



International
Initiative for
Impact Evaluation

3ie strategy 2020

Improving lives through
evidence-informed action



Closing gaps in evidence and its use

This strategy was developed through a consultative process involving our Board of Commissioners, members, staff and other key stakeholders.

Executive editors

Beryl Leach
Emmanuel Jimenez

Managing editor

Radhika Menon

Production manager

Angel Kharya

Design

John McGill

Suggested citation:
International Initiative for Impact Evaluation, 3ie, 2017. *Closing the evidence gap: 3ie strategy 2020*, Delhi: International Initiative for Impact Evaluation, 3ie

© International Initiative for Impact Evaluation, 3ie, 2017



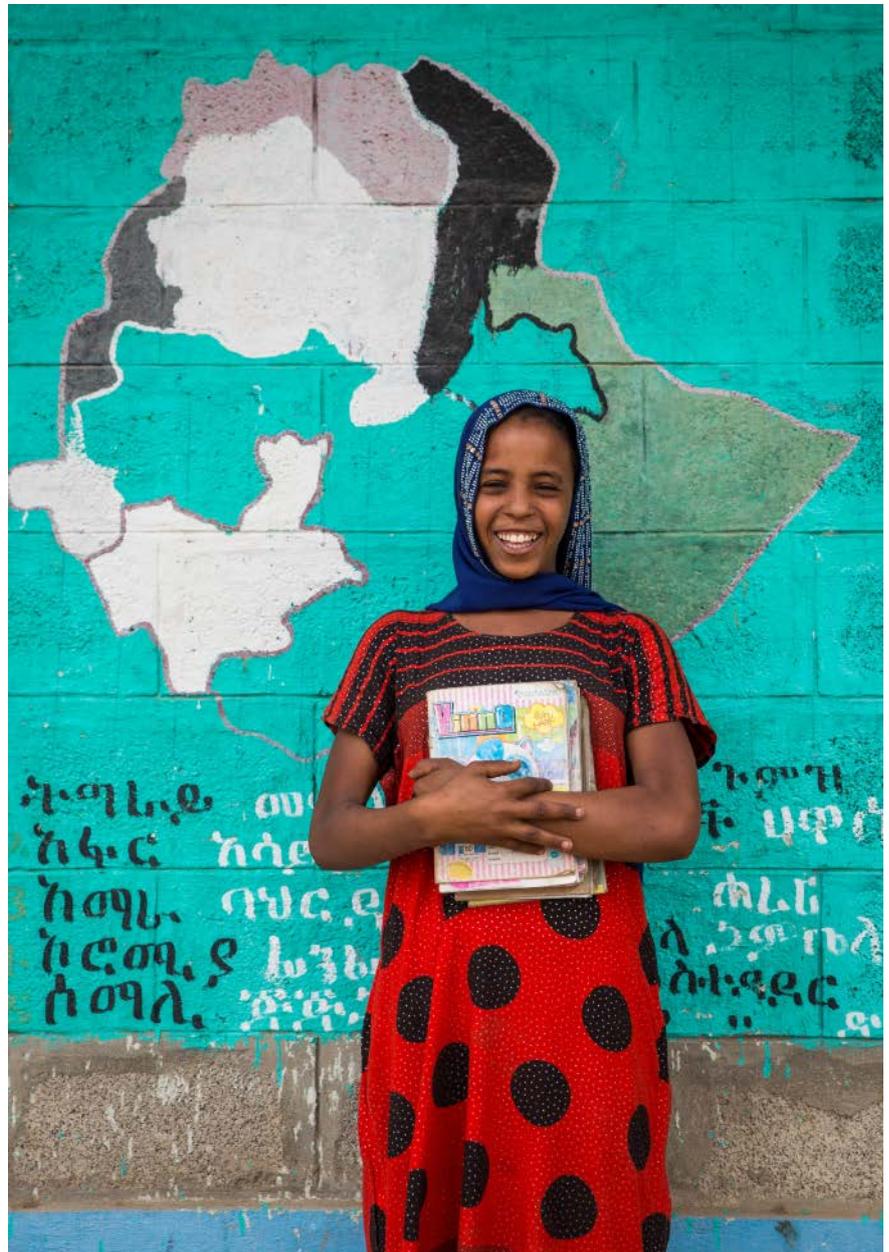
Improving lives through evidence-informed action

The International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie) is a global leader in funding, producing, ensuring the quality of and synthesising rigorous evidence. We support studies and reviews that examine what works, for whom, why and at what cost in low- and middle-income countries (L&MICs). We are a global advocate for the generation and use of high-quality evidence in development decision-making.

