



BEST BETS

Emerging Opportunities for Impact at Scale



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For more information, contact: info@poverty-action.org

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FOREWORD



We stand at an incredible moment in humanity's long quest to improve the lives of people living in poverty. We now have a strong body of evidence about what works and what doesn't in changing the lives of those living in poverty, and decision-makers are increasingly using evidence to shape more effective programs and policies.

At the same time, there is now a wave of emerging, evidence-driven innovations that are ripe for investment and poised to be expanded and transform lives. These emerging innovations are strong candidates to be scaled up. They are "Best Bets" because they are supported by solid evidence and have some commitment from partners. But key questions still need to be answered and they need greater investment to be optimized and taken to scale. Innovations such as mobile phone reminders for routine childhood immunization and teacher coaching to improve student learning have been proven effective and are ready for expansion. This report looks closely at 14 such emerging innovations, examining the problem they address, the evidence supporting them, their potential impacts, their cost, and the ease (or complexity) of their implementation. Truly, the wave of emerging innovations is now cresting.

Of course, not all potentially transformative innovations can be considered emerging. Some are backed by so much evidence and have such a profound track record of success that they can be thought of as established. At the other end of the spectrum, some innovations need more testing and refinement before they can be considered ready to be taken to scale; we refer to these

earliest-stage innovations as exploratory. The annex of this report looks at both established innovations such as the ultra-poor graduation approach, and at exploratory innovations such as hot spots policing.

IPA works to identify promising interventions and move them along the path to scale from proof of concept to exploratory, emerging, and eventually established innovations. Greater investment in research, learning, and accompanying policy work is needed at every step.

In fact, there is one key need for all of the emerging innovations profiled in the main report as well as the exploratory and established innovations profiled in the annex: partnerships. Regardless of whether an innovation is just being pioneered, or is well-established, or is a best bet, partners are needed to ensure its continued progress along the path to scale. IPA is seeking partners—in research, implementation, policymaking, and funding—to improve the lives of people living in poverty.

I hope that you—the reader of this report—will consider yourself a partner in IPA's work. I hope that you will review the emerging innovations described here and consider how we can work together to move them forward. And I hope you will partner with us to create a world with more evidence and less poverty.

Annie Duflo
Executive Director
Innovations for Poverty Action
New York City
November, 2023



INTRODUCTION

Placing Our Bets

Since the early 2000s, the international development community has taken an increasing interest in using evidence to reduce poverty and improve the well-being of disadvantaged populations around the world. Individuals and institutions determined to give effectively can now invest in causes that have been shown—using the most rigorous methods available—to work and be cost-effective.

However, social science is not exact. Despite vast amounts of evidence being generated every year, there will always be uncertainty about the impact our limited pool of resources will have on the lives of people living in poverty. We must make decisions based on the best evidence we have, and strategically decide where we need to generate more evidence. This report is about where we should be placing these bets, based on the best evidence currently available.

While the task of using evidence to inform policy and eventually drive impact is challenging, efforts to date have improved millions of lives, notably by providing deworming pills to young learners, expanding access to safe water via chlorine dispensers, distributing free malaria bed nets, and giving cash to poor families and individuals.

Yet the number of evidence-based programs that are operating at scale is still relatively small and only

addresses a slice of the challenges that underprivileged and vulnerable populations face.

Some global development challenges such as violence and crime, malnutrition, intimate partner violence, and extreme poverty, deserve more attention given their scale. There is also an opportunity to do more in sectors that already receive significant attention and funding, such as health.

Equipped with hundreds of evaluations in our portfolio, sector experts, and Policy and Path-to-Scale Research teams, Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA) is uniquely positioned to identify and share the innovations that hold the most promise, and to move them along the path to scale from proof of concept to making an impact at scale.

To determine the most promising innovations, IPA's sectoral experts and scientific advisors reviewed hundreds of studies and considered levels of partnership engagement from projects both within and outside of our portfolio, looking at the amount of evidence, the impacts observed, the cost, and other scalability factors.

Based on this exercise, we identified nearly 50 approaches as being on the path to scale, either as:

EXPLORATORY INNOVATIONS

A **possible** contender for scale, either because of a small amount of positive evidence (1-2 studies) or conflicting evidence from multiple studies. Research is still needed to know if and how an innovation in this category really works—and for what populations and under what conditions it has the most impact.

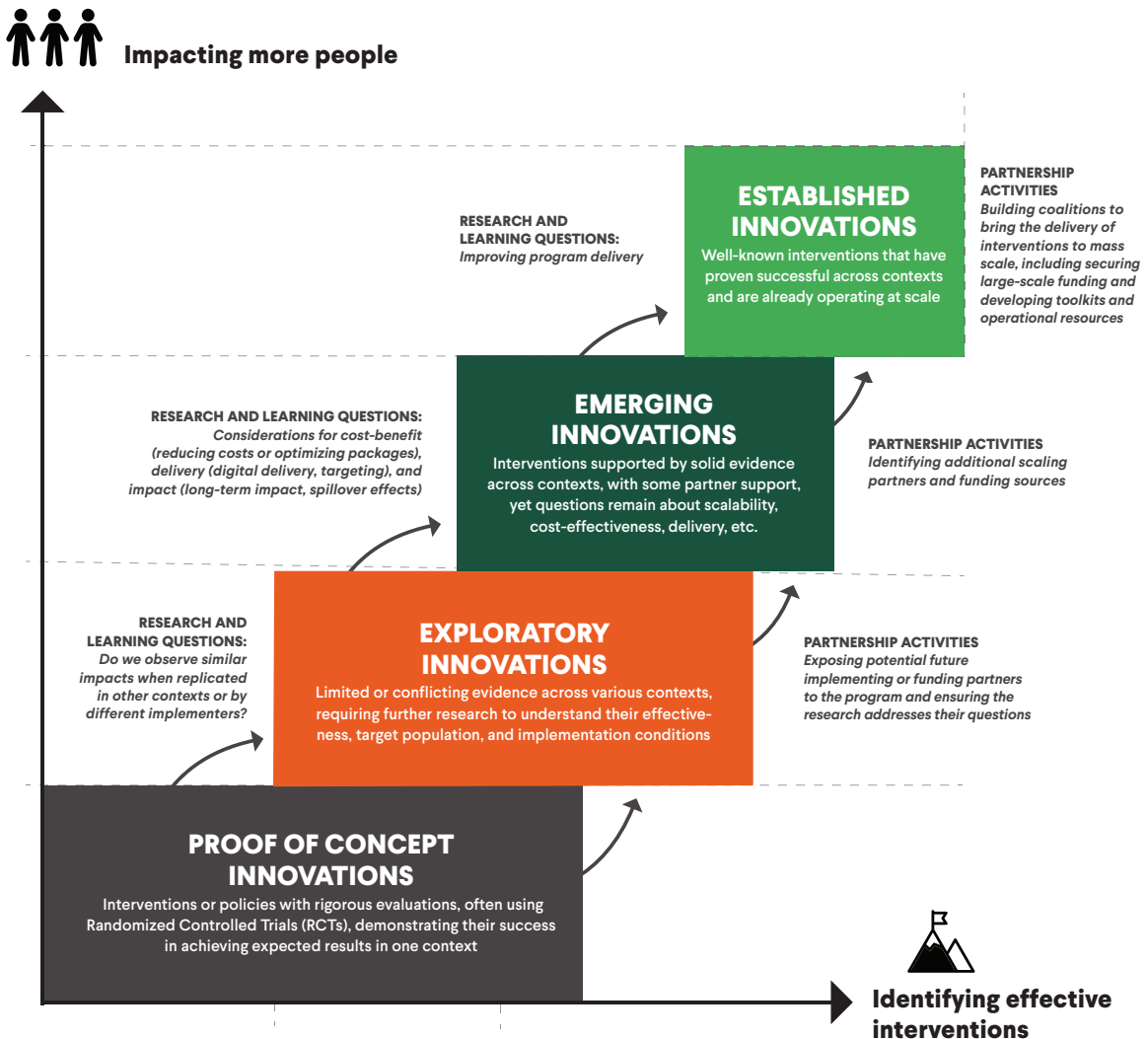
EMERGING INNOVATIONS

A **strong** contender for scale. These approaches are supported by solid evidence—either several studies and/or particularly large and impressive effects—and have some commitment from partners. Key questions still need to be answered, for example on their cost-benefit, the best delivery mechanisms, targeting, at-scale and long-term impacts, as well as indirect effects on the community.

ESTABLISHED INNOVATIONS

A **sure** contender for scale. These approaches are already well-known and operating at scale.

Figure 1: Moving Evidence-Based Interventions along the Path to Scale



At the **exploratory** stage of bringing an innovation to scale, IPA does replications in different contexts and tweaks program components. We start to build awareness among donors and policymakers.

At the **emerging** stage we do scale-up research to test different delivery models and start to answer questions about spillovers and long-term results. We learn the main questions policymakers and implementers have about emerging interventions and address those questions through co-created testing and research. We help form coalitions of implementers and provide evidence to build the case to funders for large-scale implementation.

At the **established** stage there is substantial evidence on the effectiveness of the programs in question. We provide policy support and technical assistance to improve delivery and implementation fidelity, to ensure the programs are implemented as the evidence base suggests they should be. Rigorous evaluations can still be used strategically to refine interventions, improve impact, and lower costs.



This report focuses on the most promising emerging innovations that have the greatest potential to scale. The report's annex examines compelling **exploratory** and **established** innovations.

The **emerging** approaches highlighted in this report as “Best Bets” *hold potential* as ways to improve health, reduce suffering and monetary poverty, and enhance well-being in various ways at a large scale. But each emerging intervention requires some further investment for optimization and, in some cases, more commitment from implementers or funders.

In contrast to emerging innovations, **exploratory** innovations have been shown to work but existing evidence is either mixed or too scant. For these exploratory innovations, what's first needed is to confirm if and/or how they work. Such exploratory innovations include intergroup contact to build social cohesion in fragile settings, home-based growth

monitoring to improve child growth outcomes, and teacher incentive pay. The **established** innovations—such as the Graduation Approach, cash transfers, and Teaching at the Right Level—that are highlighted in the annex have already received significant attention and are relatively well-known.

The list of emerging innovations highlighted in this report is not exhaustive. In fact, it is likely we missed some important innovations, and we invite our partners and readers to share with us their thoughts on emerging innovations. We also must note that many other pressing problems and innovations exist that are outside the scope of our work and the scope of this report.



Emerging Innovations

This section highlights 14 innovations that IPA’s experts believe offer the most opportunity for transformative investment to catalyze impact through research and partnerships. For each emerging innovation, we note why it was selected as “emerging,” the problem it seeks to address, what it is, and the necessary steps to push it forward along the path to scale.

The following icons indicate why the innovation was selected. In almost every case, the innovation has strong evidence, but there are some exceptions for cases with committed partnerships and large impacts based on one high-quality randomized evaluation.



Strong evidence

We have confidence this innovation works—its effectiveness is supported by multiple studies in different contexts.



Big impact

This innovation is shown to have especially significant and/or wide-reaching impacts.



Low-cost

The innovation’s cost is reasonable (compared to alternatives) and is not a barrier to scaling.



Simple to implement

This innovation is relatively easy to implement



Committed partnerships

Funders and/or implementers are already engaged and may be ready to scale.



Small-quantity lipid-based nutrient supplements to reduce stunting

Small-Quantity Lipid-Based Nutrient Supplements (SQ-LNS) are nutrient-dense products for infants and toddlers that provide energy, protein, essential fatty acids, and a wide range of micronutrients. SQ-LNS are designed to complement infant diets without displacing breast milk or local foods, hence the emphasis on “small quantity,” which is roughly 20 grams and provides 110-120 calories.

THE PROBLEM

Stunting, or being low-height for one’s age, is a warning signal that a child is at risk of failing to reach their full physical and developmental potential. Poor quality diets during the critical ages of 6-24 months are a key contributor to childhood stunting.

OVERVIEW OF THE EVIDENCE:

- A meta-analysis of individual participant data from 14 trials conducted in sub-Saharan Africa, Bangladesh, and Haiti found that consumption of SQ-LNS among children 6-24 months of age decreased stunting by 12 percent (Dewey et al., 2021).
- In addition to impacts on stunting, SQ-LNS is the only intervention to simultaneously have beneficial impacts on child mortality (Stewart et al., 2020), anemia (Wessells et al., 2021), wasting (Dewey et al., 2022), and cognitive, socio-emotional, and motor development (Prado et al., 2021). See Figure 2.
- Given the evidence, a coalition of nutrition leaders from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Helen Keller Intl, UNICEF, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), University of California-Davis, the World Bank, and the World Food Programme called for the scale-up of SQ-LNS for children aged 6-23 months who are in need (Aguayo et al., 2023).

COST: MODERATE

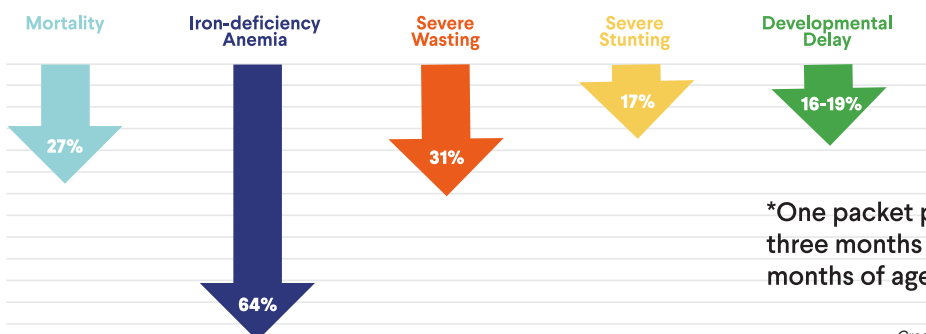
Overall, there is very limited evidence on the cost of SQ-LNS. A recent costing study found that providing SQ-LNS to all age-eligible children in Uganda for 12 months would cost \$52 per child. The estimated cost-per-disability-adjusted life year averted is \$242, which is considered “very cost-effective” relative to the Uganda per capita GDP of \$822. In comparison, providing complementary food (~250 kilocalories) to children for 12 months would be \$72 per child.

Costs could be reduced by targeting the intervention to the most vulnerable communities, such as those with high levels of stunting, wasting, child mortality, or food insecurity.

WHAT’S NEEDED NEXT:

- Investment is needed to scale up this intervention.
- National governments need support to integrate it with other interventions to improve children’s diets.
- Further evaluation is needed to improve the delivery of these programs in the diverse settings where impoverished families live.

Figure 2: Small-Quantity Lipid-Based Nutrient Supplement



*One packet per day for at least three months for children 6-23 months of age

Credit: Helen Keller Intl



Mobile phone reminders for routine childhood immunization

Reminders, delivered through phone calls or text messages, that help caregivers track their child's vaccination status and alert them when the child is due or overdue for vaccination.

THE PROBLEM

Childhood immunization is one of the most cost-effective ways of reducing child mortality, but in some contexts a large percentage of children fail to complete their immunization schedules, leaving them and others in their communities vulnerable to deadly diseases including measles, tetanus, pneumonia, and yellow fever.

OVERVIEW OF THE EVIDENCE:

- Overall, evidence reveals that in contexts where lack of awareness about the schedule impedes timely completion of immunization and mobile phone ownership/access is widespread, mobile phone reminders can be the most cost-effective intervention to improve uptake of some vaccines. This innovation also works best in places with functioning, reliable health records and communication systems.
- In Ghana ([Levine et al., 2021](#)), voice call reminders improved coverage of timely immunization by 10.5 percentage points.
- In urban Nigeria ([Eze et al., 2015](#)) and Zimbabwe ([Bangure et al., 2015](#)), text reminders improved timely immunization completion by nine percent and 16 percent, respectively.
- Mixed-positive effects were found in urban Burkina Faso ([Schlumberger et al., 2015](#)) and semi-rural Nigeria ([Ekhaguere et al., 2019](#)) and null results were found in rural Kenya ([Gibson et al., 2017](#)). In Kenya, authors noted that SMS reminders might not have addressed the demand side obstacles.
- In India ([Banerjee et al., 2021](#)), SMS reminders alone had no impact but did complement a package of interventions—including local ambassadors and incentives—that increased measles vaccination by over 40 percentage points. Given the lack of impact from SMS reminders alone, lack of familiarity with and prioritization of the schedule was unlikely to be the primary barrier to immunization.

COST: LOW

Mobile phone reminders for child immunization are low-cost if health (immunization) records are already digitized with mobile numbers. Where this is not the case, including in many of the countries with lower immunization rates, the intervention is notably more expensive. However, digitization is advancing in many countries, enabling this to become a low-cost intervention in the short to medium term.

WHAT'S NEEDED NEXT:

- Digitization of child health records and caregiver contact information is critical to the cost-effectiveness of mobile phone reminder interventions. Research on how to translate the evidence into policy (implementation research) and investment to accelerate digitization will support the scale-up of mobile phone reminder interventions (in addition to other benefits of digitization).
- Given that phone ownership and up-to-date health records for children are far from universal in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), reminder interventions may effectively reach only a subset of caregivers. The poorest and most hard-to-reach caregivers, who may lack access to a phone and have limited contact with health providers, may be systematically excluded. Further implementation research on expanding reach is a priority.



Social signaling for routine childhood immunization

A simple, low-cost innovation—a bracelet worn by the child—signals the child’s immunization status. The color shows the child’s progress and timeliness in completing their vaccination schedule. Similar to in-kind or cash incentives, social incentives have the potential to generate demand, increasing immunization uptake without expanding costly outreach.

THE PROBLEM

Childhood immunization is one of the most cost-effective ways of reducing child mortality, but in some contexts a large percentage of children fail to complete their immunization schedules, making them and others in their communities vulnerable to deadly diseases including measles, tetanus, pneumonia, and yellow fever.

OVERVIEW OF THE EVIDENCE:

- There has only been one high-quality trial on social signaling for immunization. But the cost-effectiveness of the approach and potential to save lives make a powerful case for scale-up.
- In Sierra Leone, colored bracelets were used to signal that a child had progressed in the schedule, or completed all first-year vaccinations on time (Karing, 2023). All three treatments led to a significant increase in the number of vaccines a child received by age one. The completion-signaling bracelet led to a significant increase in the share of children that had completed all required vaccinations on time. Bracelets signaling completed first-year vaccinations increased timely and complete vaccination by 13 percentage points at an incentive cost of approximately US\$1 per child.

COST: LOW

Bracelets alone cost \$1 per child (two bracelets), five to ten times less than material or financial incentives. An SMS reminder plus cash incentive increased full immunization by age one from 82 to 90% at an incentive cost of over \$8 per child in Kenya (Gibson et al., 2017), while in-kind incentives totalling \$6.64 per child increased complete immunization from 18 to 39% in India (Banerjee et al., 2010). Larger cash incentives in Nigeria

totaling \$11 moved complete immunization from 25% to 52% (IDinsight, 2020). Bracelets are significantly less costly, totalling \$2.40 per child including all program costs.

