The Evidence Gap Maps (EGM) for the six Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance (DRG) program areas under the Foreign Assistance Framework provide an overview of the available evidence on the effects of common approaches to DRG foreign assistance programming and identify areas where further research is needed. The EGMs are linked to DRG Learning, Evidence, and Analysis Platform, which provides a curated set of DRG-specific, user-friendly resources in three areas: 1) programmatic approaches, 2) metrics, and 3) evidence. This is an interactive user guide. Please use the tabs to navigate through different sections. Click on the + sign to expand text.
Introduction

Unpacking “evidence”

Figure 1: Evidence definitions broadly and specifically

This User Guide describes how EGMs – including the interactive graphical displays of the evidence, summary reports, and practitioner briefs – can support USAID staff in different phases of the Program Cycle with illustrative use cases of scenarios in work. The primary audience for this guide is the worldwide USAID DRG cadre.
Introduction

Why is evidence important?

- USAID DRG programs represent a significant investment of public resources and have the greatest possibility of long-term success when they are evidence-based.
- Given the wide array of DRG technical approaches, the varied country contexts where we work, and the ever-changing international geopolitical order, there is a constant need to interrogate what works and does not work in achieving DRG outcomes.

Evidence informs better decision-making, with an emphasis on actionable findings and recommendations that meet the needs of USAID’s DRG cadre of field officers.

Evidence advances a culture of learning and knowledge-sharing in the sector to improve the effect of DRG development assistance.

How USAID/DRG uses evidence

**Figure 2: Different types of evidence use by USAID**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evidence type</th>
<th>M&amp;E indicators and project reports</th>
<th>Performance and process evaluations</th>
<th>Impact Evaluations (IEs)</th>
<th>Systematic Review (SRs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Key question</td>
<td>WHAT was done?</td>
<td>HOW was it done?</td>
<td>Did it have an EFFECT?</td>
<td>Were the effects CONTEXT dependent?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use(s) of findings</td>
<td>Help guide program implementation and course correction and demonstrate accountability.</td>
<td>Multiple purposes. e.g., program adherence to the plan, implementer performance, achievement of planned outputs and immediate outcomes, stakeholder/partner/client feedback, etc.)</td>
<td>Measure effects of interventions, use quantitative or qualitative methods, after accounting for other factors; published IEs provide examples of what has or has not had an impact on a targeted outcome. (Link to video: What is an impact evaluation?)</td>
<td>To synthesize findings from multiple IEs (often through quantitative meta-analysis) on a particular issue, increasing confidence and generalizability.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Introduction**

**Complementing USAID resources**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programmatic Approaches</th>
<th>Country Data Portraits</th>
<th>Democracy Metrics</th>
<th>Learning Harvest</th>
<th>Learning Harvest Evidence</th>
<th>Evidence Gap Map Practitioner Briefs</th>
<th>Evidence Gap Map Matrix</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This inventory details commonly used and considered programmatic approaches in the USAID DRG portfolio across the six Program Areas.</td>
<td>Two-page summaries of key indicators of the DRG situation for the country overall and for each Program Area</td>
<td>A searchable collection of all publicly available (third party) country-level DRG outcome and context indicators, sorted by Program Area</td>
<td>A database of DRG Center-commissioned learning.</td>
<td>A short evidence summaries and guidance for field application.</td>
<td>These summary briefers provide an overview of the EGM and of select topics to distill key evidence for practitioners.</td>
<td>A visual depiction of the available evidence including impact evaluations and systematic reviews for each DRG Program Area across a range of interventions and outcomes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

**EGM study designs**

The EGMs include evidence on intervention effects (i.e., quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods impact evaluations and systematic reviews) published between 1990-2021. This evidence is identified through systematic searching of the peer-reviewed and grey literature (including unpublished papers made available online in searchable outside of a formal publication process), searches of targeted organizational websites, and crowd-sourcing.

**Figure 3: Study designs included in an EGMs**

- **Quantitative**
  - Experimental and quasi-experimental impact evaluation: Randomized controlled trails (RCTs)
  - Non-randomized designs which include an interventions and control group: Regression discontinuity, Difference-in-difference; matching techniques; multiple regression analysis; synthetic control

- **Qualitative**
  - Realist evaluations
  - Contribution analyses
  - Process tracing
  - Contribution tracing
  - Qualitative impact assessment
  - Protocols
  - General elimination methodologies
  - Qualitative comparative analyses
  - Outcome harvesting

- **Mixed Methods**

- **Excluded in an EGM**
  - Studies and reports that do not establish causal impact (e.g., project reports, performance evaluations)
  - Studies not available online
What is an EGM?

An EGM is a thematic collection of impact evaluations and systematic reviews that measure the effects of international development policies and programs. They are structured around a framework of interventions and outcomes, with the studies mapped against the intervention-outcome combinations they address, creating a visual overview of the evidence base. It enables policymakers and practitioners to explore the existing evidence in a specific area and aims to facilitate evidence-based decision-making. The EGM below shows quantitative (grey bubbles) and qualitative impact evaluations (purple bubbles) and systematic reviews (red, orange, and green bubbles).

Figure 4: How to use an evidence gap map
What is an EGM?

