GOLDILOCKS RESOURCE

Resources for Finding and Using Evidence Reviews and Evaluations

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Goldilocks assembled this list of resources for use in designing a program and developing a theory of change.

The following resources can be useful throughout the design phase of your program—showing you how others have defined similar problems and in what contexts, which interventions others have tried, and how large the effects of these programs have been found to be. This will be useful in designing the program.

These resources can also be useful for thinking ahead to a future evaluation. Many of them describe: the research methods, such as the evaluation type, sample size and sampling strategy; the research questions; the timing of the evaluation; and the outcomes measured. There is no one-size-fits-all evaluation plan, but reviewing what others have done and how they have overcome specific challenges can help you think through options for your own evaluation strategy.

Though far from exhaustive, the resources here are a good place to start when designing your program or theory of change. Taken together, they can:

- provide a broad view of the landscape in a particular sector or region
- show what has been proven to work
- demonstrate what effect sizes have been seen in different programs in different places
- provide guidance while you are developing a clear problem statement, conducting a literature review, and refining the problem and contexts
- highlight research designs that have been implemented in a range of contexts
- identify potential data sources
- demonstrate what survey questions have been used in various impact evaluations

We provide three sets of resources: 1) where to look for high-quality impact evaluations, 2) where to look for systematic reviews of a range of topics, and 3) how to conduct a literature or evidence review. While we included only those resources we feel are generally good sources of credible studies—those that define a credible counterfactual and establish causality—we cannot vouch for the quality of each study. We encourage you to apply what you've learned about evaluation, particularly on credibility and transportability, when assessing the quality and applicability of each study contained within these resources.

Where to Find Impact Evaluations

Title	Type of Resource	Areas of Focus	Topics	What It Is
3ie Impact Evaluation Repository 3ieimpact.org/evidence/impact-evaluations	• Impact evaluations	• Low- and middle-income countries	• Agriculture • Education • Financial Inclusion • Governance • Health • Peace and Recovery • SMEs • Social Protection	3ie funds impact evaluations and systematic reviews that generate high quality evidence on what works in development and why. 3ie's Impact Evaluation Database contains information on over 2,500 impact evaluations—including RCTs, difference-in-differences, and regression discontinuity—in forms ranging from book chapters to journal articles, working papers, and reports. Inclusion in the database requires attempts to credibly address the question of attribution.
American Economic Association (AEA) RCT Registry https://www.socialscienceregistry.org/	• Registry of impact evaluations	• Low- and middle-income countries • United States • Europe	• Agriculture • Education • Financial Inclusion • Governance • Health • Peace and Recovery • SMEs • Social Protection	The AEA RCT registry allows researchers to register their planned or ongoing RCTs, including intervention details and research design The searchable registry can be used to learn about new interventions and research designs (including sample size and key outcomes), which could be valuable when planning your own evaluation. As results are obtained, they will be posted and should provide additional information about what worked and—importantly—what didn't.
Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (JPAL) https://www.povertyactionlab.org/	• Impact evaluations	• Low- and middle-income countries • United States • Europe	• Agriculture • Education • Financial Inclusion • Governance • Health • Peace and Recovery • SMEs • Social Protection	JPAL aims to reduce poverty by ensuring that policy is informed by scientific evidence. JPAL conducts RCTs on a range of topics in the US and developing countries. The website contains evaluation summaries that include the study's context, research design, and details on the intervention. For completed evaluations, it also contains results and links to academic papers.
Development Impact Evaluation (DIME) http://go.worldbank.org/1F1W42VYV0	• Impact evaluations • Surveys • Data from impact evaluations	• Low- and middle-income countries	• Agriculture • Education • Financial Inclusion • Governance • Health • Peace and Recovery • SMEs	DIME is a World Bank initiative that aims to generate high-quality, operationally relevant impact evaluations. The DIME website contains surveys used in more than 70 impact evaluations, data from evaluations, evaluation papers on a range of topics, and policy briefs summarizing evaluation findings.

Title	Type of Resource	Areas of Focus	Topics	What It Is
			• Social Protection	
International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) http://www.ifpri.org	• Impact evaluations	• Low- and middle-income countries	• Agriculture • Health • Social protection	IFPRI provides research-based policy solutions to sustainably reduce poverty and end hunger and malnutrition in developing countries. IFPRI's website contains hundreds of evaluations, including RCTs, of programs designed to address poverty, hunger, and malnutrition.
Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA) http://www.poverty-action.org	• Impact evaluations	• Low- and middle-income countries • United States • Europe	• Agriculture • Education • Financial Inclusion • Governance • Health • Peace and Recovery • SMEs • Social Protection	IPA uses randomized evaluations and replication to design and evaluate potential solutions to global poverty problems. IPA conducts RCTs on a range of topics in the US and developing countries. The website contains evaluation summaries that include the study's context, research design, and details on the intervention. For completed evaluations, it also contains results and links to academic papers.
MDRC http://www.mdrc.org	• Impact evaluations	• Low- and middle-income countries • United States Europe	• Agriculture • Education • Financial Inclusion • Governance • Health • Social Protection • Infrastructure	MDRC designs promising new interventions, evaluates existing programs using the highest research standards, and provides technical assistance to build better programs and deliver effective interventions at scale. The MDRC website contains searchable publications, such as reports on programs it has evaluated using a range of methods including RCTs and other rigorous methods.
Mathematica http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/	• Impact evaluations	• United States	• Education • Social Protection • Health • Financial Inclusion	Mathematica Policy Research is dedicated to improving public well-being by bringing the highest standards of quality, objectivity, and excellence to bear on information collection and analysis. Mathematica's website contains reports from evaluations of various types— including RCTs, difference-in-differences, and regression discontinuity—on a range of domestic and international topics.