Since its inception in 2008, 3ie has made a major contribution to the growing body of rigorous evidence in international development. By encouraging the adoption of rigorous and innovative mixed-method approaches and emphasising evidence use, 3ie promotes an integrated approach to evidence production. As of March 2017, we have committed USD116 million in grants for producing high-quality impact evaluations, systematic reviews and replication studies of development programmes in more than 50 L&MICs. We make all of our knowledge products and resources freely available on our website.

‘3ie brings together those who wish to use impact evaluation findings with those who conduct them. To ensure useful measurement, it mobilises and focuses resources for relevant questions that matter in the real world, and paves the way for more-transparent research practices. 3ie also works closely with governments and NGOs to strengthen their systems for prioritising evaluations and using findings.’

Ruth Levine
Chair
3ie Board of Commissioners



3ie strategy 2020

Looking ahead to 2020, we have identified three linked strategic priorities to take 3ie forward.

Strategic priority 1

Support the generation and use of high-quality evidence

Strategic priority 2

Improve the global policy environment for the generation and use of evidence

Strategic priority 3

Continue to grow 3ie sustainably



Strategic priority 1

Support the generation and use of high-quality evidence

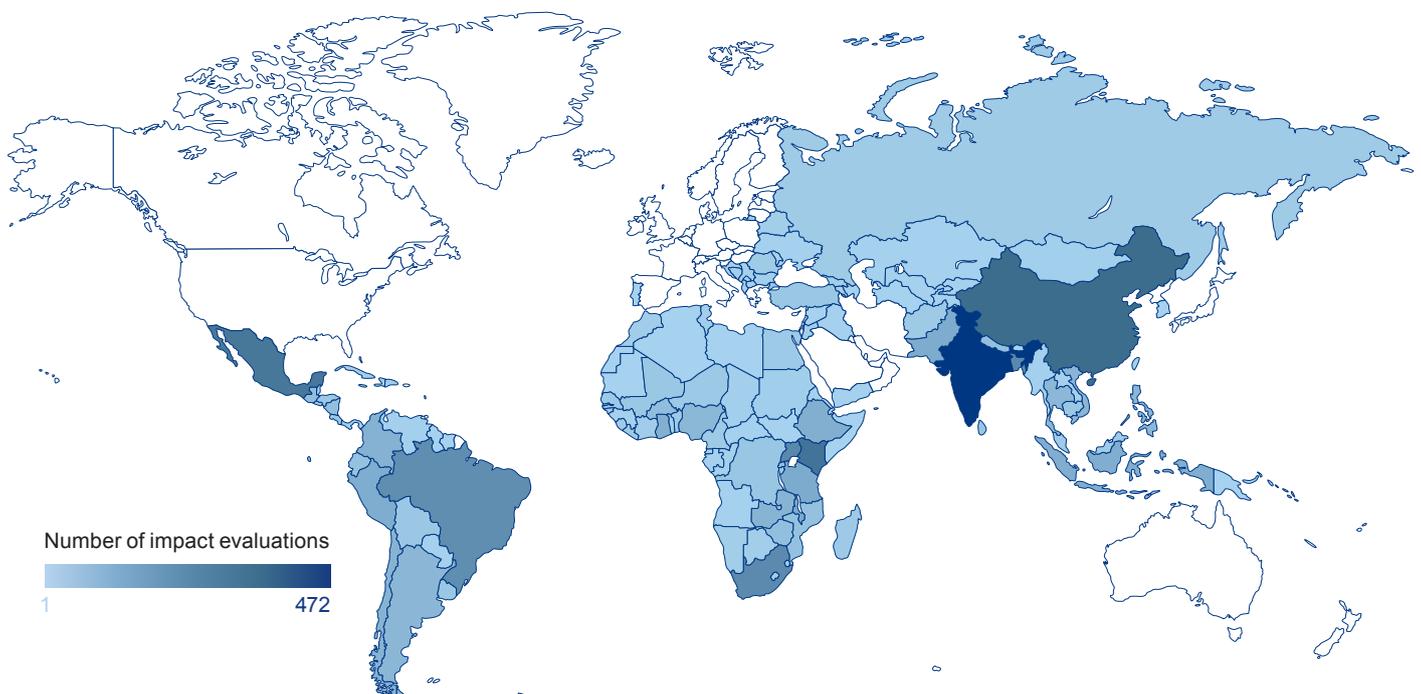
We are a long-time supporter of evaluation approaches that use a counterfactual by using experimental and quasi-experimental techniques, and we remain committed to them. We will continue to ensure demand-driven and relevant questions, high-quality evaluation designs, successful implementation, and accurate reporting of results. We will build on these strengths by closing evidence gaps, focusing on country programmes and methodological innovations – including formative and process evaluations – and promoting evidence use.