Why is “mapping” useful?

Figure 5: Key questions and information to consider
How can this help my work?

As presented in the USAID Program Cycle Operation Policy, “the Program Cycle is USAID’s operational model for planning, delivering, assessing, and adapting development programming in a given region or country to advance U.S. foreign and economic policy” (ADS 201, 2021). The framework emphasizes four key principles:

- Apply analytic rigor to support evidence-based decision making;
- Manage adaptively through continuous learning;
- Promote sustainability through local ownership;
- Utilize a range of approaches to achieve results.

As presented below, integrating EGMs holistically during the cycle can facilitate access to linked resources, such as impact evaluation and systematic reviews, to complete different tasks required in each phase.

**Figure 5: Applications of EGM findings by USAID program cycle phases**
## How can this help my work?

### Applications across the USAID Program Cycle

**Use Case:** Quickly get up to speed on which interventions are effective (or not) by reviewing the ‘main findings—high confidence systematic review summary’ section of the EGM Summary Report.

- **DRG Center Staff**: ✔
- **In-country Mission Staff**: ✔
- **Implementing Partners**: ✔

### Inform programming investment

**Use Case:** Identify key topical areas where more research is needed by reviewing the ‘future research’ section of the EGM Summary Report and the evidence and synthesis gaps in the online EGM matrix.

- **DRG Center Staff**: ✔
- **In-country Mission Staff**: ✔
- **Implementing Partners**: ✔

### Inform research/learning investment

**Use Case:** When designing your activities, review relevant theories of change from studies in the EGM online matrix and read the practitioner briefs that looked at the same or similar interventions and outcomes.

- **DRG Center Staff**: ✔
- **In-country Mission Staff**: ✔
- **Implementing Partners**: ✔

### Inform activity and project design

**Use Case:** Review “considerations for implementation” in the relevant practitioner briefs, consult the discussion section of studies** in the EGM online matrix that evaluated the intervention of interest to you to discover implementation challenges and key facilitators factors.

- **DRG Center Staff**: ✔
- **In-country Mission Staff**: ✔
- **Implementing Partners**: ✔

### Inform activity planning and implementation

**Use Case:** Locate relevant studies in the online EGM matrix; consult their ‘methods’ section to learn which specific output and outcome indicators others used to measure changes at various steps of the theory of change.

- **DRG Center Staff**: ✔
- **In-country Mission Staff**: ✔
- **Implementing Partners**: ✔

### Identify relevant indicators to measure

**Use Case:** Locate relevant studies in the online EGM matrix to consult their ‘methods’ section or the Key messages box from the practitioner briefs to learn which types of impact evaluation designs others have been used to evaluate the same or similar interventions.

- **DRG Center Staff**: ✔
- **In-country Mission Staff**: ✔
- **Implementing Partners**: ✔

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*DRG Center staff are not only users, but they can also provide support to missions at all stages of the Program Cycle. **Since the EGM includes a comprehensive set of peer-reviewed and grey literature resources, some studies are behind a paywall.*
How can I use the EGM in practice?

**USAID missions**

When USAID mission officers allocate resources for DRG programming, there is often little time and human resource capacity to systematically take stock of the evidence base supporting various types of interventions being considered. USAID mission officers can use the EGM online matrix, summary report, and practitioner briefs as a quick first step to take stock of the relevant evidence to inform investment decisions.
How can I use the EGM in practice?

DRG Center - Washington, DC

Technical staff from the DRG Center in Washington DC play a dual role in helping shape USAID’s strategic direction as well as supporting USAID missions in designing, implementing, and learning from DRG programming. A rapidly growing and evolving evidence landscape makes it challenging to keep abreast of promising new interventions and outstanding evidence gaps alike. The online EGM matrix provides a snapshot of key evidence clusters and gaps to be investigated, helping inform the development of a strategic research agenda. The EGM summary reports and practitioner briefs can help support ongoing communications with USAID missions to promote the use of evidence effects and innovation in DRG programming.
Explore the EGMs

EGM Outputs

Online EGM Matrix

Rule of Law

Summary Report

Human Rights

Rule of Law Summary Report

Civil Society

Civil Society Summary Report

Independent Media

Independent Media Summary Report

Governance

Governance Summary Report

Political Competition

Political Competition Summary Report

Practitioner Briefs

- Systems brief
- Society brief
- Services brief

Rule of Law

- C-TIP brief
- SBCC brief

Human Rights

- Civic Monitoring brief
- Decision-making brief
- Civic space brief

Civil Society

- Disseminating information brief

Independent Media

- Governance brief

Governance

- Accountability and voter inclusion brief

Political Competition

The International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie) develops evidence on how to effectively transform the lives of the poor in low- and middle-income countries. Established in 2008, we offer comprehensive support and a diversity of approaches to achieve development goals by producing, synthesizing and promoting the uptake of impact evaluation evidence. We work closely with governments, foundations, NGOs, development institutions and research organizations to address their decision-making needs. With offices in Washington DC, New Delhi and London and a global network of leading researchers, we offer deep expertise across our extensive menu of evaluation services.

For more information on 3ie’s evidence gap maps, contact info@3ieimpact.org or visit our website.

3ieimpact.org

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