Bracelets are simple and inexpensive to implement, requiring low levels of costly financial oversight due to their low intrinsic value. The initial randomized controlled trial (RCT) found no evidence of sales or sharing of the bracelets. Further, bracelets can be fully integrated into established vaccine supply chains since they are small, light, do not expire, and health workers can easily transport them with monthly vaccine supplies.

WHAT'S NEEDED NEXT:

- Social signaling requires scale-up research to optimize program design and implementation at scale in the [original site](#), which is currently underway in Sierra Leone.
- Insights from replication in new sites, including those with higher rates of vaccine hesitancy than the original study site, will help identify future contexts for scaling.
- There are strong partnerships in Sierra Leone but more partners are needed elsewhere. There is also a need for new funding and new studies involving this promising intervention.



Cognitive behavioral therapy to reduce crime

Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is a short-term, pragmatic form of psychotherapy that prompts people to think differently about and change their behavior. It helps build interpersonal skills, such as assertiveness, perseverance, and emotional regulation, as well as stress management, self-control, and problem-solving. Participants are encouraged to practice productively engaging with their environment, which over time helps individuals to modify how they make decisions, break negative automatic behavior patterns, and incorporate these changes into their identity. CBT is used widely to treat depression, but more recently has been applied to a wider set of issues including crime and violence, particularly among high-risk men in urban areas.

THE PROBLEM

There is an often disproportionate concentration of violence and crime among young men in low-income settings, both in LMICs and high-income countries. This not only has detrimental effects on the individuals involved but also impacts their victims and communities, affecting economic and social outcomes. Those who grow up in low-income or violent environments are particularly vulnerable and often targeted for involvement in violence.

OVERVIEW OF THE EVIDENCE:

- **Violent and criminal behavior outcomes:** Previous research has demonstrated CBT's potential to reduce crime and violence in various settings, even when delivered by non-experts. Evaluations of CBT in Chicago, USA, showed a short-term reduction in arrests of students from low-income schools and readmissions in juvenile detention centers ([Heller et al., 2017](#)). In Monrovia, Liberia, receiving CBT reduced thefts and the likelihood of aggressive behavior, particularly among the highest-risk participants. The most significant and lasting positive impacts were observed among those who received CBT plus a cash transfer, for whom the results remained stable even after 10 years ([Blattman et al., 2022](#); [IPA Policy Brief, 2022](#)). Another evaluation from Chicago found mixed results of CBT on crime and violence among high-risk offenders. That said, those identified by community outreach workers experienced significant reductions in violence ([Bhatt et al., 2023](#)).
- **In-school outcomes:** An evaluation of a program providing CBT alongside math tutoring in schools in Mexico City showed school drop-outs were reduced and socio-emotional skills improved for those students who attended at least five sessions ([Avitabile et al., 2019](#)). In El Salvador, an after-school behavioral therapy intervention for vulnerable public school students aged 10-16 reduced teachers' reports of bad behavior, students' reports of their delinquent and violent behaviors, and school absenteeism, while improving students' grades. The program also had

positive spillover effects on misbehavior at school and academic performance for students who did not enroll but were exposed to groups of students who joined the therapy sessions ([Dinarte and Egaña del Sol, 2019](#)).

COST: MODERATE

In Liberia, the CBT program appears to have been highly cost-effective, both alone and with cash transfers. The cost of delivering both therapy and cash transfers together was about \$530 per participant. Considering theft and robbery impacts, researchers estimate that therapy resulted in at least 200 fewer crimes per participant, which translates to \$2.50 per crime averted. This calculation does not account for the reduced drug selling and other violence, suggesting this estimation is a conservative indicator of cost-effectiveness ([IPA Policy Brief, 2022](#)).

Currently, there is no cost-effectiveness data from other LMICs, though one study from Chicago suggests that the program's benefits may have outweighed the costs by up to 20 times ([Bhatt et al., 2023](#)).

WHAT'S NEEDED NEXT:

- In Liberia, NEPI has received funding to expand its evidence-backed CBT program to new participants. However, additional funding is needed to ensure the program is being scaled in an evidence-driven and sustainable way and to test the effectiveness of the model (and variations) in Monrovia as well as in other contexts, particularly in LMICs with high levels of urban crime and violence.
- More research is needed to test different types of delivery modalities, such as app-based interventions, to maximize the potential for scaling; to disaggregate what program components are driving the impact; and to probe how to amplify impacts through small program tweaks, such as providing "booster" sessions to participants after the program has concluded.



Teacher coaching to improve student learning



Teaching coaches are dedicated educational professionals who provide key inputs such as training, advice, and feedback to in-service teachers at their school. Evidence suggests coaches are most effective when they are equipped with structured tools (such as observation guides) and not spread thinly across too many schools.

THE PROBLEM

Expanding access to primary education has not translated to better learning outcomes in many low- and middle-income countries. In fact, many countries are experiencing a learning crisis with large percentages of students not meeting grade-level expectations in reading and math.

OVERVIEW OF THE EVIDENCE

- A large body of research in the U.S. has found that coaching can have positive effects on teacher pedagogy and student outcomes across both preprimary and primary education, but also that the amount and type of activities that coaches perform can vary widely. The time coaches spend with teachers, for example, is often correlated with outcomes. In Kenya, research found that outcomes were better for students whose teachers were supported by coaches who were covering 10 schools, rather than 15 (Piper and Zuilkowski, 2015).
- A growing body of research in LMICs suggests that coaching teachers can improve student learning. Research in Peru (Majerowicz and Montero, 2018) found a national coaching program substantially improved learning, gaining a 0.25–0.38 standard deviation increase in standardized test scores. Low-performing students benefited as much as higher-performing ones. The study further found that when teachers who had been coached transferred to new schools, their new students benefited, suggesting that coaching improves teachers' effectiveness in a way that is "portable and persistent" (Majerowicz and Montero, 2018).
- Coaching is often a critical component of bundled interventions, such as structured pedagogy and Teaching at the Right Level. [The Learning at Scale Initiative](#) investigated factors contributing to successful improvement in foundation learning

outcomes in eight of the most effective large-scale reading programs in LMICs, and found that coaching was often an essential component for improving the quality of teaching and learning. [They found](#) "that what mattered was not just whether teachers were coached. Coaches having access to structured tools to guide the classroom observation and instructional discussion was essential for the coaching to be effective."

COST: MODERATE

Given that time spent with teachers is correlated with positive outcomes, school systems' ability to hire enough coaches will be a concern for some countries.

Coaching may present a more cost-effective approach than traditional, centralized teacher professional development and training.

Studies have started to look into ways in which various technologies could make virtual coaching a cost-effective possibility, but results are mixed and more research is needed.

WHAT'S NEEDED NEXT:

- A key concern is the coaches themselves: recruiting, training, and maintaining an effective coaching workforce is a critical challenge for education systems.
- More broadly, the dosage, duration, and focus of coaching should be further investigated to determine the most effective approaches for different systems. More research is also needed on if and how technology can be leveraged to deliver coaching in a more affordable way.



Psychosocial stimulation and responsive care to promote early childhood development

Facilitators show caregivers techniques to interact with and respond to their children ages 0–3 in ways likely to promote their child’s development. Programs vary in delivery and intensity, but generally involve encouraging caregivers to respond to and stimulate their children in various ways through play and engagement.

THE PROBLEM

The first years of a child’s life are a critical period for cognitive development,¹ but many children in impoverished settings do not get the stimulation and care they need to grow and develop to their full potential. Early childhood development programs can have wide-ranging, lifelong impacts on health, well-being, wages, and behavior.²

OVERVIEW OF THE EVIDENCE:

- In Jamaica, long-term, 31-year impacts include higher IQ scores, better mental health, and lower substance abuse (Walker et al., 2022), as well significant economic impacts of 43 percent higher hourly wages and 37 percent higher earnings three decades after the program took place (Gertler et al., 2021).
- Across different LMICS, diverse populations, settings, and implementation modalities, these interventions have improved children’s cognitive, social-emotional, language, and other skills (Aboud and Yousafzai, 2015).
- A meta-analysis of parenting interventions for children up to age three concluded that interventions that explicitly promote responsive caregiving—prompt, consistent, and developmentally appropriate caregiver-child interactions that respond to a child’s cues and needs—can be particularly effective (Jeong et al., 2021).
- Additionally, programs that support parents to provide young children with psychosocial stimulation—enabling children to explore their environment, manipulate objects, solve problems, and experience positive social interaction—can be effective as well (Britto et al., 2017).

COST: MODERATE

One key consideration for these programs is whether they should be delivered through home visits or through group sessions. Evidence from India found group sessions were as effective on average as home visits: the two had the same average impacts on cognition. The cost of group sessions was \$38 per child per year, while the cost of the home-based program was \$135 per child per year, indicating that group-based sessions can be much more cost-effective and offer a more scalable model (Grantham-McGregor et al., 2020).

WHAT’S NEEDED NEXT:

- In a comparative analysis of the scale-up of the “Jamaica model”—from an efficacy trial in Jamaica to a pilot in Colombia to a national program in Peru—researchers reflected on key lessons learned and outstanding questions, including how costs and effectiveness are affected by variations in dosage, duration, and intensity, as well as possible spillover effects (Araujo, Rubio-Codina, and Schady, 2021).
- The scaling process involves various trade-offs, such as between scaling quickly and scaling with quality. Another potential trade-off concerns the choice between a program focused exclusively on promoting child development through play and one that includes other components such as nutrition or intra-family violence (Araujo, Rubio-Codina, and Schady, 2021). Investigating these issues across contexts will be important.
- In certain contexts, identifying, training, and supporting a workforce for implementation at scale will be a critical concern. In addition, key questions remain regarding dosage and delivery strategy (group-based, home visit, or digital).

¹ Black, Maureen M., Susan P. Walker, Lia CH Fernald, Christopher T. Andersen, Ann M. DiGirolamo, Chunling Lu, Dana C. McCoy et al. “Early childhood development coming of age: science through the life course.” *The Lancet* 389, no. 10064 (2017): 77–90.

² E.g., Campbell, Frances, Gabriella Conti, James J. Heckman, Seong Hyeok Moon, Rodrigo Pinto, Elizabeth Pungello, and Yi Pan. 2014. “Early childhood investments substantially boost adult health.” *Science* 343, no. 6178: 1478–1485.



Soft-skills training to boost business profits and sales

A training curriculum that teaches participants to develop a proactive entrepreneurial mindset, encouraging them to consistently seek new opportunities, learn from errors, and think of ways to differentiate their business from others.



THE PROBLEM

Small- to medium-sized businesses make up the backbone of the economy in most low- and middle-income countries, but these businesses face many challenges to growth and prosperity.

OVERVIEW OF THE EVIDENCE

- Ten studies that have examined the impact of personal initiative/soft skills training on business outcomes have mostly shown that the training increases sales, profits, and business profits, at least in the short term.
- According to a meta-analysis ([McKenzie and Woodruff, 2023](#)), the average impact of these trainings was a 14% improvement in profits and a 10% improvement in sales, but some studies showed much larger impacts than others.
- A note of caution: two studies found negative effects, and one was significant in magnitude. Authors hypothesize this was due to poorly trained trainers, and concluded that trainer quality was essential to the success of this approach.
- While training online seems feasible, a recent study from Mexico ([Davies et al., 2023](#)) indicates that cost savings might be minimal. Further, while there was a short-run improvement in business practices, none of the impacts persisted six months after the training.

COST: MODERATE

Studies show a wide range of costs depending on the target population, context, and other factors, including complementary interventions. The range is \$30-880 per trainee.

Relative to other interventions in this space, it is inexpensive per participant (with the potential for costs to come down even further) and has been shown to be cost-effective.

WHAT'S NEEDED NEXT:

- Studies around intervention delivery, such as online delivery of training; and partners to participate in research around various delivery models.
- Research on targeting of training, including on which entrepreneurs are most meaningfully affected by this training and what size of firm most meaningfully benefits.
- Greater sharing of the evidence and equipping of decision-makers on how to incorporate a soft-skills curriculum into existing training programs. Also needed is implementation funding, as well as a scalable model for delivering such training programs while maintaining their quality.



Consulting services to support small and medium-sized businesses

Consulting services typically involve pairing a small business owner with a professional expert or consulting company that identifies areas of improvement in business operations and supports the firm in implementing recommended changes.

THE PROBLEM

Businesses in high-income countries tend to be much more productive than businesses in LMICs, hampering economic prosperity. Economists believe one potential reason is that some businesses have better management practices than others.

OVERVIEW OF THE EVIDENCE:

- Most studies show positive significant results on business practices, productivity, sales, and profits within the year following the intervention ([Bruhn et al., 2018](#); [Bloom et al., 2013](#)).
- One study in Ghana showed no significant results on business performance and the effects on business practices vanished within the first year ([Karlan et al., 2014](#)).
- A study in Mexico found persistent results on employment rates five years after the intervention ([Bruhn et al., 2018](#)). In India, researchers found that eight to nine years after the consulting was provided there was a lasting effect on management practices and a proxy for productivity; however, despite the gains, firms stopped using some of the management practices over time, particularly after key managers left ([Bloom et al., 2020](#)).
- Compared to other interventions to improve managerial skills, consulting is more consistent in improving business performance than training, but also much more expensive, and it is less clear how to scale such programs. A group-based consulting approach offers potential ([Iacovone et al., 2022](#)); however, there is not yet enough evidence on the efficacy of this approach.

COST: HIGH

Studies show a wide range of costs depending on the context, intensity, format, and other factors. Costs range from \$560 to \$75,000 per treated firm.

WHAT'S NEEDED NEXT:

- Research to identify less expensive ways of delivering business consulting while maintaining quality of services.
- Identifying marketing, pricing, and contracting structures that encourage firms to adopt and be willing to pay for these services, eventually resulting in a market for such business development services.



Empowerment and Livelihoods for Adolescents to promote girls' agency and health

Empowerment and Livelihood for Adolescents (ELA) is a program created by BRAC that bundles business and vocational skills training, financial literacy, health education, and empowerment training.

THE PROBLEM

Adolescent girls living in low-income settings are often trapped in a cycle where low skills and poor labor market opportunities cause them to turn to (often older) men for financial support. This increases the chances of childbearing that, in turn, further reduces the likelihood of attaining employment and achieving better health outcomes and reproductive autonomy.

OVERVIEW OF THE EVIDENCE

- In Uganda, the ELA program led to a drop in teen pregnancy (34 percent village-wide) and an increase in engagement in income-generating activities (48 percent village-wide). These findings suggest that the presence of an ELA club can have transformative effects on the girls in that community, even if they are not enrolled in the club (Bandiera et al., 2018).
- In cases where ELA was implemented during a crisis, including the Ebola outbreak in Sierra Leone and civil war in South Sudan, the presence of the clubs helped offset many of the negative impacts of these crises among the target population, including prompting re-enrollment in school post-crisis and preventing out-of-wedlock pregnancies (Buehren et al., 2017; Bandiera et al., 2018).
- In an early iteration of the program in Tanzania, an RCT failed to show impact on most outcomes, although the inclusion of microcredit did increase engagement in the program and had a positive impact on savings (Buehren et al., 2017). Researchers argue that implementation quality, available resources, scale, and enabling environment likely contributed to the limited impacts in Tanzania.

COST: MODERATE

- Current cost data varies widely across contexts, ranging from \$100 to over \$1,000 per participant.
- Results from the evaluation in Uganda suggest income gains in participating villages offset the cost of the program. With further research and optimization, implementers are optimistic that costs could be reduced to \$60-\$100 per participant.

WHAT'S NEEDED NEXT:

- Adaptations to the core curriculum and delivery modalities have not been rigorously evaluated in the past five years. Previous research stopped short of unpacking each component of the intervention to better understand causal pathways and cost-effectiveness (BRAC and UNFPA, 2023).
- Further research should look at how the program will need to shift design and resources to adapt to a more scalable model operating within government secondary schools.
- More research is needed on the effectiveness of teacher-mentors as opposed to peer mentors and overall safety for girls in school settings.
- More research is also needed to adapt and test the effectiveness of club-based empowerment programming similar to ELA for women ages 18 to 35.



Becoming One: Couples' counseling to reduce intimate partner violence



Faith leaders, who already play the role of community leaders and couples' counselors, are trained to implement a curriculum that focuses on communication, emotional regulation, conflict/anger management, financial management, sexual consent, and mutual pleasure.

THE PROBLEM

More than a third of women around the world have experienced physical or sexual violence, most commonly committed by an intimate partner.³ Many victims live in low-income countries where violence against women is too often accepted or tolerated.⁴

OVERVIEW OF THE EVIDENCE:

- One published paper found that this faith-based couples' counseling program, known as Becoming One, has been shown to be effective in rural Uganda. A 12-session "Becoming One" counseling program significantly decreased all forms of IPV, shifted power within the relationship from men to women, and improved the overall quality of relationships 12 months after implementation. Researchers found that faith leaders with the highest progressive views produced the greatest changes (Boyer et al., 2022). Other couples' counseling programs in Rwanda also found positive effects (Dunkle et al., 2020; Doyle et al., 2018), while studies of other couples' counseling interventions using different models have had mixed results (Leight et al., 2020).
- While this was a high-quality randomized evaluation, it is unclear if this intervention will have the same impacts in other contexts or with other implementers.

COST: LOW

Faith leaders commonly provide advice and counseling to couples; however, they typically receive limited training and often lack the appropriate skills to provide actionable guidance. Many faith-based

organizations offer some guidance to their faith leaders on couples' counseling, so the Becoming One program can easily and sustainably be integrated into core church programming. Carrying out the program in new locations would require some adaptation of the content and training of new faith leaders, but low additional implementation costs make it much less expensive than most other IPV reduction interventions. Additionally, building of the established networks of faith-based organizations allows the program to have a more direct pathway to scale than attempting to run standalone IPV reduction programs.

WHAT'S NEEDED NEXT:

- IPA Uganda is currently working with World Vision and the Church of Uganda on a national scale-up of the program. As part of the scale-up, IPA is testing whether faith leaders can charge for the couples guides without excluding couples who can benefit from the program and to increase sustainability.
- The intervention is tied to faith leaders, so faith-based organizations are the primary target for scaling. IPA is currently exploring opportunities to collaborate with World Vision to adapt and scale the program across multiple denominations in countries such as Kenya and Papua New Guinea. There is a need to further refine the operational model and learn from the adaptations in new contexts.
- Given the promise of Becoming One, the program's content should be adapted and tested in different regions where religion is an important part of daily life and intimate partner violence remains high.

³ World Health Organization, 2021: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women>

⁴ Banerjee et al., 2019.