Focus on gaps

Our strategy 2020 focuses our grant-making on closing three types of high-priority evidence gaps – geographic gaps within L&MICs, thematic gaps and gaps in relation to specific populations. Figure 1 draws from the 3ie impact evaluation repository to map countries where studies have been carried out. Very few impact evaluations have been done in West Africa, the Middle East and North Africa, Central Asia, the Pacific, and lower-income countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. These regions have several fragile and conflict states where populations are most vulnerable.

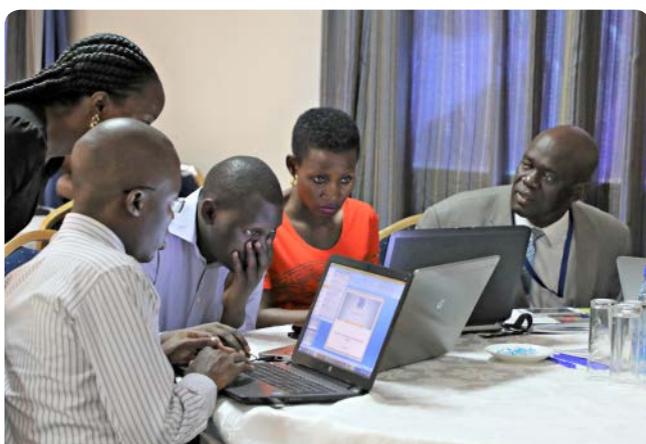
Thematically, most published impact evaluations are in agriculture, health, education and social protection. This does not mean these sectors are saturated – more needs to be done – but highlights that some sectors, such as energy, infrastructure, environment and humanitarian assistance, which receive a significant amount of public and private expenditure, need more focused attention. Similarly, few studies have carried out deep distributional analysis on the gendered effects of interventions on women and girls, vulnerable populations, the very poor or other marginalised groups. These major gaps will inform how we design our grant programmes.

Figure 1
Evidence gaps in L&MICs



Partner with governments to build an evaluation culture

3ie's thematic windows have helped build the evidence base on the impact of similar interventions in different settings. We have played a pioneering role with these nationally focused programmes. They are showing excellent results in building ownership and a strong evaluation culture that spurs rigorous evidence production and evidence-informed decision-making. The thematic windows have also helped countries assess the role of counterfactual-based methods in broader monitoring and evaluation systems. As we continue with this approach, we will develop more country-focused evidence programmes with our L&MIC government members. We will tailor these programmes to specific national contexts and evaluation capacities and encourage peer-learning amongst member governments.



Building national commitment and capacity to do rigorous evaluation and synthesis

So far, 3ie has launched country-focused evidence programmes in Uganda, the Philippines and francophone West Africa. We work closely with member governments in achieving the following objectives:

- Build technical capacity in conducting rigorous evaluations and establishing effective monitoring and evaluation systems;
- Promote engagement between researchers and policymakers to increase understanding of and access to high-quality evidence for decision-making;
- Build the evidence base for informing national policies and programmes; and
- Institutionalise an evaluation culture across participating government agencies.

