



Policy-makers are experimenting with billions of people's lives on a daily basis without informed consent, and without rigorous evidence that what they do works, does not harm, and could not be achieved more efficiently through other means. In this context, carefully designed and implemented evaluations have the potential to save lives and improve people's welfare -- Marie Gaarder, 3ie Deputy Director.

The question is how do we ensure that a government does not spend money on policies that do not work and that social interventions are instead based in solid evidence? This brief draws lessons from the experience of countries which have taken steps to institutionalize evaluation to better inform policy.

Mexico was the first country to introduce mandatory impact evaluation for all its social programs. This was in part a result of the lessons learnt from the first evaluation of the Government flagship program *Progresal/ Oportunidades*, which provides cash transfers conditional upon regular school attendance, health clinic visits and nutritional support to children. By rigorously demonstrating the program's success in reducing children's malnutrition rates and child labor, as well as increasing boys and girls' enrolment in secondary school through independent evaluations, the program survived the change of government and was scaled up.

### Seven key measures for an effective evaluation framework

1. Focus on usage and clarity on a client or set of clients that are to be served, and what their interests are;
2. Have a unique and broad legal mandate for evaluation;
3. Immerse all impact evaluations into broader M&E systems with complimentary monitoring and evaluation instruments;
4. Build local technical capacity among relevant Ministry officials, program implementers, and local researchers.
5. Strengthen data collection and processing systems in order to ensure high quality of data;
6. Ensure that evaluation is an integral part of programs since their inception;
7. Guarantee full public disclosure through legislation on access to public information or transparency.



Skoufias (2007)

“This (experience) showed that a program to fight extreme poverty can be passed from one administration to another, and that it can even grow if it is based on systematic evaluations of empirical evidence and transparent, non-partisan operations... Today, thanks to Oportunidades, the Mexican government can make direct cash transfers to

nearly all of the population living in extreme poverty”, Santiago Levy, Mexican economist, chief architect of the renowned Mexican program and Deputy Minister of Finance.

## Facts with an impact:

- **1 in 4 Mexican – 5 million** families – are now benefiting from the Progresa/oportunidades program following a number of modifications resulting from its evaluation.
- Over **17** countries from Latin America and around the world have then followed the Mexican experience and are now implementing similar programs. Bangladesh, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, Indonesia, Jamaica, Malawi, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Palestine, Panama, and Paraguay, as well as New York City have a Mexican model cash transfer program.
- In India, Pratham raised funding for a massive scale up of their “Read India” program, which already benefits **20 million children** based in part on strong evidence of effectiveness from a Jameel Poverty Action Lab impact study.
- **3 million** Kenyan children are being dewormed this year as a result of a study which proved deworming is the most cost-effective way of increasing education. The World Food Program has committed to add deworming to all their school feeding programs in areas that have high intestinal worm loads, and the microfinance organization SKS is due to launch a program to deworm **1 million** children in Andhra Pradesh.

## What can help champion and institutionalize impact evaluation?

### Strong political will

There is no unique model for strengthening and institutionalizing a Monitoring and Evaluation system. It all depend on the political will and the championing of evaluation by an agency – a specific Ministry in Mexico or the Prime Minister’s Office in the case of Colombia. In addition to the political context, there is a need for existing local capacity to implement rigorous evaluation.

“Building a Monitoring and Evaluation System is a political task, that also requires technical elements’, Gonzalo Hernandez Licona, Head of CONEVAL

The existence of a democratic system where citizens have the right to information and the right to participate in decision-making is a key factor for institutionalization of effective evaluation. The additional features include: extensive information campaigns, consultation processes, and other legal and parliamentary steps.

This requires having a clear powerful stakeholder, such as the Congress, the Ministry of Finance, or the President to champion the process.

In terms of structure, the oversight body should have a degree of independence and enforcement capabilities to disseminate the findings and enforce the adoption of the recommendations.

### A relevant and sustainable Monitoring and

## Evaluation system

The sustainability and success of the Monitoring and Evaluation M&E system depends on its usage and its relevance to the client’s interests and needs. Impact evaluation needs to be immersed into broader M&E systems with complimentary instruments. Building an evaluation culture does take time and evolves gradually from less to more sophisticated instruments.