Edutainment to change attitudes and behavior

Entertainment education (“edutainment”) is “a communication strategy that works through mass entertainment media with the aim of promoting a better context for behavior change than the delivery of information alone.”⁵ It can be delivered over radio, television, or public screenings, depending on what forms of media are most accessible.

THE PROBLEM

Governments and NGOs often provide people with information as a way to encourage behavior change—whether regarding health, the rights of women and minorities, or how to take advantage of economic opportunities—in hopes that the information will help people make positive decisions. But information alone is often not effective.

OVERVIEW OF THE EVIDENCE

- **Tailoring content:** Edutainment aimed at viewers’ specific needs or featuring role models who are similar to the viewer can be more effective than broader messages (Bernard et al., 2015).
- **Health behaviors:** In Nigeria, an edutainment MTV series about HIV led to significant improvements in knowledge and attitudes towards HIV and risky sexual behavior. Those exposed to the show were twice as likely to get tested for HIV eight months later compared to the control group (Banerjee et al., 2019). In India, an edutainment video on the importance of iron-fortified salt increased uptake just as much as a 50 percent discount (Banerjee et al., 2015).
- **Gender attitudes and violence against women (VAW):** In Uganda, short videos designed to encourage reporting of intimate partner violence, embedded in Hollywood movies and screened in local video halls, led to a notable reduction of VAW incidents reported in households. The videos also decreased the perception that those who speak out against VAW will face social sanctions and increased audiences’ willingness to report it to authorities (Green et al., 2018). In South-West Nigeria, male viewers of an MTV edutainment TV series depicting a violent husband were 21 percent less likely to justify violence than the control group eight months after (Banerjee et al., 2019). More broadly, edutainment has been shown to change attitudes about gender and women’s rights (Mehmood et al., 2023) and increase uptake of family planning (Glennester et al., 2021).
- **Aspirations and economic outcomes:** In rural Ethiopia, a one-hour documentary showing people from similar communities who succeeded in agriculture or small business without outside help improved aspirations, savings, credit choices, and investments in children’s schooling (Bernard et al., 2014).

COST: LOW

- Producing and distributing a sequence of anti-VAW videos in rural Uganda cost US\$20,000, representing a scalable, cost-effective strategy at US\$4.7 per person and US\$66 per averted violent incident.
- In Burkina Faso, modeling suggests a national radio campaign would increase using modern contraceptives users by 225,000 at a cost of US\$7.70 per woman.
- “The costs of producing content are fixed, so any intervention becomes progressively more cost-effective as it is scaled up. Even in linguistically diverse countries, videos can be easily dubbed into other languages.” (Bernard et al., 2015).

WHAT’S NEEDED NEXT:

- While edutainment programs can be extremely cost-effective, their persuasiveness and impact can vary greatly. The challenge for development organizations is knowing whether the content and narratives they are creating will be effective at engaging audiences and driving long-term shifts in beliefs. IPA is working with researchers and content providers in Tanzania to develop a methodology for early-stage testing of edutainment content to predict if it will lead to more lasting change once scaled.
- Development organizations are currently under-utilizing edutainment interventions given the prospect of creating extremely cost-effective programs at scale. There are currently a very limited number of media-focused development organizations or partnerships between major development organizations and media partners, and an even more limited number that have integrated evidence-informed decision-making into their content creation process. There is a need to promote more partnerships between content creators, development partners, and researchers to expand evidence-backed edutainment programs.

⁵ Ibid.



Digital payments to improve financial health

Digital payments, including mobile money and bank transfers, offer a cashless, quick, secure, and more private way to send and receive money.

THE PROBLEM

In low- and middle-income countries, many people—especially women—are unbanked and use cash for all transactions, including for sending and receiving money from friends and family, getting paid by employers, and receiving loans. Compared to digital forms of money, moving cash has high transaction costs, and cash is harder to save.

OVERVIEW OF THE EVIDENCE:

- Evidence from several countries shows that mobile money adoption improves household resilience and consumption, and reduces poverty by providing better and more efficient access to informal private transfers ([Suri and Jack, 2016](#); [Batista and Vicente, 2020](#); [Wieser et al., 2019](#); and [Lee et al., 2021](#)). Recipients of mobile money wage payments in Bangladesh also reported better resilience and were less likely to cut meals or medical expenses ([Breza et al., 2020](#)).
- Digital payments can also strengthen women's empowerment by providing privacy and control over money ([Field et al., 2021](#); [Aker et al., 2016](#); [Riley, 2022](#)), allowing them to resist social pressure to share resources or divert money to less desired uses.
- Digital delivery of credit and loan products show modest, but positive effects on welfare, by allowing recipients to quickly access money in the event of an unexpected income shock ([Bharadwaj et al., 2019](#); [Bjorkegren et al., 2023](#)). Downstream impacts on debt, income, and business outcomes are dependent on financial literacy, repayment terms, and other design features ([Brailovskaya et al., 2021](#)).

COST: LOW

Consumers are willing to pay for digital payments and many products are commercially viable at scale. For governments, NGOs, microfinance institutions,

employers, and others looking to digitize payments as part of other programming, a large up-front investment is required to connect to the payment rails, but we expect that organizations may recover their initial investment over time as per-transaction costs should be lower than the cost of manually distributing cash.

It should be noted that the end cost to the consumer may impede deeper adoption of digital payments, especially among the poor.

WHAT'S NEEDED NEXT:

- A well-functioning digital financial services ecosystem requires up-front investment in infrastructure like cash-in/cash-out (CICO) networks, payment switches, merchant payment acceptance networks, and connectivity. While initial investments in infrastructure may be large, widespread adoption may lead to cost savings later.
- More evidence on the most effective ways to increase adoption of digital payments by both individuals and businesses is needed, including on supply-side investments such as appropriate product design, infrastructure, pricing transparency, affordability, and CICO networks. This evidence and the investment in promising practices and business models could lead to large benefits on a massive scale.
- Having employers and governments make payments digitally offers a promising means to increase adoption and get more people using formal financial services, but more evidence is needed on how to ensure these models drive take-up and usage of digital payments at scale.
- Policymakers will need to invest in capacity building to measure and mitigate risks to consumers and the financial system as a whole. Ideally, this should be achieved through data-driven market monitoring and the adoption of adequate consumer protection measures.



Childcare for women's economic empowerment and child development

Childcare support may include vouchers for private childcare, publicly-provided daycare, community-based models, and public after-school childcare programs. Some programs also pair childcare services with job placement or training programs.

THE PROBLEM

Globally, women disproportionately care for children, and their labor force participation and earnings are generally much lower than those of men. Childcare supports women who want to work and offers education, socialization, and nutrition to children during the first years of their lives.

OVERVIEW OF THE EVIDENCE

- A review of nine randomized evaluations from eight LMICs (Brazil, Burkina Faso, Chile, Egypt, India, Kenya, Mozambique, and Uganda) found that access to childcare increased labor market participation for women; however, this effect was only found in contexts where there were no other major barriers to women's employment outside of the home ([J-PAL Policy Insight, 2023](#)). Five studies (Chile, India, Kenya, Mozambique, and Nicaragua) show that access to childcare resulted in an increase in women's employment of between 5-47 percent.
- Several studies demonstrate the benefits of childcare for children, including better development ([Bjorvatn et al., 2022](#)), growth and nutritional status ([Attanasio et al., 2022](#)), and health ([Campbell et al., 2014](#)).
- A study done in Uganda found that 37 percent of women bring their children to work, compared to zero percent of men, and that businesses of women who bring their children to work are much less profitable than those of women and men who don't ([Delecourt and Fitzpatrick, 2021](#)).
- A recent working paper examines whether and to what extent childcare laws, intended to increase access and affordability, affect women's labor market outcomes. The review finds that the enactment of childcare laws increases the rate of female labor force participation by two percent, on average, with the effect increasing up to four percent five years later. These outcomes are driven largely by married women between the ages of 35-44 who have completed less than primary education ([Anukriti et al., 2023](#)).

COST: MODERATE

The cost of childcare programs—which range from modest subsidies to free care—vary greatly. In Uganda, one program cost \$112 per participant, while other programs are significantly more expensive.

WHAT'S NEEDED NEXT:

- Scaling access to affordable childcare has the potential to make significant impacts on women's economic empowerment, agency, and labor market participation, which in turn could lead to greater economic output for women and a significant boost to the global economy. Affordable and quality center-based early childhood education may also improve a range of child development outcomes.
- Some key areas for further research include measuring the impacts of childcare beyond employment and income, such as agency and mental health, and conducting cost-effectiveness analysis on these models to measure the long-term benefits to society and the economy.



Payment for ecosystem services to reduce deforestation and protect the environment

Payment for ecosystem services (PES) is a simple but effective solution to deforestation and other environmental challenges: pay people not to cut down trees, or to make other investments in maintaining watersheds and other ecosystems. PES has the potential to be a win-win intervention, mitigating climate change while providing needed economic benefits to households in low- and middle-income countries.

THE PROBLEM

Over 90 percent of global deforestation from 2000 to 2018 occurred in tropical forests, where an area of forest roughly the size of Western Europe was cut down. In 2021, world leaders committed to conserve and restore forests and other ecosystems as part of the effort to mitigate climate change. Yet tropical primary forest loss in 2022 increased to 4.1 million hectares, the equivalent of losing 11 football fields of forest per minute. This forest loss produced 2.7 gigatonnes (Gt) of carbon dioxide emissions, equivalent to India's annual fossil fuel emissions (WRI).

OVERVIEW OF THE EVIDENCE

- A randomized evaluation of payments to Ugandan landowners in exchange for not clearing trees found substantial reduction in deforestation compared to a control group (Jayachandran et al., 2017).
- Analysis of Mexico's Payments for Hydrological Services Program (Alix-Garcia, Sims, and Yañez-Pagans, 2015) found the program reduced tree cover loss by over 40 percent while also having a small impact on poverty reduction.
- A difference-in-difference estimate of a PES program in Ecuador showed households reduced grazing by 20% over ten years and reductions continued even after payments stopped (Hayes et al., 2022).
- Ferraro and Simorangkir (2020) found substantial (30%) improvements in forest cover loss in Indonesia from a cash transfer program with no environmental requirement or messaging. The authors hypothesize the impact is due to consumption smoothing, noting the PKH cash transfer program had the greatest impact on deforestation during negative rainfall shocks.
- Jack et al. (2022) evaluated different payment mechanisms of a PES program to reduce air pollution

from crop burning in Punjab, India. They found that offering partial upfront payments led to a doubling of compliance and reduced burning by 50-80% compared to standard PES or a control group. The upfront payments helped farmers with liquidity constraints and may have helped build trust in the program.

COST: MODERATE

- In Uganda, the average landowner who participated in the PES program received the equivalent of US\$113. The reduction in carbon entering the atmosphere induced by the program was estimated at US\$0.46 per ton of carbon. This is roughly half of the social cost of carbon estimated by the United States EPA, and much more cost-effective than other carbon mitigation programs, such as incentives for electric cars or upgrades to more efficient appliances.

WHAT'S NEEDED NEXT:

- The main obstacle to scaling PES is financing. The larger PES programs tend to be in wealthier countries such as Mexico and China. There are few or no PES programs operating at scale in low-income countries.
- The evidence above shows how critical program design and contract mechanisms can be in influencing program participation and impact. Is the conditionality of PES even needed? Or might targeted cash transfers be sufficient? In Uganda, PES reduced deforestation but tree cover was still lost. How much would payments need to be to maintain or increase tree cover?
- Most PES programs require monitoring for compliance, which can be expensive. Newer technologies such as remote sensing via satellites, or LIDAR, have the potential to reduce monitoring costs dramatically.



CONCLUSION

A Call to Action

Around the world, promising innovations are emerging with the potential to improve the lives of people living in poverty. Yet the number of evidence-based programs that are operating at scale is still relatively small.

IPA engages in a wide range of research and policy work to identify, advance, and support promising evidence-based innovations at all points and along all levels of the path to scale, from proof of concept to exploratory, emerging, and eventually established innovations making an impact at scale. Taking these steps can improve lives and support human flourishing for an untold number of people for many years to come.

Equipped with hundreds of evaluations in our portfolio, sector experts, and Policy and Path-to-Scale Research teams, we have identified 14 emerging innovations that hold the most promise for improving health, reducing monetary poverty, and enhancing well-being in various ways at a large scale.

The substantial evidence behind the “Best Bets” described in this report makes them worthy of serious consideration by implementers working to achieve similar outcomes. Researchers should collaborate with implementers to better understand where and how these innovations work best at scale and to produce more and more consistent cost-effectiveness analyses, to enable quicker and more efficient review of innovations to inform scaling decisions. Funders should support the implementation at scale of these innovations and invest in the research each emerging intervention requires.

This report is an invitation for coalitions of implementers, researchers, and funders to capitalize on existing knowledge of what works to address some of the world’s most pressing problems, and to invest in answering remaining questions as they scale these interventions. By working with IPA and placing their bets on the emerging innovations profiled here, implementers, researchers, and funders can make a decisive difference in improving the lives of people living in poverty.

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Annex

Established Innovations

Structured Pedagogy **SECTOR: EDUCATION** **POLICY PRIORITY: HIGH**

The term “structured pedagogy” typically means applying a combination of core supports to teaching and learning. These usually include teacher training, lesson plans, and teachers guides; materials for learners such as textbooks, worksheets, and storybooks; and ongoing support and monitoring of teachers through coaching, refresher trainings, and other system supports (FLN Hub, 2020). These core elements are designed to be jointly integrated and mutually reinforcing, to promote evidence-based approaches to teaching literacy and numeracy.

KEY STUDIES

- Jukes, Matthew CH, Elizabeth L. Turner, Margaret M. Dubeck, Katherine E. Halliday, Hellen N. Inyega, Sharon Wolf, Stephanie Simmons Zuilkowski, and Simon J. Brooker. 2017. “Improving literacy instruction in Kenya through teacher professional development and text messages support: A cluster randomized trial.” *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness* 10, no. 3: 449-481.
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IMPACTS

- Structured pedagogy reforms have demonstrated measurable and significant impact on student learning, especially in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs); a review of 216 interventions concluded that structured pedagogy programs have the “largest and

most consistent positive average effects on learning outcomes” (Snilstveit et al., 2015).

- There is also evidence of successful implementation at scale in Kenya (Piper et al., 2018). Research in Kenya has also begun to look at which components are most critical for effectiveness (Piper et al., 2018).
- Research in Uganda compared an NGO-led implementation to a reduced-cost version implemented by the government. The NGO program raised reading scores by 0.64 SD and writing scores by 0.45 SD. The reduced-cost version had statistically insignificant reading gains and some large negative effects on advanced writing (Kerwin et al., 2021).

SCALING-UP QUESTIONS

The main questions around scaling relate to cost-effectiveness at scale, dosage, and duration.

POTENTIAL FOR IMPACT AT SCALE

Successful implementation at national scale in Kenya.

COMPARED TO OTHER APPROACHES/ COST-EFFECTIVENESS

The Global Education Evidence Advisory Panel has identified this intervention as one of the three “Great Buys” (highly cost-effective and supported by a strong body of evidence) to improve learning and education outcomes ([link to the report](#)). Supporting teachers with structured pedagogy increased learning at a relatively low cost in Kenya, Liberia, and South Africa.

Teaching at the Right Level

SECTOR: EDUCATION | POLICY PRIORITY: HIGH

Initially developed and pioneered by the Indian NGO Pratham, Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) and related interventions aim to address a status quo where classrooms include children at all different learning levels and teachers only teach to children at the very highest end of the distribution. Fundamental principles of these interventions include focusing on foundational skills of literacy and numeracy, regularly assessing children on these skills, grouping children by their ability level rather than age or grade, and teaching key concepts such as phonics in active pedagogies, rather than simply focusing on completing curriculum.

KEY STUDIES

- Banerjee, Abhijit, Rukmini Banerji, James Berry, Esther Duflo, Harini Kannan, Shobhini Mukherji, Marc Shotland, and Michael Walton. 2016. [“Mainstreaming an effective intervention: Evidence from randomized evaluations of ‘Teaching at the Right Level’ in India.”](#) No. w22746. National Bureau of Economic Research.
- Duflo, Annie, Jessica Kiessel, and Adrienne Lucas. 2020. [“Experimental Evidence on Alternative Policies to Increase Learning at Scale.”](#) No. 27298. National Bureau of Economic Research.
- Beg, Sabrin, Anne Fitzpatrick, Adrienne Lucas, Edward Tsinigo, and Henry Atimone. 2019. [“Strengthening teacher accountability to reach all students \(STARS\).”](#) World Bank SIEF, Milestone 3.
- Banerjee, A. V., S. Cole, E. Duflo, and L. Linden. 2007. [“Remedying Education: Evidence from Two Randomized Experiments in India.”](#) *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 122 (3): 1235–64.
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IMPACTS

- Depending on the intervention, effects include positive impacts on student attendance, enrollment, school choice, and test scores.
- Multiple studies, particularly in India, have been used to investigate what works best and the factors

relevant for scale (Banerjee et al., 2016). In Ghana, IPA has partnered with Ghana Education Service and the Ministry of Education for over a decade to design, implement, and evaluate differentiated learning interventions. This work was the first initiative to implement a TaRL approach entirely through an African education system. Building on the results of two randomized evaluations (Duflo, Kiessel, and Lucas, 2020; Beg, Fitzpatrick, and Lucas, 2021), IPA Ghana and researchers are continuing the collaboration with GES and the MOE to scale the intervention to 10,000 schools.

SCALING-UP QUESTIONS

Much research has already looked at key factors for scaling. In Ghana, ongoing research is looking at questions such as how to conduct ongoing teacher training remotely and cost-effectively, and how to engage support actors such as coaches and headteachers to monitor and support teachers in implementation. IPA is also working on studies of TaRL in Côte d'Ivoire and Zambia.

POTENTIAL FOR IMPACT AT SCALE

Successful implementation at scale in multiple countries and different contexts, including India and Ghana.

COMPARED TO OTHER APPROACHES/ COST-EFFECTIVENESS

Costs vary across the many different models and versions of TaRL and across the contexts in which it is implemented, but it is generally recognized as a cost-effective intervention.

Graduation Approach

SECTOR: SOCIAL PROTECTION POLICY PRIORITY: HIGH

The ultra-poor graduation approach is designed to graduate households out of extreme poverty. This program, typically delivered over two years, provides households with a holistic set of services including livelihood trainings, productive asset transfers, consumption support, savings services, basic health services, and life skills coaching. The graduation approach is one of the most rigorously evaluated anti-poverty interventions, with randomized evaluations in India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Honduras, Peru, Ethiopia, Yemen, Ghana, Uganda, and elsewhere.