Durgadas Menon/3ie

'[Our] national M&E system has hugely benefitted from the technical support and capacity development provided by 3ie. They have supported us through a wide range of activities, including tailor-made, targeted training programmes and by sponsoring staff to attend courses offered by internationally renowned training institutions on development evaluation. We also cherish 3ie's contribution in reviewing evaluation products and processes, quality control, and supporting the development of more effective systems.'

Timothy Lubanga

Assistant commissioner of monitoring and evaluation
Office of the Prime Minister, Uganda

Facilitate the uptake and use of evidence

From the beginning, 3ie has focused on supporting the production of useful, policy-relevant evidence. We will continue to support evaluation and synthesis teams to engage with key actors throughout the evidence production process because doing so promotes understanding, uptake, and use of evidence in policies and programmes. Using effective communication approaches, we will ensure that new evidence is widely available through effective communication approaches. We will be global advocates for using high-quality evidence to inform decision-making. We will use our enhanced strategic focus on country programmes to work with decision makers to improve their access to and understanding and use of evidence. We will continue our successful approach to promoting regular engagement amongst researchers, implementers, policymakers and other key actors. We will provide the most appropriate, customised capacity building.



Neil Palmer/CIAT

Promote innovative methodologies

In recent years, we have been championing a range of rigorous evaluation designs and theory-based mixed methods for building a broader evidence base that is more useful for decision makers. 3ie's gap maps and scoping studies involve key actors in prioritising which evidence gaps to fill.

Where complex development challenges require innovative approaches, we have funded formative evaluations to test the efficacy of pilot interventions before they are scaled up. We are funding more mixed-method impact evaluations that use process monitoring and implementation science and operational research to examine why, how and for whom programmes work and do not. We encourage the creative use of administrative, digital and other data sources to complement surveys.

We will continue to encourage innovation in evaluation design, data collection and analysis to ensure that 3ie funding and our work respond to the challenge of being equity- and gender-responsive.

Expand technical assistance and quality assurance services

Beyond our grant-making evidence programmes, 3ie will continue to provide paid technical assistance in commissioning; managing; assuring quality; and building capacities to produce, synthesise and use evidence. Our technical assistance will cover formative, process and impact evaluations; systematic reviews; and other syntheses and evidence gap maps.

Key actions

- Carry out scoping work and develop informative evidence gap maps to focus investments in areas where rigorous primary evaluation studies or syntheses are missing or more are needed;
- Support the generation of equity- and gender-responsive evaluations and reviews that focus on understudied areas in rigorous and innovative ways;
- Monitor and measure stakeholder engagement of research teams and evidence uptake, and publish evidence use summaries;
- Contribute to raising evaluation standards and capacities through quality assurance, publishing methods guidelines and implementation lessons, and providing training and bursaries; and
- Focus on developing country engagements for evidence generation and uptake.

We will work towards substantially expanding the body of high-quality, policy-relevant evidence and supporting decision makers' capacities to use it.

Strategic priority 2

Improve the global policy environment for the generation and use of evidence

3ie continuously fosters engagement and communication among researchers, policymakers, implementers, beneficiaries and other key actors. We will continue to act as a leader, advocate, convener and facilitator at country, regional and global levels to improve evidence production and use in improving actions to help people living in poverty and promote sustainable and equitable development. We will work towards improving the policy environment for the generation and use of evidence in several ways.

Ensure relevant research investments based on evidence mapping

3ie has been a global leader in advancing methods for producing evidence gap maps. We introduced them to bring systematic methods to finding and presenting existing evidence in key development areas. Where clear gaps are identified, we can make evidence-informed decisions on research investments. Gap maps also show us whether there is sufficient evidence to carry out useful syntheses. Our innovative, interactive map platform makes it easy for decision makers and implementers to visualise and explore existing evidence. We also recognise that maps can help with decision-making. We will continue working to support policy-relevant mapping.

