

Cuernavaca Post-Conference Survey Report

What difference has the conference made to people's understanding and practice with respect to impact evaluation? A post-conference survey report was sent out to participants three months after the "Mind the Gap" conference in June 2011 in Cuernavaca, Mexico, to help answer this question.

Main findings

- 98.7% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the conference was worth attending.
- 96.7% said the content of the programme was pertinent.
- 84.9% said the right mix of participants (policymakers, development practitioners and researchers) attended the conference.
- 90.8% said the sessions helped inform their thinking on impact evaluation.
- 97.4% would recommend colleagues to attend a similar event.
- 67.3% have applied knowledge gained during the conference in their work.
- 70.1% respondents accessed information relating to presentations after the conference.
- 68.6% sent information about the conference to colleagues, or shared with colleagues what they learned at the conference.

What we do well

- **Overall high satisfaction of participants.** The participants particularly liked the plenary sessions (34.2% said the plenaries were excellent and 54.6% said there were very good and good). On average, over 80% reported that the presentations were good. For those who participated in the pre-conference clinic, 76.4% responded that the clinic fulfilled their expectation and on average the perceived knowledge gain was of 25.8% from a medium capacity level to good.
- **Good and accessible information about the conference.** Over 70% of the respondents reported that the website was useful to very useful. Only 26% of the participants participated or monitored the online forum. However, the blog space was primarily targeted at non-participants.
- **The majority of respondents have been able to utilize/apply their new knowledge.** Most of the respondents have been able to apply what they learned to their programme or training. They've

ABOUT THE REPORT

The Cuernavaca post-conference survey generated a response rate of 39 percent (180 responses out of 460 participants). Half of the respondents were from research institutions and the other half practitioners and policy makers from government, NGOs and donors.

The majority of respondents were from Latin America (41%), followed by North America (28%), Asia (14.4%), Europe (9%) and Africa (8%).

also learned new tools to influence policy. Others have been able to apply the methodological tips provided by Guido Imbens in particular or comments received during their presentations. Many mentioned that the conference helped clarify their understanding of what impact evaluation means. It also prompted some to learn more and read several papers or apply new methodologies.

- **Change in attitude.** Some respondents indicated that they have changed their attitude towards the kind of methodology they would apply and they are now thinking of applying mixed methods or quasi-experimental designs. Some are discussing different approaches to help their organization conduct/manage impact evaluations.

Where we need to improve

While responses were overwhelmingly positive, we are taking into consideration the negative reactions of some participants:

- **Lack of policy relevance of some of the sessions.** Several respondents mentioned that many of the presenters did not bridge the gap to policy. Many presenters were unable to explain their technical work in policy-relevant and lay language.
- **A bias for econometric measures and RCTs.** Some respondents felt that some of the recommendations were hard to apply to small-scale community-based programmes and that presentations were very “number heavy”.
- **Some low quality studies presented.** Some respondents regretted the fact that there was not enough presentations of first class research and that many studies presented were not rigorous.
- **Lack of representations from certain sectors.** The programme did not focus on topics such as evaluations in humanitarian settings.
- **Need for more discussions on how to handle methodological challenges and replication.**
- **Lack of presentations from NGO practitioners.** For some respondent, some of the discussions lacked practical examples, and a number of presentations were too technical.

What we are doing about it

We have learned from the feedback received from the participants and will incorporate it in the planning for the next bi-annual conference organized by 3ie in 2013.

For instance, 3ie will revise its criteria for the selection of presentations, as well as the pre-conference marketing strategy to attract more presentations from both practitioners and policymakers. 3ie will also be looking at different approaches to entice more participants to bridge the gap between research and policy, and engage in more policy relevant and practical discussions around specific challenges.

We would like to thank the participants who completed the survey. And we would further like to invite participants who have ideas about how we can improve —whether they have taken a survey already or not— to send us their thoughts at: 3ie@3ieimpact.org