KEY STUDIES

- Banerjee, Abhijit, Esther Duflo, Nathanael Goldberg, Dean Karlan, Robert Osei, William Parienté, Jeremy Shapiro, Bram Thuysbaert, and Christopher Udry. 2015. [“A multifaceted program causes lasting progress for the very poor: Evidence from six countries.”](#) *Science* 348, no. 6236: 1260799.
- Banerjee, Abhijit, Dean Karlan, Robert Osei, Hannah Trachtman, and Christopher Udry. 2022. [“Unpacking a multi-faceted program to build sustainable income for the very poor.”](#) *Journal of Development Economics* 155: 102781.
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IMPACTS

The studies noted above demonstrate a strong evidence base for the impact of the program. IPA and J-PAL’s study published in *Science* in 2015 showed six adaptations of BRAC’s ultra-poor graduation program were effective in increasing income, consumption, and assets for ultra-poor households. Since then, new interventions have adapted the components of the graduation approach to increase cost-effectiveness, enhance impacts, or reach new populations.

SCALING-UP QUESTIONS

While effective, the graduation approach has been relatively expensive, so most scaling questions relate to how to reduce cost while maintaining impacts. IPA has written a [research agenda](#) for scaling the next generation of graduation programs, including through optimizing the level of components, digital delivery, and integrating graduation into existing safety net programs.

POTENTIAL FOR IMPACT AT SCALE

Graduation is already being scaled, though not enough to meet the goal of eliminating extreme poverty. Recent research shows that adding graduation components to existing safety net programs can produce strong impacts at relatively modest cost.

COMPARED TO OTHER APPROACHES/ COST-EFFECTIVENESS

- Cost-benefit calculations from the six-country study confirm that the long-run benefits of graduation outweigh the up-front costs. Program costs ranged from \$344 to \$2,697 with returns per participant ranging from 130% to 433%, with the notable exception of Honduras. Graduation performed well in all countries except Honduras, with some sites producing gains far exceeding the amount invested ([Policy Bulletin, 2015](#)).
- The [2016 study](#) by Sulaiman et al. comparing the cost-effectiveness of three anti-poverty social protection interventions reviewed 30 livelihood development programs, 11 lump-sum unconditional cash transfers, and seven graduation programs. The study found lump-sum transfers had the highest benefit-cost ratio, but very few target the extreme poor and measure long-term impact. In contrast, graduation programs were found to be more cost-effective than the livelihood programs that targeted the extreme poor and measured long-term impacts (i.e., at least one year after the end of interventions).
- Two more recent studies found graduation programs outperformed cash ([Sedlmayr et al., 2020](#); [Chowdhury et al., 2017](#)).

Cash Transfers and Universal Basic Income

SECTOR: SOCIAL PROTECTION POLICY PRIORITY: HIGH

Universal basic income (UBI) is a policy idea to give all households a minimum standard of living through the provision of regular cash transfers. Conceptually, the only difference between cash transfers and UBI is the idea that UBI would be made available to all households, regardless of income. This allows for the elimination of inclusion and exclusion errors that result from proxy measures of income, often used in developing countries where income measures can be difficult to ascertain, for the informal sector in particular, and where participation in the formal tax system is low.

KEY STUDIES

- Bastagli, Francesca, Jessica Hagen-Zanker, Luke Harman, Valentina Barca, Georgina Sturge, Tanja Schmidt, and Luca Pellerano. 2016. “Cash transfers: what does the evidence say?” London: ODI 1, no. 7.
- Hanna, R., & Olken, B. A. 2018. “Universal basic incomes versus targeted transfers: Anti-poverty programs in developing countries.” *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 32(4), 201-26.
- Banerjee, A., Faye, M., Krueger, A., Niehaus, P., & Suri, T. 2020. “Effects of a Universal Basic Income during the pandemic.” *Innovations for Poverty Action Working Paper*.
- Banerjee, Abhijit, Paul Niehaus, and Tavneet Suri. 2019. “Universal basic income in the developing world.” *Annual Review of Economics* 11: 959-983.
- Jones, Damon, and Ioana Marinescu. 2022. “The labor market impacts of universal and permanent cash transfers: Evidence from the Alaska Permanent Fund.” *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy* 14, no. 2: 315-340.
- Salehi-Isfahani, Djavad, and Mohammad H. Mostafavi-Dehzoeei. 2018. “Cash transfers and labor supply: Evidence from a large-scale program in Iran.” *Journal of Development Economics* 135 (2018): 349-367.

IMPACTS

- There is an enormous body of evidence on the impacts of cash transfers (Bastagli et al., 2016). Cash transfers have produced many benefits, especially on household expenditure. Recent research has demonstrated long-term impacts of cash transfers on children.
- In their simulation, Banerjee, Hanna, Kriendler, and Olken (2017) suggest that targeted cash transfer programs deliver substantial improvements in welfare compared to universal programs and may outweigh the impacts of inclusion errors common in UBIs.
- A common critique of UBI is the potential to impact labor supply. However, an analysis of seven RCTs regarding the income effects of government-run cash transfer programs, providing between four and 20 percent of household incomes, found no systematic

evidence that any of these programs caused a reduction in labor supply (Banerjee et al., 2017).

- The first experimental evidence on UBI took place in rural Kenya, during the COVID-19 pandemic, and results show that transfers made significant improvements in well-being, including reducing hunger, sickness, and depression, despite the pandemic (Banerjee et al., 2020).

SCALING-UP QUESTIONS

- There are operational questions about delivering cash transfers at mass scale.
- There are also fiscal questions about finding ways to cover large numbers of households. In the absence of a progressive income tax schedule to finance UBI schemes, what are alternatives for both financing and enrollment?
- There are questions regarding general equilibrium effects, and what happens to prices when cash transfers are delivered at scale.
- Further research is needed on the impacts of UBI on labor market participation, possible distortions to labor market supply, and human capital investments.
- Further research is needed on the impacts of UBI on measures of resilience and participants' ability to absorb shocks.

POTENTIAL FOR IMPACT AT SCALE

Supporters of UBI argue that it has the potential to impact wealth redistribution for the world's poorest. With a lack of rigorous large-scale experimental evidence, evaluating a scaled program could have global policy implications at a time when the policy debate is in the spotlight, post-pandemic.

COMPARED TO OTHER APPROACHES/ COST-EFFECTIVENESS

Low administrative costs and ease of implementation are often cited as favorable elements of the intervention when compared to other, more complex safety net schemes.

Exploratory Innovations

Informational Interventions to Parents and Children

SECTOR: EDUCATION RESEARCH PRIORITY: MEDIUM

A growing body of research has found that providing information to either parents, children, or both, can improve educational outcomes including enrollment, attendance, and learning. Different types of information (e.g., income-earning benefits of education, individual and student-level test scores) can be delivered in a variety of ways (e.g., community meetings, SMS).

KEY STUDIES

- Jensen, Robert. 2010. “The (perceived) returns to education and the demand for schooling.” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 125, no. 2 (2010): 515-548.
- Andrabi, Tahir, Jishnu Das, and Asim Ijaz Khwaja. 2017. “Report cards: The impact of providing school and child test scores on educational markets.” *American Economic Review* 107, no. 6: 1535-1563.
- Busso, Matias, Taryn Dinkelman, A. Claudia Martínez, and Dario Romero. 2017. “The effects of financial aid and returns information in selective and less selective schools: Experimental evidence from Chile.” *Labour Economics* 45 (2017): 79-91.
- Neilson, Christopher, Francisco Gallego, and Oswaldo Molina. 2016. “Decidiendo para un futuro mejor: el efecto de la información sobre la deserción escolar y el uso del tiempo.” *Publicaciones del Ministerio de Educación de Perú*.
- Nguyen, Trang. 2008. “Information, role models and perceived returns to education: experimental evidence from Madagascar.” Working paper.

IMPACTS

- Depending on the intervention, effects include increased student attendance, enrollment, school choice, and test scores.
- When considering scale, it is also possible that delivering such interventions might have equilibrium effects—such as in Pakistan, where providing information at the market level influenced school choice dynamics and responses from both public and private schools (Andrabi et al., 2017).

- *Not all interventions are effective: A study in Kenya* provided parents with information about their children’s performance on basic literacy and numeracy tests, in addition to information on how to become more involved in children’s learning, but found no behavior change in response. The researchers theorized a framework of different conditions that need to be met in order for informational interventions to be effective (Lieberman, Posner, and Tsai, 2014).

SCALING-UP QUESTIONS

Detailed contextualized understanding of different systems and actors is key. Understanding how various actors respond to information and their potential interaction might also be an important consideration.

POTENTIAL FOR IMPACT AT SCALE

One of the most promising aspects of informational interventions is that they can be very inexpensive and relatively easy to deliver at scale.

COMPARED TO OTHER APPROACHES/ COST-EFFECTIVENESS

It is very cost-effective to send a text message, for example, rather than convene a group in person, but providing information should not be seen as a cure-all.

Community Engagement in School Management

SECTOR: EDUCATION RESEARCH PRIORITY: MEDIUM

Engaging communities in the management of primary education typically includes community meetings, the election of leaders, and training on how to monitor outcomes at the school.

KEY STUDIES

- Blimpo, Moussa, David Evans, and Nathalie Lahire. 2015. [“Parental human capital and effective school management: evidence from the Gambia.”](#) *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper* 7238.
- Pradhan, Menno, Daniel Suryadarma, Amanda Beatty, Maisy Wong, Arya Gaduh, Armida Alisjahbana, and Rima Prama Artha. 2014. [“Improving educational quality through enhancing community participation: Results from a randomized field experiment in Indonesia.”](#) *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 6, no. 2: 105-126.
- Barr, Abigail, Frederick Mugisha, Pieter Serneels, and Andrew Zeitlin. 2012. [“Information and collective action in community-based monitoring of schools: Field and lab experimental evidence from Uganda.”](#) Working paper.
- Kabay, Sarah. 2019. [School-based Management in Ugandan Primary Schools](#). Preliminary report.

IMPACTS

- Depending on the intervention, effects include increased student attendance, enrollment, school choice, and test scores.
- When they work, these interventions are highly cost-effective, but even within a single context, these interventions can have variable outcomes.
 - In the Gambia, for example, providing a school management training to principals, teachers, and community representatives seemed to impact student learning only in villages with higher levels of adult literacy (Blimpo, Evans, and Lahire, 2015).
 - In Uganda, one variation of a school scorecard program was effective while another was not (Barr et al., 2012).

SCALING-UP QUESTIONS

These interventions are not always effective. More research is needed to better understand the underlying mechanisms of different interventions and the conditions under which they are most likely to be effective.

POTENTIAL FOR IMPACT AT SCALE

Many education systems have a structure in place for school management, such as school management committees. These interventions can capitalize on existing structures to scale, and when these interventions work, they are highly effective.

COMPARED TO OTHER APPROACHES/ COST-EFFECTIVENESS

When they work, these interventions are highly cost-effective.

Teacher Incentive Pay

SECTOR: EDUCATION

RESEARCH PRIORITY: MEDIUM

Teacher pay-for-performance contracts or incentive contracts are used to connect teachers' pay to their performance, as assessed through students' test scores, activity in the classroom, or other indicators.

KEY STUDIES

- Leaver, Clare, Owen Ozier, Pieter Serneels, and Andrew Zeitlin. 2021. "Recruitment, effort, and retention effects of performance contracts for civil servants: Experimental evidence from Rwandan primary schools." *American Economic Review* 111, no. 7: 2213-2246.
- Cilliers, Jacobus, Ibrahim Kasiye, Clare Leaver, Pieter Serneels, and Andrew Zeitlin. 2018. "Pay for locally monitored performance? A welfare analysis for teacher attendance in Ugandan primary schools." *Journal of Public Economics* 167 (2018): 69-90.
- Gilligan, Daniel O., Naureen Karachiwalla, Ibrahim Kasiye, Adrienne M. Lucas, and Derek Neal. 2022. "Educator incentives and educational triage in rural primary schools." *Journal of Human Resources* 57, no. 1: 79-111.

IMPACTS

Depending on the study, positive impacts have been observed on teacher attendance, effort, and motivation, as well as student test scores and student drop-out rates.

SCALING-UP QUESTIONS

Scaling pay-for-performance schemes presents several key challenges for education systems, which need to be able to accurately monitor teacher behavior and assess children's learning outcomes. A key focus of IPA's work to scale the pay-for-performance scheme in Rwanda is to help build institutional capacity in both of these areas.

POTENTIAL FOR IMPACT AT SCALE

- These interventions can be implemented at almost no cost (for example, in the study in Rwanda, teachers' pay-for-performance contracts come at no additional cost to the government) and can be implemented through existing payment systems. The challenges come in relation to communication, transparency, and measuring teacher effectiveness.
- IPA is currently working to scale and conduct further research on teacher pay-for-performance contracts in Rwanda. IPA Rwanda and researchers are continuing their collaboration with Rwanda Education Board and the Ministry of Education and are now working to scale the pay-for-performance contracts across multiple districts in Rwanda. The approach to pay-for-performance contracts is well-suited to the Rwandan context, because it aligns with the existing *imihigo* system, which provides performance contracts to various civil servants.

COMPARED TO OTHER PROGRAMS/ COST-EFFECTIVENESS

Technically, performance contracts can be "no cost" if they align with how the government is currently paying teachers, but implementation requires a way to measure teacher effectiveness. If the school system already measures student learning regularly, these interventions could technically cost nothing, aside from the work to put them in place.

Preparation for Social Action

SECTOR: EDUCATION RESEARCH PRIORITY: HIGH

The Ugandan NGO Kimanya-Ngeyo Foundation for Science and Education (KN) uses activities and content from *Preparation for Social Action*, a curriculum developed and promoted by the Colombian organization Fundación para la Aplicación y Enseñanza de las Ciencias (FUNDAEC). The curriculum is broadly focused on developing capacity in language, mathematics, science, and community life processes for a wide range of actors. In KN's work, teachers are encouraged to think like scientists and support their students to gain knowledge by investigating the world around them.

KEY STUDIES

- Ashraf, Nava, Abhijit Banerjee, and Vesall Nourani. 2020. "Learning to Teach by Learning to Learn." Working paper.

IMPACTS

Positive impacts were found on student test scores, higher-order thinking, performance at a science fair, and performance on the primary-leaving exam (a high-stakes, end-of-primary school exam that determines entrance into secondary school). It raised the pass rate in the country's high-stakes national exam from 51 percent to 75 percent (Ashraf, Banerjee, and Nourani, 2020).

SCALING-UP QUESTIONS

- What are the underlying mechanisms of the intervention and under what conditions is it most effective?
- Many interventions struggle to transition from local, NGO-led implementation to at-scale government implementation. As part of the initial impact assessment, IPA is collaborating with KN and researchers to use qualitative research to more deeply investigate the underlying theory of change and the experiences of students and teachers in the study. At the same time, the team is conducting additional exploratory research with the Ugandan Ministry of Education and Sports Teacher Training Colleges to consider if and how the intervention might be adapted for implementation in Uganda. This project represents an initiative at the early phases of the pathway to scale.

POTENTIAL FOR IMPACT AT SCALE

This approach is still very early in the process of scaling—with only one RCT—so a key question for the research team is how to build on the extraordinary impact found in a single study. One compelling feature is that the original curriculum was designed by an organization in Colombia, and has been adapted for use in multiple contexts and settings. So while the work of KN to adapt this curriculum for use in Uganda is unique, it builds on previous horizontal scaling of the FUNDAEC Preparation for Social Action Curriculum.

COMPARED TO OTHER APPROACHES/ COST-EFFECTIVENESS

Based on cost-effectiveness analysis, it is in the top five percent of all educational interventions that have been evaluated (Ashraf, Banerjee, and Nourani, 2020).

Heuristics-based Financial Literacy Training

SECTOR: ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND PRIVATE SECTOR DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH PRIORITY: HIGH

Heuristic training aims to provide simple rules-of-thumb or easily digestible business practices to entrepreneurs. It is based on the idea that traditional business training programs may be too complicated or provide too much information to be practical or actionable, especially for individuals with low levels of education. The intervention has been typically studied in the context of micro-entrepreneurs with low levels of education or low levels of cognitive skill. Studied implementations have varied across several dimensions:

- Some implementations include complementary interventions like feedback or access to mobile money accounts.
- The intensity of training has varied significantly across studies, ranging from a single 30-minute session to sessions of three hours per week for five weeks.
- While most implementations have been conducted in person, one study used audio messages delivered via mobile phones.

KEY STUDIES

- Drexler, Alejandro, Greg Fischer, and Antoinette Schoar. 2014. “Keeping it Simple: Financial Literacy and Rules of Thumb.” *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 6, no. 2: 1-31.
- Arraiz, Irani, Syon Bhanot, and Carla Calero. 2019. “Less is more: Experimental evidence on heuristic-based business training in Ecuador.” *IDB Invest Working Paper TN No. 18* (2019).
- Cole, Shawn Allen, Mukta Joshi, and Antoinette Schoar. 2021. “Heuristics on call: The Impact of Mobile Phone-based Business Management Advice.” Available at SSRN 3971013.
- Grohmann, Antonia, Lukas Menkhoff, and Helke Seitz. 2022. “The effect of personalized feedback on small enterprises’ finances in Uganda.” *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 70, no. 3: 1197-1227.
- Batista, Catia, Sandra Sequeira, and Pedro C. Vicente. 2022. “Closing the gender profit gap?.” *Management Science* 68, no. 12: 8553-8567.

IMPACTS

- The intervention was originally studied in the Dominican Republic and shown to have impacts on business practices and ability of businesses to cope with slower periods of business activity.
- Of the four more recent studies summarized in McKenzie and Woodruff (2021), there is only one study (set in Ecuador) that showed positive and statistically significant effects of rules-of-thumb training on business performance.
- In another study from Uganda, the intervention showed statistically significant results on savings and investments when the training was paired with feedback sessions.
- In Mozambique, the training showed positive but insignificant results on profits one and five years after the intervention. However, when the training was paired with access to mobile savings accounts, the results were statistically significant for female entrepreneurs one and five years after the intervention.

SCALING-UP QUESTIONS

- Ideal intervention package: Does heuristics-based training work best with other complementary interventions (e.g., access to a mobile money account/accounting software), and if so, what is the optimal package? Can the approach be extended to other concepts of business management?
- Improving cost-effectiveness: What is the most cost-effective way to scale and deliver the program? Can some components be delivered online or digitally?
- Long-term impacts: What are the long-term impacts of participating in heuristics-based training programs? What are the impacts on business performance?
- Comparison with other training programs: When is heuristic training more effective than other types of training? What is the best way to deliver complex concepts/topics embedded in other training programs?
- Target population: Who does this type of training work best for?

POTENTIAL FOR IMPACT AT SCALE

This is a promising approach, but more research is needed to understand its impacts, especially on business performance. The training programs studied thus far seem to be relatively inexpensive, especially since online/digital methods of delivery have been explored. More replication studies are needed, especially with a focus on understanding the cost-effectiveness of the intervention and the best complementary interventions.

