



**Asian Development Bank - International Initiative for Impact Evaluation**

**Video Lecture Series**

# **Assessing the impact of humanitarian relief assistance: a challenge and an opportunity**

Jyotsna Puri

# What is an impact evaluation?



The holy grail statement:

An *xxxx* programme caused a 7% (*xx%*) increase (*amount of change and direction of change*) in the income (*some measure*) of the *included* population.




We need comparison groups to know what would have happened in the absence of the programme



Photo: Rong Shoujun / Xinhua Press / Corbis  
(for the pile of junk)

# So in fact



	Before	After
Project		
Comparison		

More than one observation required per group to avoid bias

- There is a big gap between the requirement and availability of funds.
  - In 2011, shortage of funds amounted to **\$3.4 billion**



Critical that we know if programmes are working, how much, why and under what circumstances.

# How can impact evaluations help?



Photo: Claire Pismont



Photo: NRC/Olivia Grey Pritchard

- Magnitude of change?  
*How large was the impact? For how long?*
- Implementation science: What *amount* of assistance & with *what frequency* is it best delivered?
- Best delivery option e.g. cash or kind?

# How can impact evaluations help?



- *What* difference did my agency make? Why?
- Could it have been done in a *more cost-effective* manner?
- Was there a larger impact on some groups than others?

Picture: UNHCR/L. Addario

# **LESSON 1: IMPACT EVALUATIONS CAN HELPFULLY SUPPLEMENT OTHER EVALUATION EFFORTS IN HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE**

Impact evaluations can be difficult!

- Need for speed
- Imperfect and absent data
- Multiplicity of actors
- High co-variability
- Ethics



Photo from Progress Report 'Hunger Under The Cloudless Skies'