In addition, evaluation needs to be an integral part of the programs since their inception. For instance in Chile, the Government has shifted its approach and is now conducting program evaluations instead of ex-post impact evaluations.

## In-house technical capacity and legal support

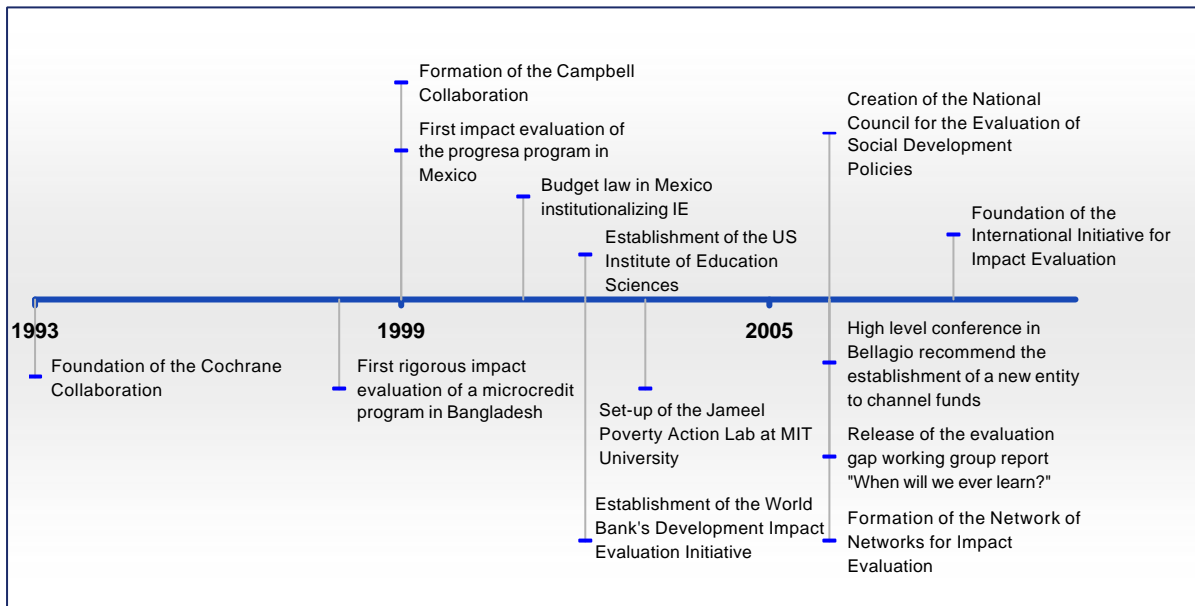
To ensure the quality of the evaluation, there is a pressing need to build and strengthen local technical capacity among relevant Ministry officials, program implementers, and local researchers. This also involves the strengthening of data collection and processing systems. The legal support from access to public information or transparency laws is another important asset to back full public disclosure, and track policies before and after its enactment.