COMPARED TO OTHER APPROACHES/ COST-EFFECTIVENESS

- Compared to personal initiative training or traditional business training, heuristic training, although promising, does not have a large body of evidence to support its effects, and only one study has shown significant positive effects on business performance. It is less costly than personal initiative training or business consulting, but the evidence shows that its effects are concentrated on business practices rather than business performance. It works well for subsistence entrepreneurs.

Business Networking Programs

SECTOR: ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND PRIVATE SECTOR DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH PRIORITY: MEDIUM

This type of intervention aims to evaluate the impact of interactions between firms or entrepreneurs on business practices, business outcomes, and new business connections. The hypothesis is that networking programs could improve firm performance through facilitated learning and partnership development. There is not a standard or proven-effective way to establish connections among firms or entrepreneurs. Studies have tried online or face-to-face courses, regular meetings among firms/entrepreneurs, interactions between entrepreneurs and mentors (and their networks), and serving as judges in a business plan competition, among other approaches. The purpose of the intervention is the same, but the design of the intervention varies significantly across studies.

KEY STUDIES

- Cai, Jing, and Adam Szeidl. 2018. [“Interfirm Relationships and Business Performance.”](#) *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 133 (3): 1229–82.
- Beaman, Lori, Niall Keleher, and Jeremy Magruder. 2018. [“Do Job Networks Disadvantage Women? Evidence from a Recruitment Experiment in Malawi.”](#) *Journal of Labor Economics* 36 (1): 121–57.
- Fafchamps, Marcel, and Simon Quinn. 2018. [“Networks and Manufacturing Firms in Africa: Results from a Randomized Field Experiment.”](#) *The World Bank Economic Review*, October, lhw057.
- Vega-Redondo, Fernando, Paolo Pin, Diego Ubfal, Cristiana Benedetti-Fasil, Charles Brummitt, Gaia Rubera, Dirk Hovy, and Tommaso Fornaciari. 2019. [“Peer Networks and Entrepreneurship: A Pan-African RCT.”](#) Working Papers, Working Papers.
- Eesley, Charles E., and Lynn Wu. 2019. [“For Startups, Adaptability and Mentor Network Diversity Can Be Pivotal: Evidence from a Randomized Experiment on a MOOC Platform.”](#) SSRN Scholarly Paper. Rochester, NY.
- Campos, Francisco, Markus Goldstein, Obert Pimhidzai, Mattea Stein, Bilal Zia. [“Financial management and vocational training in Uganda.”](#) Enhancing financial capability and behavior in low-and middle-income countries: 495.
- Hardy, Morgan, Shelby Grossman, and Meredith Startz. 2021. [“Business-to-Business Information Sharing.”](#)

IMPACTS

- All studies found positive short-term results on different outcomes, depending on what they were evaluating. Some studies found positive effects on firm performance, business practices, or the quality of a business plan submission. Most studies have not evaluated long-term effects. Only one study showed positive results after two years.

SCALING-UP QUESTIONS

- Networking programs are a way to improve access to markets for firms and entrepreneurs. Compared

to other interventions with the same goal, like export promotion, networking programs might be harder to implement because there is no unique and proven successful intervention design. Its cost might vary significantly, depending on the chosen design of the intervention. Therefore, cost-effectiveness comparisons with other interventions might be hard to estimate.

- Some key questions to answer are:
 - Does this intervention have long-lasting effects?
 - Given the inconsistency in intervention design, outcome measures, and varied results across studies, are we confident that we could design an effective networking intervention?
 - What is the best setting for entrepreneurs/firms to interact?
 - Is there a gender component?
 - Can an online setting achieve positive results?
 - Can it be delivered in a cost-effective way?
 - What are the spillover and general equilibrium effects?
 - External validity: Can findings be generalized to other situations, people, or settings?

POTENTIAL FOR IMPACT AT SCALE

The idea of networking as a way to build relationships between firms and facilitate learnings and partnerships is a promising one. It could potentially also be a very inexpensive intervention, which makes the case for further studying how best to design networking programs in a manner that is most effective.

COMPARED TO OTHER APPROACHES/ COST-EFFECTIVENESS

Compared to other interventions with the same goal, like export promotion, networking programs might be harder to implement since there is no unique and proven successful intervention design. Its cost might vary significantly depending on the chosen design of the intervention; therefore cost-effectiveness comparisons with other interventions might be hard to estimate.

Business Plan Competitions

SECTOR: ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND PRIVATE SECTOR DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH PRIORITY: HIGH

This intervention aims to use the mechanism of business plan competitions to identify high potential firms or entrepreneurs and provide them with some combination of training, mentorship, consulting services, and capital to encourage launch or expansion of the firm in terms of sales, profits, or workers employed.

KEY STUDIES

- Fafchamps, Marcel, and Simon Quinn. 2017. “Aspire.” *The Journal of Development Studies* 53 (10): 1615–33.
- Fafchamps, Marcel, and Christopher Woodruff. 2017. “Identifying Gazelles: Expert Panels vs. Surveys as a Means to Identify Firms with Rapid Growth Potential.” *The World Bank Economic Review* 31 (3): 670–86.
- Klinger, Bailey, and Matthias Schündeln. 2011. “Can entrepreneurial activity be taught? Quasi-experimental evidence from Central America.” *World development* 39, no. 9: 1592–1610.
- McKenzie, David. 2017. “Identifying and Spurring High-Growth Entrepreneurship: Experimental Evidence from a Business Plan Competition.” *American Economic Review* 107 (8): 2278–2307.
- Schoar, Antoinette. “The Impact of Business Training and Capital for High Potential Entrepreneurs in Colombia.”

IMPACTS

Three studies found positive impacts on firm survival or launch (+5 – 56 percent), profits (+17 percent, +\$150 per month), and employment generation (+2 – 5 more employees). Two studies found no impact on business outcomes or firm growth, although one found the competition had a positive impact on developing entrepreneurs’ networks. Most studies have not evaluated the long-term effects (beyond one year). **One study** (McKenzie and Woodruff, 2021) followed participants for three years after the intervention was complete and found continuing positive impacts on survival or launch (+20 – 37 percent), employment generation (+80 – 140 percent) and profits (+17 percent) for existing and new firm winners.

SCALING-UP QUESTIONS

- How do we identify high potential firms?
- Which part of the intervention is driving the outcomes?
- How important is the selection process? Are there cheaper ways to conduct selection?
- What are the spillover effects?
- What are the general equilibrium effects?

POTENTIAL FOR IMPACT AT SCALE

This intervention shows promise; however, there is not enough evidence. More replication studies are needed.

COMPARED TO OTHER APPROACHES/ COST-EFFECTIVENESS

This is a promising intervention, but currently there is not a large enough body of evidence to compare it with different interventions and assess the cost-effectiveness.

Alternative Credit Scoring Models

SECTOR: ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND PRIVATE SECTOR DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH PRIORITY: HIGH

Alternative credit scoring models use “nontraditional” data (from mobile phones, social network activity, mobile money transactions, etc.) to assess the creditworthiness of people who have historically lacked access to formal credit or for people who would not qualify for credit by traditional screening.

KEY STUDIES

- Irani Arráiz, Miriam Bruhn, Rodolfo Stucchi. 2015. “Psychometrics as a tool to improve screening and access to credit.” *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 7506* (2015).
- Paravisini, Daniel, and Antoinette Schoar. 2013. “The incentive effect of scores: randomized evidence from credit committees.” No. w19303. *National Bureau of Economic Research*.
- Laura Chioda, Paul Gertler, Sean Higgins. (Ongoing) “The Impact of a Women-Specific Credit Scoring Model on Women’s Access to Credit in the Dominican Republic.”

IMPACTS

- A study in Peru showed that a psychometric test lowered the risk to the loan portfolio when used as a secondary screening mechanism for already banked entrepreneurs, and increased access to credit for unbanked entrepreneurs without increasing portfolio risk.
- A study in Colombia found that when the credit score was included in the loan review, the committees were able to better allocate loans, extending larger loans to less risky borrowers and smaller loans to riskier borrowers.
- An ongoing study in the Dominican Republic is evaluating the impact of credit scoring models designed specifically for women. Long-term effects have not been evaluated in the reviewed studies.

SCALING-UP QUESTIONS

- External validity
- Heterogeneous treatment effects
- Long-term effects

POTENTIAL FOR IMPACT AT SCALE

Alternative credit scoring models are potentially a very useful solution to address the challenges of lending to smaller and more disadvantaged businesses that have limited credit history or lack traditional sources of collateral to secure a loan. These tools lean on vast amounts of data that is being collected and in effect work better at scale. This is a promising but still-growing area of research and more replication studies are needed.

COMPARED TO OTHER APPROACHES/ COST-EFFECTIVENESS

This is a promising intervention, but currently there is not a large enough body of evidence to compare it with different interventions and assess the cost-effectiveness.

Export Promotion

SECTOR: ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND PRIVATE SECTOR DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH PRIORITY: MEDIUM

Export promotion programs aim to provide firms in low- and middle-income countries with access to high-income markets. Export promotion programs might include access to clients that firms would otherwise not have access to, provision of information, and training. Some studies focus on the impact of the program on business performance, while others focus on the relationship between access to finance and exporting.

KEY STUDIES:

- Atkin, David, Amit K. Khandelwal, and Adam Osman. 2017. “Exporting and firm performance: Evidence from a randomized experiment.” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 132, no. 2: 551-615.
- Kapoor, Mudit, Priya Ranjan, and Jibonayan Raychaudhuri. 2017. “The impact of credit constraints on exporting firms: Evidence from the provision and subsequent removal of subsidised credit.” *The World Economy* 40, no. 12: 2854-2874.
- Giacomo De Giorgi, Aminur Rahman, Eric Verhoogen. (Ongoing). “Matching Grant to Connect to Export Market in Tunisia.” Tunisia Matching Grant Impact Evaluation.
- Castro, L. & Hallak, J. C. (Ongoing) “Growing Small and Medium Enterprises by Encouraging Exports: Evidence from Argentina.”
- Llamas S. (Ongoing) “Supporting SMEs to Become Successful Exporters through Good Exporting Practices in Argentina.”

IMPACTS

- Facilitating access to international markets is shown to have impacts on firm performance. A study in Egypt found firms that participated in an export promotion program had 16–26 percent higher profits and exhibited large improvements in quality, alongside reductions in output per hour relative to control firms.
- A study in India showed that credit expansion increased borrowing and improved export earnings, and that businesses continued to borrow and earn more from exporting even after the subsidized credit was revoked.

SCALING-UP QUESTIONS

- External validity
- Long-term effects
- Spillovers
- Best way to deliver

POTENTIAL FOR IMPACT AT SCALE:

This group of interventions shows promise. However, it is still early and there is a need for more replication studies and an understanding of the cost-effectiveness of these types of interventions.

COMPARED TO OTHER APPROACHES/ COST-EFFECTIVENESS

Other types of interventions to increase access to markets include training programs on how to sell to big corporations or government procurement programs. All of these interventions seem promising and have shown positive effects. However, there is not a large enough body of evidence to compare one with another and assess cost-effectiveness.

Targeted Awareness and Behavior Change Interventions

SECTOR: HUMAN TRAFFICKING RESEARCH PRIORITY: HIGH

Awareness raising, public campaigns, and behavior change communication interventions are widespread in the counter-trafficking space. Most are general awareness-raising efforts and are frequently duplicative of campaigns that have already been conducted. There are a few studies that have been conducted in the last ten years that are starting to shift consensus on the need for awareness raising. These show that general awareness is not effective, but targeted awareness campaigns can help to shift knowledge in the short term.

KEY STUDIES

- Archer, Dan, Margaret Boittin, and Cecilia H. Mo. 2016. “Reducing Vulnerability to Human Trafficking: An Experimental Intervention Using Anti-Trafficking Campaigns to Change Knowledge, Attitudes, Beliefs, and Practices in Nepal.” Research and Innovation Grants Working Papers Series, U.S. Agency for International Development (August).
- Boittin, Margaret, Biz Herman, Cecilia H. Mo, Sarah Rich-Zendel, and Soo Sun You. 2020. Experimental Interventions Using Mass Media to Change Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices Around Vulnerability to Forced Labor in Hong Kong. Prepared for U.S. Department of Labor.
- Barsbai, Toman, Victoria S. Licuanan, Andreas Steinmayr, Erwin R. Tiongson, and Dean Yang. 2021. “Information and Immigrant Settlement.” University of Innsbruck, Research Platform Empirical and Experimental Economics, Innsbruck. Working Papers in Economics and Statistics, no. 2021 30.
- Dunsch, Felipe Alexander, Jasper Tjaden and William Quiviger. 2019. Migrants as Messengers: The Impact of Peer to Peer Communication on Potential Migrants in Senegal. Geneva: Impact Evaluation Report, International Organization for Migration.

IMPACTS

- RCTs have found that awareness-raising campaigns have mixed impacts on trafficking incidence, but promising effects on increasing knowledge. Evidence on the effectiveness of trafficking-adjacent interventions for potential migrants has been mixed.
 - Archer, Boittin and Mo (2016): Found that the campaigns increased knowledge, ability to identify trafficking, and sense of urgency and concern around the issue, but not an increase in the awareness of local prevalence in one’s own community.

- Boittin et al. (2020): Found a positive impact on the knowledge of forced labor and migrant domestic worker rights and conditions, but limited effects on attitudes and practices.
- Barsbai et al. (2021): Found no effect on employment, settlement, and subjective well-being.

SCALING-UP QUESTIONS:

- Replication studies are needed.
- More studies are needed to show the long-term effects on behavior change. There are also trafficking-adjacent studies on discrete prevention approaches and packages of support for potential migrants, with an emerging IPA study evaluating an information campaign that incorporates information specifically on trafficking risks.

POTENTIAL FOR IMPACT AT SCALE

This intervention holds promise, and there is a demand for strong evidence on human trafficking. However, there is not yet enough evidence to estimate the impact at scale.

COMPARED TO OTHER APPROACHES/ COST-EFFECTIVENESS

This is a promising intervention, but currently there is not a large enough body of evidence to compare it with different interventions and assess the cost-effectiveness.

Social Protection Programs for Human Trafficking Survivors and At-Risk Populations

SECTOR: SOCIAL PROTECTION HUMAN TRAFFICKING RESEARCH PRIORITY: HIGH

Financial vulnerability and shocks are often referred to as root factors of trafficking and increased vulnerability of trafficking survivors to re-trafficking. Some counter-trafficking prevention and protection-focused programs offer products such as rice banks and savings groups as a way to bolster financial health for at-risk populations, reduce the impacts of shocks that might lead people to take on risky labor migration, and improve reintegration prospects for survivors of trafficking.

Many counter-trafficking protection-focused programs (branded as economic empowerment programs) offer components of the graduation model—including productive asset transfer/in-kind grants, technical training and coaching, and soft-skills training—to help populations at risk of trafficking to develop livelihoods in their home communities. To date, however, no studies have measured the effectiveness of these programs—specifically focused on populations deemed most at risk of trafficking—using RCTs.

KEY STUDIES

- Betancourt, Theresa S., Ryan McBain, Elizabeth A. Newnham, Adeyinka M. Akinsulure-Smith, Robert T. Brennan, John R. Weisz, and Nathan B. Hansen. 2014. “A Behavioral Intervention for War-Affected Youth in Sierra Leone: A Randomized Controlled Trial.” *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry* 53, no. 12 (December): 1288–97.
- Jones, Kelly and Erick Gong. 2021. “Precautionary Savings and Shock-Coping Behaviors: Effects of Promoting Mobile Bank Savings on Transactional Sex in Kenya.” *Journal of Health Economics* 78 (July): 102460.
- O’Callaghan, Paul, John McMullen, Ciarán Shannon, Harry Rafferty, and Alastair Black. 2013. “A Randomized Controlled Trial of Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Sexually Exploited, War-Affected Congolese Girls.” *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry* 52, no. 4 (April): 359–69.
- Ertl, Verena, Anett Pfeiffer, Elisabeth Schauer, Thomas Elbert, and Frank Neuner. 2011. “Community-Implemented Trauma Therapy for Former Child Soldiers in Northern Uganda: A Randomized Controlled Trial.” *JAMA* 306 (5): 503.

IMPACTS

- Researchers measured the impact of an intervention for vulnerable women that promoted savings in a mobile banking account labeled for goals and emergency expenses. Three months after the intervention, there was a positive treatment effect on total savings, and the rate of sex-coping reduced by half among rural women in the treatment group compared to the control group. Eight months after the intervention, almost zero percent of the treatment group relied on

sex for shock-coping, compared to 13 percent of the control group. The treatment also nearly halved the rate of reducing consumption in response to a shock, and more than doubled the rate of probability of relying on savings. For rural women who experienced a shock during the previous four months, the treatment group was half as likely to report any sexual activity relative to the control group (Jones and Gong, 2021).

- There have been promising studies on using this approach to improve mental health outcomes for conflict-affected youth (Betancourt et al., 2014; O’Callaghan et al., 2013; Ertl et al., 2011). Thus, it could be beneficial to integrate mental health interventions with social protection.

SCALING-UP QUESTIONS

Replication studies are needed.

POTENTIAL FOR IMPACT AT SCALE

This intervention holds promise, and there is a demand for strong evidence on programs that seek to address human trafficking. However, there is not yet enough evidence to estimate the impact at scale.

COMPARED TO OTHER APPROACHES/ COST-EFFECTIVENESS

This is a promising intervention, but currently there is not a large enough body of evidence to compare it with different interventions and assess the cost-effectiveness.

Law Enforcement and Judicial Capacity Building

SECTOR: HUMAN TRAFFICKING RESEARCH PRIORITY: HIGH

Law enforcement and judicial capacity-building and training programs are widely believed to improve the ability of police, prosecutors, and judges to conduct counter-trafficking investigations and victim-centered prosecutions. However, there are few studies beyond ex-post evaluations to examine the effectiveness of these training efforts, and the rate of trafficking prosecutions and convictions has actually gone down in most countries in recent years.

KEY STUDIES

- Boittin, Margaret, Nicole Hinton, Cecilia Hyunjung Mo, and Georgina Pizzolitto. 2019. [The Effects of Awareness-Raising Police Training to Combat Child Labor, Forced Labor, and Human Trafficking: An Experimental Study in Nepal](#). Prepared for U.S. Department of Labor (April).