‘For a country like Peru, which has huge challenges making education a real pathway for prosperity for all its citizens, 3ie’s systematic review offers critical insights on the effectiveness of structured pedagogic programmes, additional instructional time, remedial education and community engagement. I am sure it will be extremely useful for all government actors, researchers and programme implementers throughout the world.’

Jaime Saavedra

Senior director for education, World Bank;
former minister of education, Peru

Using synthesised evidence to improve education outcomes

3ie recently published the largest-ever systematic review on the effectiveness of education programmes in L&MICs. The review examined the impact of 216 education programmes in 52 countries and synthesised evidence on the effects of 21 different interventions on children’s school enrolment, attendance, completion and learning. The review offers governments and international agencies a number of much-needed, evidence-based pointers for identifying effective approaches to meet the education Sustainable Development Goal.



Generate and use evidence syntheses

We believe that rigorous and systematic syntheses provide the most robust evidence for informing decision-making. 3ie has made a major contribution to this area by testing and advancing methodological innovations in commissioning and producing our own theory-based, mixed-method reviews with useful policy recommendations. As part of our strategy 2020, we will continue to commission and produce synthesised evidence that is accessible and useful for decision makers. We will continue to contribute to setting methods standards, including publishing papers and guidelines.



Enhance the accessibility of evidence

3ie's website hosts a much-valued evidence hub, which includes the largest-of-its-kind repositories of impact evaluations and systematic reviews focused on development in L&MICs. We also produce a range of 3ie publications and resources in multimedia formats. 3ie will continue to invest in enhancing the accessibility of our evidence and knowledge products by effectively using all of our communication channels.

Improve the quality of evidence through transparency and replication initiatives

As a global advocate and champion for evidence-informed decision-making, 3ie has fostered rich debates on transparency and accountability in evaluations. We launched the first grants programme to fund replication studies of international development impact evaluations. We have also been providing incentives to encourage researchers to preregister their studies and make data open and accessible. In the next few years, we will promote more conversations and establish clear standards on open data, research transparency and replication.

Key actions

- Support mapping and syntheses of existing evidence on the effectiveness of development interventions;
- Increase the evidence and resources available through 3ie's online evidence hub and website;
- Enhance evidence quality by promoting research transparency and accountability through replication and preregistration of impact evaluations;
- Convene stakeholders and facilitate conversations on important topics related to the generation and use of evidence; and
- Build coalitions for evidence-informed decision-making by building links amongst researchers, implementers, policymakers, civil society members, donors and other key actors at country level and amongst the broader evaluation community and academia.

We will foster important conversations and innovation in setting quality standards, improving impact evaluation and synthesis methods, and advocating for evidence-informed decision-making.

Strategic priority 3

Continue to grow 3ie sustainably

As independent reviews of the organisation and stakeholder consultations have confirmed, 3ie has a clearly defined global leadership role and a strong network on which to build. These reviews have praised our work and the professional competence of our staff.

Our strategic priority is to strengthen the foundation of the organisation and build partnerships.



'3ie has been stimulating the production of impact evaluations and encouraging collaboration between local institutions and international actors.'

Caroline Heider
Director general
Independent Evaluation Group
World Bank

Build a robust network and partnerships

3ie has a collaborative network of members, of which more than half are government ministries or departments from L&MICs. With this unique network, 3ie promotes peer learning and knowledge sharing and builds effective initiatives and partnerships focused on evidence generation and use. We are committed to increasing the voices of L&MIC members and partners in regional and global dialogues on strengthening evaluation systems. We will continue to forge new partnerships and collaborations and deliver value for money through these synergies.

As part of our strategy 2020, we will increase engagement with L&MIC governments, regional evaluation associations, and select public and private-sector organisations. We will engage productively with a wider set of donors.

Key actions

- Deepen engagement and promote peer learning amongst our members and partners;
- Diversify the funding base and explore new donor partnerships;
- Structure the organisation to deliver the new strategy effectively; and
- Develop a demand-driven capacity building programme based on effective practices.

We will continue to build a strong and sustainable 3ie.



3ie strategy 2020

How we contribute to effective development





'3ie has been of great importance to the expansion of impact evaluation in international development.'

RAND Europe
Independent review of 3ie
2016



istock.com/Hadyinyah