Where to Find Systematic/Evidence Reviews and Meta-Analyses

What	Type of Resource	Areas of Focus	Topics	What it is
3ie Systematic Reviews http://www.3ieimpact.org/evidence/systematic-reviews	• Systematic reviews	• Low- and middle-income countries	• Agriculture • Education • Financial Inclusion • Governance • Health • Peace and Recovery • SMEs • Social Protection	The 3ie database includes summaries and links to more than 200 systematic reviews of the effectiveness of social and economic interventions in low- and middle-income countries. The summaries include findings, methodologies and quality appraisal of existing reviews and protocols of ongoing studies.
Abdul Jameel Latif Poverty Action Lab http://www.povertyactionlab.org/search/apachesolr_search?filters=type%3Apublication ss_cck_field_type%3A"Literature Review"	• Literature reviews	• United States • Europe • Low- and middle-income countries	• Agriculture • Health • Education • Social protection • Financial Inclusion • Governance	The JPAL website allows users to search a large database of 571 publications in 63 countries using keywords, filters, or browser our featured publications. Selecting the "literature review" filter shows JPAL literature reviews on selected topics.
AidGrade Aidgrade.org	• Meta-analyses		• Agriculture • Education • Financial Inclusion • Governance • Health • Peace and Recovery • SMEs Social Protection	AidGrade allows users to conduct their own meta-analyses based on program type, outcome, and evaluation characteristics.
Campbell Systematic Reviews http://www.campbellcollaboration.org/lib/?go=monograph	• Systematic Reviews	• United States • Low-and middle income countries	• Social protection • Education • Health • Agriculture • Financial inclusion	Campbell Systematic Reviews is a peer-reviewed series of systematic reviews prepared under the editorial control of the Campbell Collaboration. The reviews undergo rigorous peer review and editorial review before publication.

What	Type of Resource	Areas of Focus	Topics	What it is
Mathematica Systematic Reviews http://cipre.mathematica-mpr.com/search?keyword="systematic review"	• Systematic review	• United States • International	• Health • Education • Social protection	Mathematica's searchable publications database contains systematic reviews on a range of topics.
University of York Centre for Reviews and Dissemination http://www.york.ac.uk/crd/research	• Systematic Reviews • Scoping studies • Mapping reviews	• United States • Europe	• Health	The Centre for Reviews and Dissemination offers systematic reviews, scoping studies, and mapping reviews on topics of public health, child health, service delivery and organization, and health technology, among others.
What Works Clearinghouse (Institute of Education Sciences) http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc	• Systematic Reviews	• United States	• Education	The What Works Clearinghouse identifies studies that provide credible and reliable evidence of the effectiveness of a given practice, program, or policy, and disseminates summary information and free reports on the WWC website. The website contains more than 10,500 reviewed studies in its searchable online database, some of which are RCTs.

How to Conduct Literature/Evidence Reviews

Article and Organization	What It Is
"How to do a rigorous, evidence-focused literature review in international development, A Guidance Note." **Overseas Development Institute (ODI)** http://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/8572.pdf	This paper discusses how to conduct a literature review and is aimed at development organizations. Of particular value is that this paper considers some of the challenges of conducting literature reviews for development interventions—interventions that have been rigorously evaluated but may not appear in peer-reviewed databases. Some of these challenges include locating and screening sources, assessing quality, and presenting findings.
"Cochrane Handbook for Systematic Reviews of Interventions" **Cochrane** http://handbook.cochrane.org	This guide contains highly detailed, step-by-step instructions for undertaking a systematic review. Some of the instructions are specific to Cochrane. Its focus on peer-reviewed medical trials may not be fully helpful outside of medical policy, and it may be more thorough than necessary for most organizations' purposes. However, the document's key principles and instructions can provide a general template for other organizations to follow.
"Guide to Conducting a Systematic or evidence-based literature review" **Emerald Group Publishing** http://www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/authors/guides/write/evidence_based.htm?part=1	This website provides clear, basic instructions for conducting an unbiased, comprehensive systematic review. Like the Cochrane handbook, it focuses on peer-reviewed scholarly articles, but provides good instructions on how to evaluate and synthesize findings.

Types of Evidence Reviews

Best evidence synthesis: a synthesis that, like a realist synthesis, draws on a wide range of evidence (including single case studies) and explores the impact of context, and also builds in an iterative, participatory approach to building and using a knowledge base.

Lessons learnt: Lessons learnt can develop out of the evaluation process as evaluators reflect on their experiences in undertaking the evaluation.

Meta-analysis: a statistical method for combining numeric evidence from experimental (and sometimes quasi-experimental studies) to produce a weighted average effect size.

Meta-ethnography: a method for combining data from qualitative evaluation and research, especially ethnographic data, by translating concepts and metaphors across studies.

Rapid evidence assessment: a process that is faster and less rigorous than a full systematic review but more rigorous than ad hoc searching, it uses a combination of key informant interviews and targeted literature searches to produce a report in a few days or a few weeks.

Realist synthesis: synthesizing all relevant existing research in order to make evidence-based policy recommendations.

Systematic review: a synthesis that takes a systematic approach to searching, assessing, extracting and synthesizing evidence from multiple studies. Meta-analysis, meta-ethnography and realist synthesis are different types of systematic review.

Textual narrative synthesis: dividing the studies into relatively homogenous groups, reporting study characteristics within each group, and articulating broader similarities and differences among the groups.

Vote counting: comparing the number of positive studies (studies showing benefit) with the number of negative studies (studies showing harm).

Source: *Synthesise Data Across Evaluations*. BetterEvaluation. Retrieved April 2015 from:
http://betterevaluation.org/plan/synthesize_value/synthesize_across_evaluations