IMPACTS

- When designed appropriately, law enforcement capacity-building campaigns can make a positive impact on police officers' knowledge regarding human trafficking (e.g., how to handle suspects, how to recognize human trafficking, who is at risk of being trafficked), as well as the extent to which human trafficking is a crime that police officers need to prioritize.
- Edutainment appears to matter. Narrative videos with engaging stories were found to be more effective as a training tool than simple fact-based training tools without stories, and an empowerment narrative was found to be more effective than the fear-based narrative.
- Narratives about human trafficking victims that chart how they became trafficked could result in an increase in victim blaming. This may be because nar-

ratives of a typical victim may reveal that the victim made a decision that the officer disagrees with that made him/her more vulnerable. The backlash finding shows that care needs to be taken when sharing awareness-raising stories, which may involve dialogue on the circumstances that cause individuals to become more vulnerable to human trafficking.

SCALING-UP QUESTIONS

Replication studies are needed.

POTENTIAL FOR IMPACT AT SCALE

This intervention holds promise, and there is a demand for strong evidence on reducing human trafficking. However, there is not yet enough evidence to estimate the impact of this approach at scale.

COMPARED TO OTHER APPROACHES/ COST-EFFECTIVENESS

Currently, there is not a large enough body of evidence to compare this approach with different interventions or assess its cost-effectiveness.

Adolescent Mentoring and Soft Skills to Reduce Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)

SECTOR: INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE RESEARCH PRIORITY: HIGH

Soft-skills programs are targeted at improving adolescents' socio-emotional skills, which are essential for success in both personal and professional life. These programs focus on developing inter- and intra-personal skills as well as increasing adolescents' long-term planning. Mentorship programs focused on soft skills can help adolescents build stronger relationships with others, better manage their emotions, and achieve personal goals. Socio-emotional skills trainings can be standalone or combined with other programs seeking to improve entrepreneurship, job readiness, or gender sensitivity. Soft-skills programs have been shown to reduce IPV, even when IPV reduction is not specifically an intended outcome of the program. Whether the impact would be increased by including program components aimed explicitly at reducing IPV is a key scale-up research question.

KEY STUDIES

- Chioda, Laura, and Paul Gertler. 2019. *Soft Skills and Entrepreneurship Training for Secondary School Students in Uganda*.
- De Koker, Petra, Catherine Mathews, Melanie Zuch, Sheri Bastien, and Amanda J. Mason-Jones. 2014. "A Systematic Review of Interventions for Preventing Adolescent Intimate Partner Violence." *Journal of Adolescent Health* 54 (1): 3–13. doi:10.1016/j.jadohealth.2013.08.008.
- DuBois, David L., Nelson Portillo, Jean E. Rhodes, Naida Silverthorn, and Jeffrey C. Valentine. 2011. "How Effective Are Mentoring Programs for Youth? A Systematic Assessment of the Evidence." *Psychological Science in the Public Interest* 12 (2): 57–91. doi:10.1177/1529100611414806.

IMPACTS

- The 2011 meta-analysis by DuBois et al. looked broadly at the impact of mentoring on the socio-emotional and academic development of youth, finding positive impacts across a range of outcomes.
- The 2014 systematic review by De Koker et al. reviewed eight studies of six RCTs of interventions for preventing adolescent intimate partner violence in the US, finding positive impacts on IPV perpetration in three of the studies and victimization in one study, though with quality issues identified in all of the trials.
- In Uganda, the Educate! Program, focused on entrepreneurship, led to delayed childbearing, less risky behavior, shifts in social norms, and reductions in intimate partner violence. Educate! graduates were less likely to justify IPV, and females in the treatment group were also 6.2 percentage points less likely to report having experienced threats or incidences of physical violence (28.7 percent of women in the treatment group reported threats or incidences of violence, compared to 34.9 percent in the comparison group).

SCALING-UP QUESTIONS

- The outstanding questions on soft-skills training to reduce IPV concern whether these mentoring programs could be delivered at a lower cost and to a wider audience digitally, and whether the impact would be increased by including program components aimed explicitly at increasing gender equality.
- Several of the soft-skills interventions have been run by NGOs at a small scale. Integrating these programs into school curricula is a potential avenue to scale, but the effectiveness of this delivery model is still to be tested.

POTENTIAL FOR IMPACT AT SCALE

Since adolescence is a critical time of personality development and establishing norms for interacting with intimate partners, effective soft-skills training for adolescents has the prospect of creating impacts over a lifetime. Quality mentors are critical for program effectiveness, but these engaging individuals can be readily identified and trained, which increases the prospects for scaling.

COMPARED TO OTHER PROGRAMS/ COST-EFFECTIVENESS

There is not a large enough body of evidence to compare this approach with different interventions or assess its cost-effectiveness. Soft-skills programs have shown to be effective across a variety of outcomes, including IPV, suggesting they could be cost-effective.

Cash Transfer and Cash Plus Programs to Address IPV

SECTOR: INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE RESEARCH PRIORITY: HIGH

Cash programs are the transfer of funds—including physical cash, direct transfers to bank accounts, or digital funds—to participants. “Cash plus” programs couple these transfers with other services. For example, the cash may also come with several trainings on financial management. There is a wide variety of cash programs, but all of them fundamentally provide liquid capital to participants. Cash plus programs widely vary their services as well, although often the services relate to the “windfall” of additional cash in the home. Common “plus” components that target IPV include financial empowerment for women, maternal and child healthcare education, schooling initiatives, nutrition/agriculture, and livelihood trainings.

Cash transfers may be one of the most rigorously studied social programs, dating back to the groundbreaking research on Mexico’s *Oportunidades* cash transfer program. More recently, IPV reduction efforts have been connected with many cash programs, both as explicit IPV-prevention programs and as an important measure for non-IPV programs to understand their impact.

KEY STUDIES

- Buller, Ana Maria, Amber Peterman, Meghna Ranganathan, Alexandra Bleile, Melissa Hidrobo, and Lori Heise. 2018. “A mixed-method review of cash transfers and intimate partner violence in low-and middle-income countries.” *The World Bank Research Observer* 33, no. 2 (2018): 218-258.
- Peterman, A., & Roy, S. 2021. *Cash transfers and intimate partner violence (IPV) in low-and middle-income settings: a joint research agenda to inform policy and practice*. International Food Policy Research Institute.
- Kilburn, Kelly N., Audrey Pettifor, Jessie K. Edwards, Amanda Selin, Rhian Twine, Catherine MacPhail, Ryan Wagner, James P. Hughes, Jing Wang, and Kathleen Kahn. 2018. “Conditional cash transfers and the reduction in partner violence for young women: an investigation of causal pathways using evidence from a randomized experiment in South Africa (HPTN 068).” *Journal of the International AIDS Society* 21 (2018): e25043.
- Litwin, Ashley, Elizaveta Perova, and Sarah Anne Reynolds. 2019. “A conditional cash transfer and Women’s empowerment: Does *Bolsa Familia* influence intimate partner violence?.” *Social Science & Medicine* 238: 112462.

IMPACTS

- Cash transfers and cash plus programs may reduce—or have no impact on—IPV. In some situations, cash seems to be enough to reduce IPV; in others, connecting cash to gender-relevant programming seems necessary. As a whole, it can be concluded that cash and cash plus programs are an important tool to reduce IPV.

- However, cash and cash plus programs that send the funds to women seem to have heterogeneous impacts on households. For some, cash transfers increase IPV. There are several theories about why this happens, mostly related to “extractive” partner relationships and gender norms about financial control. Evidence is emerging about the underlying dynamics and how to address them.

SCALING-UP QUESTIONS

Cash and cash plus programs are currently at-scale or being scaled in many contexts around the world. The big question is how to maximize their benefit to reduce IPV. This raises questions about how to better understand the causal pathways at work for cash programs reducing IPV and how to mitigate the specific risks associated with households that may see an increase in IPV.

POTENTIAL FOR IMPACT AT SCALE

Cash and cash plus programs have a demonstrated history of being managed at-scale by governments. Coupled with growing research about how to maximize the impact of cash on IPV reduction, this has the potential to be a broadly powerful tool to reduce IPV globally.

COMPARED TO OTHER APPROACHES/ COST-EFFECTIVENESS

This is a promising intervention, but currently there is not a large enough body of evidence to compare it with different interventions and assess the cost-effectiveness.

Community Gender Norms Change Interventions

SECTOR: INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE RESEARCH PRIORITY: MEDIUM

Beginning in South Africa and being replicated in other countries, these community-level programs engage men and women in gender equity dialogue. The three most well-known programs are Stepping Stones, *SASA!*, and *Indashyikirwa*. While the programs are adjusted for local settings, they all begin with the training of intervention facilitators who then lead multi-session discussions with couples about gender norms, including violence.

KEY STUDIES

Stepping Stones, *SASA!*, and *Indashyikirwa* have been the subjects of multiple rigorous studies in recent years.

- Dunkle, Kristin, Erin Stern, Sangeeta Chatterji, and Lori Heise. 2020. “Effective prevention of intimate partner violence through couples training: a randomised controlled trial of *Indashyikirwa* in Rwanda.” *BMJ global health* 5, no. 12: e002439.
- Abramsky, Tanya, Karen M. Devries, Lori Michau, Janet Nakuti, Tina Musuya, Ligia Kiss, Nambusi Kyegombe, and Charlotte Watts. 2016. “Ecological pathways to prevention: How does the *SASA!* community mobilisation model work to prevent physical intimate partner violence against women?” *BMC public health* 16: 1-21.
- Abramsky, Tanya, Karen Devries, Ligia Kiss, Janet Nakuti, Nambusi Kyegombe, Elizabeth Starmann, Bonnie Cundill et al. 2014. “Findings from the *SASA!* Study: a cluster randomized controlled trial to assess the impact of a community mobilization intervention to prevent violence against women and reduce HIV risk in Kampala, Uganda.” *BMC medicine* 12, no. 1: 1-17.
- Gibbs, Andrew, Laura Washington, Nada Abdelatif, Esnat Chirwa, Samantha Willan, Nwabisa Shai, Yandisa Sikweyiya, Smanga Mkhwanazi, Nolwazi Ntini, and Rachel Jewkes. 2020. “Stepping stones and creating futures intervention to prevent intimate partner violence among young people: cluster randomized controlled trial.” *Journal of Adolescent Health* 66, no. 3: 323-335.
- Gibbs, Andrew, Laura Washington, Samantha Willan, Nolwazi Ntini, Thobani Khumalo, Nompumelelo Mbatha, Yandisa Sikweyiya et al. 2017. “The Stepping Stones and Creating Futures intervention to prevent intimate partner violence and HIV-risk behaviours in Durban, South Africa: study protocol for a cluster randomized control trial, and baseline characteristics.” *BMC public health* 17, no. 1 (2017): 1-15.

IMPACTS

The interventions have produced long-term reductions of IPV, although there are some reports of “backlash” IPV during the programs’ process.

SCALING-UP QUESTIONS

These programs take significant support and political will to implement at a large scale. They also require trained facilitators, raising quality concerns about rapid scaling.

POTENTIAL FOR IMPACT AT SCALE

These programs are “gender transformative,” have impacts beyond IPV, and generally enjoy widespread support. This has led to substantial interest, especially in Africa, in expanding these programs. Governments are interested, as exemplified by Rwanda’s support for the *Indashyikirwa* program, although funding largely comes from other multi- and bi-lateral donors at this point.

COMPARED TO OTHER PROGRAMS/ COST-EFFECTIVENESS

While less expensive than protection programs, these programs are still relatively expensive prevention programs and are time-consuming (often requiring at least 20 community sessions).

Intergroup Contact to Build Social Cohesion in Fragile Settings

SECTOR: PEACE AND RECOVERY RESEARCH PRIORITY: MEDIUM

Lots of programming in fragile and conflict-affected states relies on the idea that bringing people together in a non-adversarial way can change attitudes and behaviors about the outgroup. Based on Gordon Allport's "contact hypothesis," intergroup contact interventions aim to reduce prejudice and bias among individuals on opposite sides of the conflict. The theory posits that interventions must meet the following conditions to be successful: (1) there is equal status between groups; (2) groups are working towards a common goal; (3) there is intergroup cooperation; and (4) there is support from authorities.

KEY STUDIES

- Pettigrew, Thomas F., and Linda R. Tropp. 2006. "[A meta-analytic test of intergroup contact theory.](#)" *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 90, no. 5: 751.
- Paluck, Elizabeth Levy, Seth A. Green, and Donald P. Green. 2019. "[The contact hypothesis re-evaluated.](#)" *Behavioural Public Policy* 3, no. 2: 129-158.
- Lowe, Matt. 2021. "[Types of contact: A field experiment on collaborative and adversarial caste integration.](#)" *American Economic Review* 111, no. 6: 1807-44.
- Mousa, Salma. 2020. "[Building social cohesion between Christians and Muslims through soccer in post-ISIS Iraq.](#)" *Science* 369, no. 6505: 866-870.
- Zhou, Yang-Yang, and Jason Lyall. 2022. "[Prolonged Contact Does Not Reshape Locals' Attitudes toward Migrants in Wartime Settings: Experimental Evidence from Afghanistan.](#)" SSRN Scholarly Paper. Rochester, NY.
- Scacco, Alexandra, and Shana S. Warren. 2018. "[Can social contact reduce prejudice and discrimination? Evidence from a field experiment in Nigeria.](#)" *American Political Science Review* 112, no. 3 (2018): 654-677.

IMPACTS

- Studies generally find weak or null effects when attempting to build social cohesion between different racial or ethnic groups, but there are important open questions that are currently being addressed.

SCALING-UP QUESTIONS

Open questions exist regarding better understanding mechanisms, impacts on different populations, testing intensity and duration, and coupling with interventions explicitly intended to build empathy. More information about these open questions can be found in the [GCCCI's evidence wrap up](#) (page 75).

POTENTIAL FOR IMPACT AT SCALE

- The topic has received significant attention from researchers, donors, and practitioners as a means of supporting prejudice reduction, peacebuilding, and violence prevention in fragile and conflict-affected states.
- There is a growing body of evidence testing intergroup contact in real-world settings.
- However, the evidence base is still at an early stage and thinking about scaling at this stage seems premature.

COMPARED TO OTHER APPROACHES/ COST-EFFECTIVENESS

There are a variety of settings in which intergroup contact can be delivered (leisure activities, training, workplace, etc.). Currently, there is not a large enough body of evidence on the impacts at the individual level to compare different interventions and assess the cost-effectiveness.

Perspective-taking for Social Cohesion

SECTOR: PEACE AND RECOVERY RESEARCH PRIORITY: MEDIUM

Perspective-taking for social cohesion is a psychological approach that aims to reduce bias and prejudice by encouraging participants to embody the mindset of members of the outgroup—that is, to imagine spending a day in another person's shoes. Similar to contact theory, perspective-taking is grounded in a robust social psychology literature where, often in controlled experimental settings, it has been shown to increase feelings of sympathy and empathy, improve attitudes towards target groups (most often groups that are marginalized or stigmatized), and build social bonds.

KEY STUDIES

- Alan, Sule, Ceren Baysan, Mert Gumren, and Elif Kubilay. 2021. [“Building social cohesion in ethnically mixed schools: An intervention on perspective taking.”](#) *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 136, no. 4: 2147-2194.
- Simonovits, Gábor, Gabor Kezdi, and Peter Kardos. 2018. [“Seeing the world through the other's eye: An online intervention reducing ethnic prejudice.”](#) *American Political Science Review* 112, no. 1: 186-193.
- Adida, Claire L., Adeline Lo, and Melina R. Platas. 2018. [“Perspective taking can promote short-term inclusionary behavior toward Syrian refugees.”](#) *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 115, no. 38: 9521-9526.
- Paluck, Elizabeth Levy (2010). [Is It Better Not to Talk? Group Polarization, Extended Contact, and Perspective Taking in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.](#) *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 36(9), 1170-1185.

IMPACTS

- In Turkey, one study (Alan et al., 2021) found that a perspective-taking curriculum—which taught students to view different situations from the perspectives of others—was effective in lowering peer violence, improving relationships between refugee and Turkish students, and increasing prosocial behaviors like trust, cooperation, and altruism.
- Other studies of perspective-taking interventions in Hungary and the United States have found similarly promising outcomes in reducing outgroup prejudice.
- By contrast, a study in DRC (Paluck, 2010) found that a radio program that included perspective-taking elements actually led to less tolerant behaviors towards the outgroup. The author suggests the program may have lacked sufficient guidance to listeners on how to engage in perspective-taking.

SCALING-UP QUESTIONS

- These findings suggest that the intensity of perspective-taking interventions may affect the magnitude, direction, and persistence of results. However, more research is needed.
- Additional research is also needed to better understand the mechanisms driving changes in behaviors and to observe outcomes over longer time horizons.
- Moreover, the majority of perspective-taking studies evaluate programs that are asymmetric in nature, where members of a majority group are provided with exercises that enable them to take the perspective of the minority group, but minority group members are not offered the same experience. More research is needed to understand programming that offers a two-way exchange of perspectives.

POTENTIAL FOR IMPACT AT SCALE

- Similar to intergroup contact, in that it is also highly relevant for building social cohesion, this topic has received attention from researchers, donors, and practitioners.
- Informed by the findings of Alan (2020), researchers and the Turkish Ministry of Education are in conversations on using this evidence to inform integration activities in schools hosting refugee students in the country.
- The evidence base is still in an early stage and thinking about scaling at this stage seems premature.

COMPARED TO OTHER APPROACHES/ COST-EFFECTIVENESS

Currently, there is not a large enough body of evidence on the impacts of perspective-taking on social cohesion at the individual level to compare different interventions and assess the cost-effectiveness.

Hot Spots Policing

SECTOR: PEACE AND RECOVERY RESEARCH PRIORITY: MEDIUM

Hot spots policing focuses police resources on urban areas where crime is most heavily concentrated. Most research has been done in the United States, but there is a growing number of research studies—much of it led by the IPA Colombia office—on the use of police forces in high-crime areas in Latin America. However, evidence development is still in an early stage.

KEY STUDIES

- Blattman, Christopher, Donald P. Green, Daniel Ortega, and Santiago Tobón. 2021. “[Place-based interventions at scale: The direct and spillover effects of policing and city services on crime.](#)” *Journal of the European Economic Association* 19, no. 4 (2021): 2022–2051.
- Collazos, Daniela, Eduardo García, Daniel Mejía, Daniel Ortega, and Santiago Tobón. 2021. “[Hot spots policing in a high-crime environment: An experimental evaluation in Medellín.](#)” *Journal of Experimental Criminology* 17: 473–506.
- Nussio, Enzo, and Ervyn Norza Céspedes. 2018. “[Deterring delinquents with information. Evidence from a randomized poster campaign in Bogotá.](#)” *PLoS one* 13, no. 7 (2018): e0200593.
- Blair, Robert, and Michael Weintraub. 2021. “[Military Policing Exacerbates Crime and May Increase Human Rights Abuses: A Randomized Controlled Trial in Cali, Colombia.](#)” *Working Paper*.

