USAID’s Strategic Impact Evaluations: “LAC Reads” and E3/ED’s “Reading and Access”

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Rigorously evaluate interventions aimed at improving early grade reading to inform the evidence base in the region, and globally

Rigorously evaluate interventions aimed at improving access to education in conflict settings to inform the evidence base

Methods:
- Randomized control trials (RCTs) or quasi-experimental designs (QEDs)
- Cost-effectiveness estimates for those interventions with demonstrated impact

Capacity building of local research partners and other stakeholders
Strategic identification of evaluation opportunities

- USAID’s LAC team has identified key learning opportunities in collaboration with USAID/Missions
- Learning from program adaptations directed at key underserved groups (such as indigenous populations, at risk youth, and out of school youth)
- Programs with pedagogical and community outreach components: fostering a culture of reading and increasing time on task
- Programs designed around existing national testing initiatives, with appropriate supports to teachers in using test results

- 4 RCT evaluations designed and in various stages of implementation in four countries
  - Leer Juntos, Aprender Juntos (Peru, Guatemala: year 3)
  - Amazonia Lee (Peru: year 2)
  - Data-Driven Instruction: Formative and End of Grade Assessments (Honduras: year 2)
  - Espacios para Crecer (Nicaragua: year 2)

- 1 impact evaluation in the design stage
  - Youth workforce development in conflict areas (El Salvador)
LAC Reads Impact Evaluation Learning Agenda

- Leer Juntos, Aprender Juntos (Peru-Quechua speaking departments, Guatemala (K’iche speaking department)
  - What is the impact of the teacher training and support (five skills) component of Leer Juntos/Aprender Juntos on early grade reading and other outcomes?
  - What is the impact of the community action component of Leer Juntos/Aprender Juntos on early grade reading and other outcomes?
LAC Reads Impact Evaluation Learning Agenda (cont’d.)

- Data-Driven Instruction: Formative and End of Grade Assessments (Honduras)
  - Impact:
    - What impact does providing feedback on end of grade test results and pedagogical support for teachers have on student learning?
    - What added impact does providing formative assessment materials and pedagogical support for teachers have on student learning?
Spaces to Grow/Espacios para Crecer (Nicaragua, Atlantic Coast)

- Impact:
  - What impact does the Espacios para Crecer (child development and academic leveling with a focus on reading), intervention have on early grade reading, education, and security related outcomes for at risk students and children out of school?
Data Collection Approaches to Address Research Questions

- Student assessments in Spanish, Quecha, K’iche, Kriol, Miskito (emerging literacy, EGRA)
- Classroom observations (teaching practices, language use, gender focus)
- Teacher surveys
- Household surveys
- Community level
- Qualitative and quantitative approaches
Balancing Internal and External Validity

- Leer Juntos, Aprender Juntos: Findings relevant for other countries where many children arrive at school without being fluent in official language; children are followed from 1st to 3rd and 4th grade (extremely small schools excluded)

- Formative and Summative Assessment (Honduras): An opportunity to rigorously test formative and summative assessment supports in selected municipalities, many with security concerns, lower performing schools, urban and rural. Children are followed from 1st to 3rd grade
Balancing Internal and External Validity (cont’d.)

- Espacios para Crecer (Nicaragua): The first rigorous evaluation of a program being implemented in multiple countries in the region. Nicaragua context: multilingual communities on the Atlantic Coast, many with security concerns; at risk students eligible to participate in EpCs; 1st - 3rd graders, and dropouts (8-14 years old)
Implications for Program Implementation

- Requires active engagement of implementing partner (often at the busiest time when preparing for program implementation):
  - Sharing the program’s underlying theory of change with evaluators
  - Recruitment (and over-recruitment of eligible participants)
  - Input into data collection instruments and analytic products
  - Sometimes changes to program implementation timeline

- Tension between recruitment of a counterfactual and achieving programmatic targets

- Resource implications for implementing partners
Elements for Success

- Strong leadership at USAID LAC/RSD and USAID Mission commitment to evaluation has been critical in helping us to manage “bumps in the road”
- Flexibility in interpretation of implementing partners’ contractual requirements related to numbers of beneficiaries served is key
- Flexibility in evaluation contracts and implementing partners’ agreements to cover the costs associated with cooperating with evaluation needs is critical
- Implementing partners’ openness and willingness to support evaluation mandate critical
- Constant communication with all stakeholders around key moments of the evaluation is essential
For More Information

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