particular time savings which are often especially beneficial for women and girls.

Overall, there is not enough evidence to prove that household water treatment intervention in the long run are sustainable. Overtime, the review suggests that impact of these interventions on **diarrhoea-related morbidity is only 20 per cent after a year.** Also the study shows that families are not filtering, boiling or disinfecting their water a year or more later. Therefore we need to know why people are not applying those safe practices in order to improve children's health and save lives. This will be particularly critical in case these interventions are to be effectively scaled-up.

In general, there are several shortcomings in impact evaluation coverage and design in particular of sanitation interventions. There is also virtually no evidence of how these interventions effect the performance in reaching other MDG targets as few studies look beyond health outcomes. Very few evaluations address the complementarities between water and sanitation interventions.