IMPACTS

- The evidence suggests that targeting hot spots with increased policing is effective in reducing crime in these areas, but many of these studies have featured relatively small sample sizes and have not always rigorously examined whether intensified policing in one location shifts crime elsewhere.
- New research, mostly from Colombia, is contributing to the evidence base on what types of crimes are likely to be deterred or shifted by hot spots policing. In two Colombian studies, hot spots interventions led to declines in thefts and non-violent crimes (Collazos et al., 2021; Nussio and Norza Céspedes, 2018). However, a third study from Colombia found that a hot spots policing intervention pushed property crimes onto neighboring street segments that had not received increased police surveillance (Blattman et al., 2021).
- In all cases, violent crimes proved harder to affect: the Colombian studies saw limited or no reduction in violent crimes, but also saw no evidence that violent crime shifted elsewhere.

SCALING-UP QUESTIONS

Productive avenues for further research include focusing on what kinds of policing activities undertaken in hot spots are most likely to deter crime, as well as further expanding the evidence base on whether non-criminal activities are more likely to be deterred or displaced by hot spots policing.

POTENTIAL FOR IMPACT AT SCALE

- There is a growing number of studies on the use of police forces in high-crime areas in Latin America, which will continue to expand the evidence base on hot spots policing.
- These research studies are conducted in close collaboration with police forces, indicating interest in learning and adopting practices that prove to be effective. Therefore, as the evidence base grows, there is potential for police forces to adopt and scale interventions that demonstrate positive impacts.
- However, the evidence base is still in an early stage, and thinking about scaling at this stage seems premature.

COMPARED TO OTHER APPROACHES/ COST-EFFECTIVENESS

The existing evidence does not strongly support the cost-effectiveness of hot spots policing. Studies that include a cost-effectiveness analysis indicate that the costs of the programs are higher than those of crime, while others make no clear statement about the cost-effectiveness. Moreover, based on [the Metaketa results](#), other types of policing strategies are not more effective than hot spots policing in reducing crime, so there are no clear cost-effective comparative programs.

Messaging for Reintegration of Ex-Combatants

SECTOR: PEACE AND RECOVERY RESEARCH PRIORITY: MEDIUM

This approach consists of messages from trusted authorities that highlight the importance of acceptance and forgiveness. Trusted authorities can be effective messengers for promoting reintegration, and radio messages are a highly scalable way to disseminate reintegration messages. However, the evidence base is still in an early stage and there is not a large enough body of evidence to compare different interventions and assess the cost-effectiveness.

KEY STUDIES

- Blair, Graeme, Rebecca Littman, Elizabeth R. Nugent, Rebecca Wolfe, Mohammed Bukar, Benjamin Crisman, Anthony Etim, Chad Hazlett, and Jiyoung Kim. 2021. “Trusted authorities can change minds and shift norms during conflict.” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 118, no. 42: e2105570118.

IMPACTS

The study by Blair et al. (2021) in Nigeria delivered radio messages from religious leaders, which significantly increased people’s support for reintegration and willingness to interact in social, political, and economic life. People became more likely to believe that others in their community were supportive of reintegration.

SCALING-UP QUESTIONS

There are still many questions about delivery effectiveness that need to be properly tested. For example, which platform (radio, TV, social media, in-person, etc.), type of leader (religious, ethnic, political, etc.), or content is more effective? Also, there are open questions about the intensity or frequency in which these messages need to be shared, targeting the right population, and network effects.

POTENTIAL FOR IMPACT AT SCALE

- Trusted authorities can be effective messengers for promoting reintegration.
- Radio messages are a highly scalable way to disseminate reintegration messages.
- However, the evidence base is still in an early stage and thinking about scaling at this stage seems premature.

COMPARED TO OTHER APPROACHES/ COST-EFFECTIVENESS

Currently, there is not a large enough body of evidence on the impacts of messaging interventions for reintegration to compare different interventions and assess the cost-effectiveness.

Dialogue for Reconciliation

SECTOR: PEACE AND RECOVERY RESEARCH PRIORITY: MEDIUM

Community-level reconciliation forums where victims share accounts and perpetrators seek forgiveness are one of the most common forms of transitional justice programming delivered by peacebuilding implementers in conflict-affected states. Such programs have the potential for large impacts on community trust in conflict-affected areas. Currently, there is not a large enough body of evidence on the impacts of dialogue interventions for reconciliation to compare different interventions and assess the cost-effectiveness.

KEY STUDIES

- Cilliers, Jacobus, Oeindrila Dube, and Bilal Siddiqi. 2016. “Reconciling after civil conflict increases social capital but decreases individual well-being.” *Science* 352, no. 6287 (2016): 787-794.

IMPACTS

Findings from one of the first randomized evaluations of a reconciliation program in Sierra Leone (Cilliers, Dube, and Siddiqi, 2016) suggest that at least in some cases, transitional justice programming may harm individual healing. While the evaluated reconciliation program did lead to greater forgiveness of war perpetrators and strengthened social ties, as intended, it came at a significant cost to individuals’ psychological well-being, increasing depression, anxiety, and PTSD in villages that received the intervention.

SCALING-UP QUESTIONS

Reconciliation program designers should consider how to ensure the same societal benefits without imposing psychological costs.

POTENTIAL FOR IMPACT AT SCALE

- Dialogue programs are already one of the most common forms of transitional justice programming delivered by peacebuilding implementers in conflict-affected states.
- Especially if programs can be refined to reduce the psychological costs, there is potential for large impacts on community trust in conflict-affected areas.

COMPARED TO OTHER APPROACHES/ COST-EFFECTIVENESS

Currently, there is not a large enough body of evidence on the impacts of dialogue interventions for reconciliation to compare different interventions and assess their cost-effectiveness.

Cash Transfers for Resilience

SECTOR: PEACE AND RECOVERY RESEARCH PRIORITY: HIGH

Provision of cash to vulnerable or at-risk populations in fragile, conflict-affected, or violent settings to empower them to make their own decisions on how to meet their own needs and strengthen their resilience using available local resources.

KEY STUDIES

- Schwab, Benjamin. “In the form of bread? A randomized comparison of cash and food transfers in Yemen.” 2020. *American Journal of Agricultural Economics* 102, no. 1: 91-113.
- Özler, Berk, Çiğdem Çelik, Scott Cunningham, P. Facundo Cuevas, and Luca Parisotto. 2021. “Children on the move: Progressive redistribution of humanitarian cash transfers among refugees.” *Journal of Development Economics* 153 (2021): 102733.
- Lyall, Jason, Yang-Yang Zhou, and Kosuke Imai. 2020. “Can economic assistance shape combatant support in wartime? Experimental evidence from Afghanistan.” *American Political Science Review* 114, no. 1 (2020): 126-143.
- Aker, Jenny C. 2017. “Comparing cash and voucher transfers in a humanitarian context: Evidence from the Democratic Republic of Congo.” *The World Bank Economic Review* 31, no. 1: 44-70.
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IMPACTS

- Evidence from sub-Saharan Africa suggests that cash transfers can be more effective than food transfers or vouchers in terms of consumption smoothing and dietary diversity (Aker et al., 2016, Aker et al., 2017). However, in Ecuador, no significant differences are found between these two types of transfers (Hidrobo et al., 2014).
- In terms of complementarity, there is evidence that cash transfers can be an effective component. This body of research includes combining cash transfers with vocational training in Afghanistan (Lyall, Zhou, and Imai, 2020), with cognitive behavioral therapy in Liberia (see Blattman et al., 2022), and within a disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration program in Burundi (Gilligan, Mvukiyehe, and Samii, 2012).
- The World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Bank released a systematic review of the impacts of cash transfers and in-kind transfers in humanitarian settings on five main outcome areas—basic needs, financial outcomes, gender, human development, and social cohesion—with the majority of the studies examining impacts on basic needs provision. They additionally examine the relative effectiveness of different delivery modalities. The review found the following top-line conclusions for each of their outcome areas:¹
 - **Basic needs outcomes:** Humanitarian assistance interventions targeting basic needs effectively enhance food security, food and non-food expenditure, and coping strategies. In particular, cash and in-kind transfers demonstrate comparable effectiveness, though variations may arise depending on the outcome measure. For example, cash is more effective in increasing non-food expenditure than in-kind transfers.

¹Adapted from “Cash and In-Kind Transfers in Humanitarian Settings: A Review of Evidence and Knowledge Gaps.” The authors of the review caution that modality choice should depend on “a series of factors such as the nature of the humanitarian crisis (sudden onset vs. slow onset), the objective of the programme or the main outcome of interest, the profile of the targeted population, implementation costs, and local market capacity,” and that it is hard to draw definitive conclusions from the available research (WFP, p.4).

- **Financial outcomes:** Cash-based programs effectively improve household asset accumulation in humanitarian settings, while food assistance and food-for-work initiatives yield no discernible impact on financial outcomes. In particular, lump sum cash transfers outperform multiple smaller payments in generating assets, but no distinction is observed in terms of encouraging savings behavior.
- **Human development outcomes:** Limited evidence suggests that unconditional and conditional cash transfers have positive effects on education and health, while the impacts of food transfers and vouchers remain mixed and inconclusive. Further research is needed to understand the relative effectiveness of different transfer modalities in improving human capital outcomes.
- **Gender outcomes:** The evidence on women's empowerment and gender-based violence is limited and ambiguous. Some studies indicate that cash-based interventions can empower women within households and increase their involvement in income-generating activities, while other studies fail to find significant effects.
- **Social cohesion outcomes:** Limited evidence indicates that both cash and in-kind transfers have the potential to foster social capital and cohesion during humanitarian crises.

SCALING-UP QUESTIONS

- Despite the positive evidence of cash transfers in non-conflict or humanitarian settings, further research is still needed to fully understand the impact of cash transfers on resilience and relevant outcomes in these particular contexts.
- Spillover effects are also an open question in conflict and humanitarian settings.
- In what ways can shifting from in-kind to cash-based assistance for displaced populations support local economies/markets and displaced businesses? Can cash bundled with market-based interventions improve economic recovery of conflict-affected areas after conflict?

POTENTIAL FOR IMPACT AT SCALE

- Cash transfers are increasingly used in conflict and humanitarian settings and the evidence suggests it is a cost-effective approach that complements limited humanitarian aid.
- Cash transfers can be implemented alongside other kinds of programs in humanitarian contexts, including livelihoods, employment, food security, or mental health and psychosocial support programs.

COMPARED TO OTHER PROGRAMS/ COST-EFFECTIVENESS

As described above, this type of intervention is more cost-effective (especially if delivered digitally) than other transfer programs, such as food or in-kind transfers.

Apprenticeships and Training for Youth Livelihoods

SECTOR: SOCIAL PROTECTION RESEARCH PRIORITY: HIGH

Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) programs equip youth with skills required to engage in the labor force, including formal wage employment and/or self-employment. There are a variety of key components within a TVET system, including: technical education, vocational education and training, on-the-job and apprenticeship training/work-based learning, or any combination of the above. The common two-phase model includes combining theoretical and practical classroom-based training with a period of work-based learning. Other key features of combinatory programs include labor intermediation services (e.g., job placement services), training for self-employment, and the inclusion of non-TVET-related training (e.g., life skills).

KEY STUDIES

- McKenzie, David. 2017. [“Assessing the effectiveness of active labour market programmes in developing countries.”](#) *Perspectives*.
- Crépon, Bruno, Patrick Premand. 2019. [Direct and indirect effects of subsidized dual apprenticeships.](#) Available at SSRN 3495770.
- Card, David, Jochen Kluge, and Andrea Weber. 2018. [“What Works? A Meta Analysis of Recent Active Labor Market Program Evaluations.”](#) *Journal of the European Economic Association*, 16 (3), 894-931.
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- Betcherman, Gordon, Amit Dar, and Karina Olivas. 2004. [“Impacts of active labor market programs: New evidence from evaluations with particular attention to developing and transition countries.”](#)
- Katz, Elizabeth. 2008. [Programs Promoting Young Women’s employment.](#)
- Angel-Urdinola, Diego F.; Semlali, Amina; Brodmann, Stefanie. 2010. [Non-Public Provision of Active Labor Market Programs in Arab-Mediterranean Countries: An Inventory of Youth Programs.](#) SP Discussion Paper; No. 1005. © World Bank, Washington, DC. License: CC BY 3.0 IGO
- Kluge, Jochen. 2006. [“The Effectiveness of European Active Labor Market Policy.”](#) SSRN Scholarly Paper. Rochester, NY.
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- Betcherman, Gordon, Martin Godfrey, Susana Puerto, Friederike Rother and Antoneta Stavreska. 2007. [“A Review of Interventions to Support Young Workers: Findings of the Youth Employment Inventory.”](#)
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- Stavreska, Antoneta. 2006. [“Interventions to Support Young Workers in South, East Asia and the Pacific.”](#)

IMPACTS

- Overall, the evidence base is weak and inconsistent. More evaluations are needed on programs in low- and middle-income countries, those targeting youth and women, and in urban contexts.
- Meta-analyses have been conducted on TVETs across country contexts, including in AMCs (Angel-Urdinola et al., 2010), European countries (Kluge 2006), and OECD countries (Betcherman et al., 2004).
- Building on Dar and Tzannatos’ 1999 review of active labor market policies, Betcherman reaffirms mixed labor market effects across contexts. Training for youth and employment subsidies showed few positive effects; while public works can be an effective short-term safety net, it does not improve sustainable employment prospects.
- Employment services had generally positive impacts on employment and earnings, at a relatively low cost, while training for the unemployed increased employment but not earnings. Self-employment assistance showed some positive results, but only for older and more highly educated participants.

- Many of these insights may not translate to impacts on wages and formal employment in contexts where economic growth is slower, informal markets more prevalent, and the capacity to implement more constrained.
- Few studies on general equilibrium and cost-effectiveness and a dearth of data on post-program outcomes limits the ability to benchmark long-term impacts.
- A meta-analysis of TVETs in LMICs found similar low-quality research and limited representation of lower-income countries (Tripney and Hombrados, 2013). Most studies included significant methodological shortcomings that made it difficult to draw comparisons and conclusions. TVET models and key target groups were not evenly represented. Despite these shortcomings, results showed small, positive, and significant impacts on paid employment, formal employment, and monthly earnings. No effect was found for self-employment earnings or weekly hours worked and significant heterogeneity was observed. This presents a somewhat promising impact outlook and an argument for further research.
- A number of YELs have also been conducted in OECD countries (Betcherman et al., 2007), Latin America (Puerto 2007), and South and East Asia and the Pacific (Stavreska 2006). All found rigorous evaluations outside of the OECD to be rare, and no particular intervention or design more successful than others. However, Stavreska did find programs for young entrepreneurs, multi-service approaches, and skills programs tended to deliver positive results. Additional research on more recent programming is suggested. Puerto 2007 showed a similar lack of evidence on cost-benefit analysis and long-term impacts.
- Only one review looked at young women's labor force participation in developing countries (Katz, 2008) and found that complex constraints in these contexts required more integrated approaches.
- Overall, the evidence base is weak and inconsistent, with a strong emphasis needed on evaluations in LMICs, targeting youth and women, and urban contexts.
- Labor market maturity is also an area for further evaluation. Does this type of training work better for those transitioning directly from school to work or for those that are not currently involved in education or employment?
- More geographically diverse RCTs and robust QED research is needed to better understand the underlying mechanisms of the approach and the conditions under which programs are most likely to be effective.
- Investigating cost-effectiveness of a broad range of TVET and work-based learning interventions will be an important part of the path to scale for policymakers, as well as determining which components can be digitally enabled to encourage cost-savings, skills transfer, and scalability.
- Improving the quality, relevance, and delivery of curriculum, as well as qualification and certification requirements, is needed.
- Improving monitoring and evaluation capacity of TVET strategies and systems is needed.

POTENTIAL FOR IMPACT AT SCALE

Despite inconsistent and weak evidence, TVET systems have gained international attention and investment recently as youth unemployment rates and the global skills gap continue to increase. TVET programs are seen as a promising intervention to potentially bridge this gap and could significantly impact labor market participation for youth when scaled nationally.

COMPARED TO OTHER APPROACHES/ COST-EFFECTIVENESS

TVETs programs can be costly; however, the body of evidence is not robust enough to compare different interventions and assess their cost-effectiveness. Investigating cost-effectiveness of different approaches will be an important part of the path to scale.

SCALING-UP QUESTIONS

- More research is needed on intermediate and long-term effects on key outcomes including employment, earnings, and labor market mobility.
- For which target groups is the intervention most beneficial? More research is needed into age, gender, and regional variations between urban and rural contexts.

Immunization Education and Information

SECTOR: HEALTH RESEARCH PRIORITY: MEDIUM

Immunization education interventions aim to address gaps in knowledge or understanding about the schedule, safety, and benefits of the childhood immunization series. These education interventions may improve coverage of some vaccines.

KEY STUDIES

- Oyo-Ita, Angela, Charles S Wiysonge, Chioma Orin-ganje, Chukwuemeka E Nwachukwu, Olabisi Odu-wole, and Martin M Meremikwu. 2016. "[Interventions for Improving Coverage of Childhood Immunisation in Low- and Middle-Income Countries.](#)" *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*.
- Bright, Tess, Lambert Felix, Hannah Kuper, and Sarah Polack. 2017. "[A Systematic Review of Strategies to Increase Access to Health Services among Children in Low and Middle Income Countries.](#)" *BMC Health Services Research* 17, no. 1: 252..

IMPACTS

A Cochrane review found moderate evidence that community-based health education improved coverage of all three doses of DTP (Diphtheria, Tetanus, and Pertussis) by 68 percent. Information campaigns utilizing posters, leaflets, and other media increased coverage of at least one dose of a vaccine by 43 percent (Oyo-Ita et al., 2016). Another systematic review found that 36 percent of educational interventions were associated with a positive effect on immunization uptake, 18 percent were mixed-positive, and 45 percent showed null effect (Bright et al., 2017).

SCALING-UP QUESTIONS

Additional research is needed to identify the most cost-effective interventions across the range of contexts in which immunization demand is lagging, and to assess how educational interventions compare to other demand-generation activities.

POTENTIAL FOR IMPACT AT SCALE

In contexts where lack of awareness about the schedule and benefits impede uptake of immunization, educational interventions may be the most cost-effective approach to improving coverage of some vaccines.

COMPARED TO OTHER APPROACHES/ COST-EFFECTIVENESS

Additional research is needed to identify the most cost-effective interventions across the range of contexts in which immunization demand is lagging, and to assess how educational interventions compare to other demand generation activities.

Socially Embedded Educational Interventions to Combat Misinformation and Distrust

SECTOR: HEALTH RESEARCH PRIORITY: HIGH

Leveraging community social networks and leaders to disseminate information and build support for immunization—known as socially-embedded education interventions—can be effective in improving immunization uptake in some contexts. It may be particularly effective in contexts where misconceptions and distrust of vaccination are key drivers of low coverage.