Table: Characterization of Evaluation Bodies in Mexico, Colombia and Chile

Dimension	Mexico	Colombia	Chile
Origins	Political pressure by opposition in Congress, M&E Champion of <i>Progres</i> a textbook design, multilateral demand	Constitutional accountability focus, multilateral demand, <i>Progres</i> a demonstration effect, President Uribe's championship of management for results administration	Public Reform Program, Congress demand, Budget directors' continued championship
Location	Independent public administration entity	Under the executive; a directorate within the Planning Ministry (DNP)	Under the executive; a division under the Budget Directorate within the MoF
Scope of Mandate	Evaluation of <i>social</i> development programs and policies, and measurement of poverty at the national, state and municipal level.	DNP has the mandate to plan, design and organize the systems of evaluation of results and management, for the entire public administration	Improve efficiency in allocation and utilization of public resources assigned to different programs, projects and institutions
Size of evaluation departments and activities	Aprox. 70 people. 119 evaluations during 2007-2008; out of these 106 consistency and results evaluations and 13 design evaluations. Of these, 10 contracted directly by CONEVAL	Aprox. 30 people. Between 2006-2009, 28 evaluations completed, out of these, 9 impact evaluations	Aprox. 32 people. Since 2001, an annual average of 14 governmental program evaluations; and 7 impact evaluations annually
Annual Budget	USD 12.0 million (2008)	Rough estimate for 2009/10: USD 6.7 million (0.003% of GDP) for aprox. 26 evaluations of all types; evaluations finalized during 2007-2009 cost approx. USD 5.3 million	NA
Governance and accountability	Reports to a Board of six independent academics	Reports to DNP's General Director and to Presidency	Reports to Congress, and Finance Minister
Dissemination of Findings	Full disclosure on Internet websites of databases and reports is mandatory by the General Guidelines	Partial disclosure on Internet website of evaluation data and reports, and public discussion seminars. Full disclosure of monitoring information	Full disclosure on Internet website by access to public information Law
Regulatory aspects	The General Guidelines are mandatory principles for the evaluation of all federal programs; Annual program of federal evaluations, PAE; There are Norms including guidelines and models for standardized TOR that federal dependencies and entities must observe	Standardized TOR for the rapid or executive evaluations, not for impact evaluations, which vary according to the programs' nature; No legal or mandatory IE guidelines, ad-hoc principles of quality; Central entities commanded to present to the IEC any impact evaluation planned	Standardized TOR for evaluations;
Scope & enforcement of regulations	Federal programs by federal dependencies and entities; guidelines are mandatory for them; strong legal support	Central entities; limited enforcement capacity, mainly demand-driven by DEPP's technical capacity; very limited regulatory legal support	Central entities; large enforcement capacity based on budget powers and own funding; supply-driven

Source: Institutionalizing Evaluation (3ie, 2009)

## Milestones in the production and use of impact evaluation



### Useful references and resources

"When will we ever learn?", Report of the Evaluation Gap Working Group, May 2006:  
[www.cgdev.org/files/7973\\_file\\_WillWeEverLearn.pdf](http://www.cgdev.org/files/7973_file_WillWeEverLearn.pdf)

Bertha Briceño and Marie M. Gaarder (2009), Institutionalizing Evaluation: Review of International Experience, 3ie.

Institutionalizing Impact Evaluation Within the Framework of a Monitoring and Evaluation System, World Bank Independent Evaluation Group and Poverty Analysis, Monitoring, and Impact Evaluation Thematic Group, 2009.

Hornby, P and Perera, HSR (2002) A development framework for promoting evidence-based policy action: drawing on experiences in Sri Lanka, *The International Journal of Health Planning and Management*, Vol. 17, No. 2, pp165-183.

The World Bank's Spanish Trust for Impact Evaluation ([www.worldbank.org/sief](http://www.worldbank.org/sief)) and the World Bank's Development Impact Evaluation Initiative ([www.worldbank.org/dime](http://www.worldbank.org/dime)) finance a portfolio of impact evaluations and focus on increasing the ability of staff to design and carry impact evaluations.

The Network of Networks on Impact Evaluation (NONIE, [www.worldbank.org/ieg/nonie](http://www.worldbank.org/ieg/nonie)) is comprised of the OECD/DAC Evaluation Networks, the UN Evaluation Group, the Evaluation Cooperation Group, and the International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation.

The Cochrane Collaboration ([www.cochrane.org](http://www.cochrane.org)) and Campbell Collaboration ([www.campbellcollaboration.org](http://www.campbellcollaboration.org)) are non-profit organizations preparing, maintaining synthetic reviews.

The Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL, [www.povertyactionlab.org](http://www.povertyactionlab.org)) is a network of researchers who work on randomized evaluation.

The Mexican National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policies (CONEVAL *Consejo Nacional de Evaluación de la Política de Desarrollo Social*, [www.CONEVAL.gob.mx](http://www.CONEVAL.gob.mx))

**The International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie)** works to improve the lives of people in the developing world by supporting the production and use of evidence on what works, when, why and for how much. 3ie is a new initiative that responds to demands for better evidence, and will enhance development effectiveness by promoting better informed policies. 3ie finances high-quality impact evaluations and campaign to inform better program and policy design in developing countries.

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