# **LESSON 2: IMPACT EVALUATIONS REQUIRE CAPACITY AND EFFORT BUT HELP REMOVE BIASES IN MEASUREMENT**

# 3. Taking stock

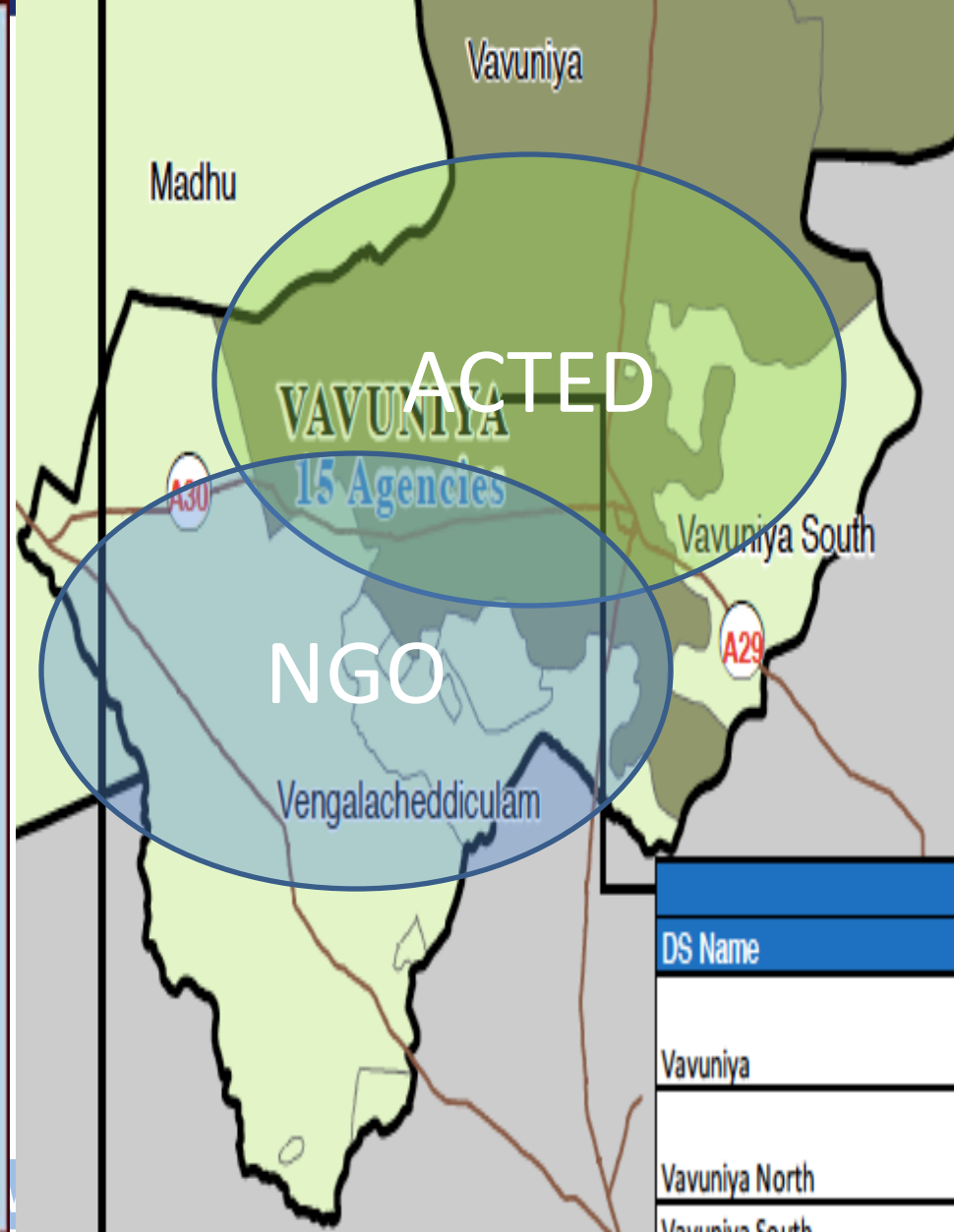


- Only 39 impact evaluations
  - 29 HAD a theory of change.
- But
  - 23 did not have any balance tests
  - 29 did not have any power analysis (to show confidence in results)
  - Only 5 discuss ethical concerns.



**LESSON 3: THERE ARE FEW HIGH QUALITY EVALUATIONS OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE. BUT THERE IS HIGH NEED.**

# Hypothetical Case Study



**Treatment type**

**Agency on the ground**

**Sample size (hhs)**

5% min.  
Detectable

Ethics: Factorial design – no one is excluded from food distribution.

Data: Not very large data collection effort.

Time: In Chad, it took 18 months.

Treat.  
General food  
distribution + RUSF

NGO

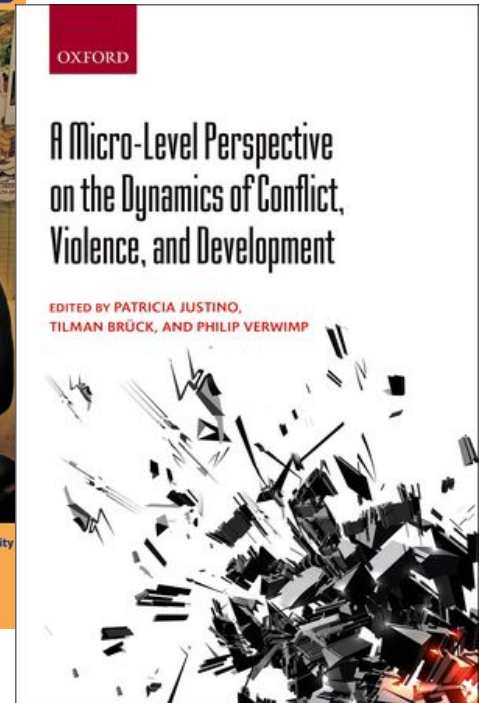
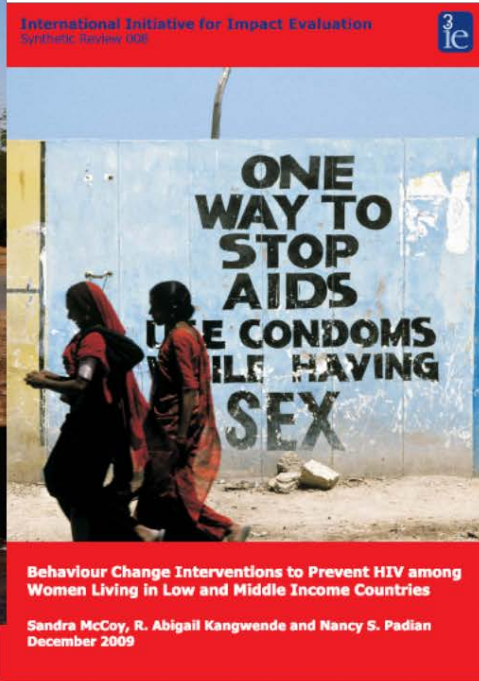
## Impact evaluations are possible in humanitarian assistance.

- They do not make aid recipients worse off.
- They can help in better planning.
- They do not require long periods of time or large datasets.



Photo: Claire Pismont (for the second, landfill looking picture)

# Thank you.



[jpuri@3ieimpact.org](mailto:jpuri@3ieimpact.org)  
[www.3ieimpact.org](http://www.3ieimpact.org)