Impact Evaluations in Humanitarian Emergencies and Conflict-Affected Areas

Tilman Brück
ISDC – International Security and Development Center
brueck@isdc.org
www.isdc.org

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Outline

1. Impact evaluations: why?

2. The special case of humanitarian assistance

3. Taking stock of the field of impact evaluations in humanitarian emergencies

4. Special challenges in conflict-affected areas
1. Impact Evaluations: Why?
Why do impact evaluations?

Nature of impact:
• Did my agency make *any* difference? *Why?*
• Did *certain groups* become better off compared to others? *Why?*

Magnitude of change:
• *How much* were people better off? For *how long*?
Why do impact evaluations?

Implementation:
• Best delivery option, e.g. cash or kind?
• What amount of assistance & what frequency is best?

Budget:
• Could it have been done in a more cost-effective manner?
Impact evaluations can helpfully supplement other evaluation efforts.

They are quite data intensive.
2. The case of humanitarian assistance
In humanitarian assistance

• There is a big gap between the requirement and availability of funds
• In 2011, shortage of funds amounted to USD 3.4 billion

It is hence critical that we know if programs are working, how much, why and under what circumstances.
IE in humanitarian context is hard!

- Need for speed
- Imperfect and absent data
- Multiplicity of actors
- High co-variability
- Ethics
Impact evaluations require capacity and effort but help improve programming in the long term.

Impact evaluations are learning exercises.
3. Taking stock of the field of IE in humanitarian emergencies
An evidence-\textit{gap} map of humanitarian interventions

- Very few impact evaluations (n=39)
- Most work done in health, nutrition & peace building
## An evidence-needs map

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<th>Education</th>
<th>Empowerment</th>
<th>Equity</th>
<th>Food Security</th>
<th>Livelihood</th>
<th>Nutrition</th>
<th>Protection</th>
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**Importance of evidence in education, livelihoods, WASH, nutrition, health, early recovery**
Summary of the Literature to Date

Theory suggests these important criteria for quality

• internal validity
• external validity

Practice of research on humanitarian assistance

• since 2005 - $90 Billion spent
• but only 39 impact evaluations

Quality of impact evaluations:

• 29 HAD a theory of change.
• all used experimental or quasi-experimental methods.
• 23 did not have any balance tests (bw comparison and treatment groups)
• 29 did not have any power analysis (to show confidence in results)
• only 5 discuss ethical concerns
There are few high quality evaluations of humanitarian assistance.

But there is a high need.
4. Challenges in conflict-affected areas
Challenges in Conflict Settings

Comparability
Can’t Randomize Conflict
Security of the Enumerators and Respondents
Survival Bias
Impact Evaluations in Humanitarian Emergencies and Conflict Areas

• Can be done.
• Need planning and multi-disciplinary efforts.
• Add to real-time evaluations and process evaluations.
• Improve programming in the long-term.
Impact evaluations are possible in humanitarian contexts.

And in settings shaped by insecurity.
Further References


- [www.hicn.org](http://www.hicn.org) (with early versions of above papers)
Thank you!