KEY STUDIES

- Banerjee, Abhijit, Arun G. Chandrasekhar, Suresh Dalpath, Esther Duflo, John Floretta, Matthew O. Jackson, Harini Kannan, Francine N. Loza, Anirudh Sankar, Anna Schrimpf, and Maheshwor Shrestha. 2021. [“Selecting the Most Effective Nudge: Evidence from a Large-Scale Experiment on Immunization.”](#) National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper Series. Working Paper 28726.
- Oyo-Ita, Angela, Xavier Bosch-Capblanch, Amanda Ross, Patrick Hanlon, Afiong Oku, Ekperonne Esu, Soter Ameh, Bisi Oduwale, Dachi Arikpo, and Martin Meremikwu. 2020. [“Impacts of Engaging Communities through Traditional and Religious Leaders on Vaccination Coverage in Cross River State, Nigeria.”](#) 3ie Grant-ee Final Report. New Delhi: International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie).

IMPACTS

Socially-embedded education can be effective in improving immunization uptake in some contexts. In India, community members selected for their skills in relaying information acted as “ambassadors,” and shared immunization information throughout their social networks, leading to a 26 percent increase in measles vaccination uptake (Banerjee et al., 2021). Engaging communities through traditional and religious leaders in Nigeria, where pockets of vaccine distrust persist, effectively reduced the number of unvaccinated children from seven percent to 0.4 percent and improved the timeliness of later vaccines (Oyo-Ita et al., 2020).

SCALING-UP QUESTIONS

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, policy interest in the specific issues of misinformation and mistrust in vaccination globally has grown dramatically, but research on how to change minds has not yet produced consistent, generalizable results. Research focused on the range of misinformation and distrust and strategies to combat them is ongoing and urgently needed.

POTENTIAL FOR IMPACT AT SCALE

In contexts where misconceptions and distrust of vaccination are key drivers of low coverage, this intervention may effectively improve coverage.

COMPARED TO OTHER APPROACHES/ COST-EFFECTIVENESS

Additional research is needed to identify the most cost-effective interventions across the range of contexts in which immunization demand is lagging, and to assess how socially-embedded interventions compare to other demand-generation activities.

Financial and In-Kind Incentives to Increase Childhood Immunization Coverage

SECTOR: HEALTH RESEARCH PRIORITY: HIGH

Monetary and in-kind incentives aim to reward immunization uptake or alleviate financial obstacles such as transport costs. Financial incentives have mixed impacts on child immunization, while in-kind incentives may improve coverage and timeliness of immunization.

KEY STUDIES

- IDInsight. 2020. [“Impact of Conditional Cash Transfers on Routine Childhood Immunizations in North West Nigeria.”](#) Final Report.
- Gibson, Dustin G., Benard Ochieng, E. Wangeci Kagucia, Joyce Were, Kyla Hayford, Lawrence H. Moulton, Orin S. Levine, Frank Odhiambo, Katherine L. O'Brien, and Daniel R. Feikin. 2017. [“Mobile Phone-delivered Reminders and Incentives to Improve Childhood Immunisation Coverage and Timeliness in Kenya \(M-SIMU\): A Cluster Randomised Controlled Trial.”](#) *The Lancet Global Health* 5, no. 4: e428-e438.
- Levine, Gillian, Amadu Salifu, Issah Mohammed and Günther Fink. 2021. [“Mobile Nudges and Financial Incentives to Improve Coverage of Timely Neonatal Vaccination in Rural Areas \(GEVaP trial\): A 3-armed Cluster Randomized Controlled Trial in Northern Ghana.”](#) In press: *PLOS One*.
- Bright, Tess, Lambert Felix, Hannah Kuper, and Sarah Polack. 2017. [“A Systematic Review of Strategies to Increase Access to Health Services among Children in Low and Middle Income Countries.”](#) *BMC Health Services Research* 17, no. 1: 252.
- Oyo-Ita, Angela, Charles S. Wiysonge, Chioma Orin-ganje, Chukwuemeka E. Nwachukwu, Olabisi Oduwole, and Martin M. Meremikwu. 2016. [“Interventions for Improving Coverage of Childhood Immunisation in Low- and Middle-Income Countries.”](#) *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*.
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[come Area in Karachi, Pakistan: A Longitudinal Intervention Study.”](#) *Vaccine* 28, no. 19: 3473-3478.

- Banerjee, Abhijit Vinayak, Esther Duflo, Rachel Glennerster, and Dhruva Kothari. 2010. [“Improving immunisation coverage in rural India: clustered randomised controlled evaluation of immunisation campaigns with and without incentives.”](#) *BMJ* 340: c2220.

IMPACTS

- In-kind or cash incentives have the potential to generate demand, increasing immunization uptake without expanding costly outreach. Evidence on the effectiveness of cash incentives has been mixed, and there are some concerns about negative spillovers and long-term impacts (such as creating expectations of payment for other preventive care, undermining messaging that vaccines are intrinsically valuable).
- Several studies found positive impacts. A conditional cash transfer (CCT) program in northwest Nigeria doubled the proportion of children who were fully vaccinated (IDInsight, 2020). In rural Kenya, a small monetary incentive (KES 200/US\$1.82) combined with text message reminders led to increases in full immunization by nine percentage points (Gibson, 2017). Vaccination promotion from community health volunteers and a small monetary incentive (GHC1/US\$0.25) led to 49.5 percentage point higher coverage in Ghana (Levine et al., 2021).
- Additional evidence is mixed: A 2017 systematic review found null results for cash transfer (including conditional and unconditional) studies on immunization and mixed positive results for a cash transfer combined with services strengthening and community-based nutrition programming (Bright et al., 2017). A 2016 review (Oyo-Ita et al., 2016) found evidence that monetary incentives have little to no effect on immunization uptake, and a 2007 review (Lagarde et al., 2007) found unclear results for CCTs.

- In-kind incentives have proven effective in a few high-quality studies. In Pakistan, food and medicine coupon incentives for immunization led to a two-fold increase in up-to-date DTP coverage at the recommended age (Chandir, 2010). In India, reliable immunization plus incentives—that is, regular availability of immunization services on the supply side, combined with an in-kind incentive (1 kg of lentils per vaccine and a set of metal plates upon completion of the full schedule)—led to 39 percent of children being fully immunized compared to 18 percent in villages receiving a reliable immunization intervention only, and six percent in the comparison villages (Banerjee, 2010).

SCALING-UP QUESTIONS

Research on the general equilibrium impacts of incentives is urgently needed, as is implementation research looking at means (including digitization) to lower the costs of delivery (preventing leakages, simplifying the process).

POTENTIAL FOR IMPACT AT SCALE

In-kind or cash incentives have the potential to generate demand, increasing immunization uptake without expanding costly outreach.

COMPARED TO OTHER APPROACHES/ COST-EFFECTIVENESS

Additional research is needed to identify the most cost-effective interventions across the range of contexts in which immunization demand is lagging, and to assess how financial and in-kind interventions compare to other demand generation activities.

Cash Transfers plus Behavior Change Communication to Reduce Stunting

SECTOR: HEALTH NUTRITION RESEARCH PRIORITY: HIGH

Current evidence suggests that cash transfers may improve height and nutritional status, but the effects are modest and inconsistent across programs.² To effectively use cash transfers to improve child growth and development, caregivers must understand what constitutes good feeding, care, health, and hygiene practices, and adopt such behaviors. Behavior change communication—an approach to change behaviors by influencing knowledge, attitudes, and social norms—in combination with cash transfers may be more effective than either intervention alone.

KEY STUDIES

- Ahmed, Akhter U., John Hoddinott, and Shalini Roy. 2019. “[Food Transfers, Cash Transfers, Behavior Change Communication and Child Nutrition: Evidence From Bangladesh.](#)” SSRN Scholarly Paper. Rochester, NY.
- Maffioli, M. Elisa, Erica Field, Nicholas Tint Zaw, Fred-erica Esu and Alexander Fertig. 2019. “[LEGACY Program Randomized Controlled Trial Endline Report.](#)” Livelihoods and Food Security Fund.
- Carneiro, Pedro, I. Rasul, G. Mason, L. Kraftman, and M. Scott. 2019. “[Child Development Grant Programme evaluation.](#)” *Quantitative endline report volume I: final endline findings.* EPact Consortium.

IMPACTS

- Social and behavior change communication (BCC) approaches covering maternal health and nutrition, exclusive breastfeeding, complementary feeding, hygiene and sanitation practices, and health-seeking for child illness combined with cash transfers can improve linear growth by 0.14 to 0.25 standard deviations and reduce stunting by four to 7.8 percentage points, based on recent evidence from Bangladesh (Ahmed, Hoddinott, and Roy, 2019), Myanmar (Maffioli et al., 2019), and Nigeria (Carneiro et al., 2019).
- There is promising evidence across a range of contexts. More research is needed to understand how robust these findings are at larger scales and in new contexts and how to maximize the cost-effectiveness of the approach.

SCALING-UP QUESTIONS

- **Delivery:** How do intensity (number and duration of activities) and delivery platforms (digital, community health worker) of the BCC package affect child growth outcomes?
- **Co-delivery:** Which component of the intervention (BCC, conditionality, or cash transfer) drives results?
- **Cost assessment:** How cost-effective are BCC and cash compared to other child growth interventions?
- **Development:** What are the anthropometric, developmental, and morbidity outcomes after the 1,000-day window?
- **Behavior change:** How does delivery of BCC to multiple audiences (i.e. mothers and other primary caregivers, fathers, influencers such as mothers-in-law/grandmothers) affect child growth outcomes?
- **Targeting:** Which households should be targeted for participation in cash plus BCC programs?

POTENTIAL FOR IMPACT AT SCALE

There is promising evidence across a range of contexts. More research is needed to understand how robust these findings are at larger scales and in new contexts and how to maximize the cost-effectiveness of the approach.

COMPARED TO OTHER APPROACHES/COST-EFFECTIVENESS

More research is needed to understand how BCC and cash compares to other interventions in a range of contexts.

² Radhika Jain and Shubhra Mittal. [The Role of Cash Transfer in Improving Child Health: A Review of the Evidence.](#) Cash Transfers for Child Health (CaTCH) Initiative. (2018).

Home-Based Growth Monitoring to Improve Child Growth Outcomes

SECTOR: HEALTH NUTRITION RESEARCH PRIORITY: MEDIUM

Growth monitoring, the process of tracking a child's growth against a standard with frequent anthropometric measurements, is traditionally performed through primary healthcare or community based services. It is meant to be a diagnostic tool for assessing the status of a child's growth and to instigate appropriate action in response to the growth status, thus preventing and reducing child malnutrition and mortality. Furthermore, growth monitoring is meant to make growth faltering visible to caregivers so that they can adopt improved child care behaviors. IPA research in Zambia found that providing caregivers a home-based growth chart significantly improved growth among malnourished children.

KEY STUDIES

- Fink, Günther, Rachel Levenson, Sarah Tembo, and Peter C. Rockers. 2017. "[Home-and community-based growth monitoring to reduce early life growth faltering: an open-label, cluster-randomized controlled trial.](#)" *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 106, no. 4: 1070-1077.

IMPACTS

- Home-based growth monitoring is a promising new approach to improve child growth outcomes. While the evidence for traditional growth monitoring outside the home indicates little or no effect on children's nutritional status,³ an RCT in Zambia found that installing life-sized growth charts in homes for caregivers to monitor their child's height over time led to a 22-percentage point reduction in stunting among malnourished children.
- Given the relatively low cost, this intervention may be a cost-effective tool for increasing parental efforts toward reducing children's physical growth deficits.
- Additional research is needed to identify the most cost-effective interventions across the range of contexts and to assess how home-based growth monitoring compares to other interventions.

SCALING QUESTIONS

- **Replication:** Does the initial Zambia RCT replicate on a larger scale and in other contexts?
- **Co-Delivery:** How does the addition of caregiving/early child development messages and tools on the poster impact child cognition (ECD measures) while maximizing effects on child growth and nutritional status?
- **Cost assessment:** How cost-effective are growth charts compared to other child growth interventions?
- **Development:** What are the anthropometric, developmental, and morbidity outcomes after the 1,000-day window?
- **Feeding practices:** How do the charts affect child growth and nutritional status of future children and siblings after the 1,000-day window?

POTENTIAL FOR IMPACT AT SCALE

Given the relatively low cost, this intervention may be a cost-effective tool for increasing parental efforts toward reducing children's physical growth deficits.

COMPARED TO OTHER APPROACHES/COST-EFFECTIVENESS

Additional research is needed to identify the most cost-effective interventions across the range of contexts and to assess how home-based growth monitoring compares to other interventions. Research is currently underway in Zambia to assess if results hold at a larger scale, and in a new context, Indonesia.

³ Bryce, Jennifer, Denise Coitinho, Ian Darnton-Hill, David Pelletier, Per Pinstrup-Andersen, and Maternal and Child Undernutrition Study Group. "[Maternal and child undernutrition: effective action at national level.](#)" *The Lancet* 371, no. 9611 (2008): 510-526.

Animal-Source Foods to Improve Child Growth Outcomes

SECTOR: HEALTH NUTRITION RESEARCH PRIORITY: MEDIUM

Limited evidence suggests animal-source foods can improve height, but very few studies have directly tested their effect on child growth during the complementary-feeding window, and effects appear highly context-dependent.⁴ Dietary diversity, or eating foods from each of the food groups, is a good proxy for ensuring children consume quality diets with adequate amounts of critical nutrients for growth and development. Animal-source foods (ASFs), such as eggs, meat, fish, and dairy, are a key component of dietary diversity and may be especially important foods for the complementary feeding period given the relatively small amounts of foods that are consumed between the ages of 6 and 24 months (200 – 550 kcal/day; 137 – 515 grams/day). Caregivers may not recognize the role ASFs could play in early nutrition, or cost or context-specific ecological or cultural factors may prevent incorporation into infant and young child diets.

KEY STUDIES

- Eaton, Jacob C., Pamela Rothpletz-Puglia, Margaret R. Dreker, Lora Iannotti, Chessa Lutter, Joyceline Kaganda, and Pura Rayco-Solon. “Effectiveness of provision of animal-source foods for supporting optimal growth and development in children 6 to 59 months of age.” *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* 2 (2019).
- Iannotti, Lora L., Chessa K. Lutter, Christine P. Stewart, Carlos Andres Gallegos Riofrío, Carla Malo, Gregory Reinhart, Ana Palacios et al. 2017. “Eggs in early complementary feeding and child growth: a randomized controlled trial.” *Pediatrics* 140, no. 1 (2017): e20163459.
- Stewart, Christine P., Bess Caswell, Lora Iannotti, Chessa Lutter, Charles D. Arnold, Raphael Chipatala, Elizabeth L. Prado, and Kenneth Maleta. 2019. “The effect of eggs on early child growth in rural Malawi: the Mazira Project randomized controlled trial.” *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 110, no. 4 (2019): 1026-1033.

IMPACTS

Limited evidence suggests animal-source foods can improve height, but very few studies have directly tested their effect on child growth during the complementary-feeding window, and effects appear highly context-dependent.⁴ In Ecuador, the provision of eggs to children from ages six months to nine months led to a 0.63 increase in length-for-age scores and a 47 percent reduction in stunting.⁵ When replicated in Malawi, in a context with high access to fish, the provision of eggs had no effect.⁶

SCALING-UP QUESTIONS

- **Demand and consumption:** How does delivery (e.g., raising garden chickens vs. egg provision/purchase) affect outcomes?
- **Cost assessment:** How cost-effective are animal source foods compared to other feeding and home fortification supplements?
- **Development:** What are the anthropometric, developmental, and morbidity outcomes outside of the 1,000-day window?
- **Feeding practices:** What are the contextual factors (cultural preferences and practices) and selection criteria for choosing animal source foods versus another type of intervention to improve child growth?
- **Replication:** Does the impact of ASFs on child growth replicate in other contexts?
- **Targeting:** Which households should be targeted for encouraging animal source foods to complement infant diets?

POTENTIAL FOR IMPACT AT SCALE

While evidence is limited, animal-source foods may be more cost-effective and easier to adopt in contexts where animal-source foods are accessible and affordable but not commonly fed to children, compared to other interventions.

COMPARED TO OTHER APPROACHES/ COST-EFFECTIVENESS

Additional research is needed to understand the contextual factors that determine when and where animal source food interventions can be effective at improving child growth and nutritional status.

⁴ Eaton, Jacob C., Pamela Rothpletz-Puglia, Margaret R. Dreker, Lora Iannotti, Chessa Lutter, Joyceline Kaganda, and Pura Rayco-Solon. “Effectiveness of provision of animal-source foods for supporting optimal growth and development in children 6 to 59 months of age.” *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* 2 (2019).

⁵ Iannotti, Lora L., Chessa K. Lutter, Christine P. Stewart, Carlos Andres Gallegos Riofrío, Carla Malo, Gregory Reinhart, Ana Palacios et al. “Eggs in early complementary feeding and child growth: a randomized controlled trial.” *Pediatrics* 140, no. 1 (2017): e20163459.

⁶ Stewart, Christine P., Bess Caswell, Lora Iannotti, Chessa Lutter, Charles D. Arnold, Raphael Chipatala, Elizabeth L. Prado, and Kenneth Maleta. “The effect of eggs on early child growth in rural Malawi: the Mazira Project randomized controlled trial.” *The American journal of clinical nutrition* 110, no. 4 (2019): 1026-1033.

Supporting Digitally-Empowered Community Health Workers to Save Lives

SECTOR: HEALTH RESEARCH PRIORITY: HIGH

Community health workers (CHWs) provide preventive and curative primary health services—often addressing key causes of maternal, child, and neonatal mortality—to communities that are underserved or unserved by formal health facilities. Evidence has shown that CHWs can effectively deliver a range of interventions to save lives,⁷ but sustaining high-quality CHW programs is constrained by supply challenges, insufficient training, inadequate supervision, and high turnover rates—often as a result of poor or no pay and unrealistic responsibilities (Exemplars in Global Health, 2023).

Living Goods developed an approach to community health program delivery that improves and sustains CHW performance at scale. Under this approach, known as DESC, CHWs are digitally enabled; equipped with training, medicines, and supplies; provided with supportive supervision; and compensated.

KEY STUDIES

- While a number of studies evaluate the impact of delivering specific interventions, RCT studies evaluating the impact of community health program delivery on improved CHW performance and child mortality are limited to the Living Goods program in Uganda.
- Nyqvist, Martina Björkman, Andrea Guariso, Jakob Svensson, and David Yanagizawa-Drott. “Reducing child mortality in the last mile: Experimental evidence on community health promoters in Uganda.” *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 11, no. 3 (2019): 155–192.
- Björkman, Martina, Andrea Guariso, Jakob Svensson, and Phyllis Awor. 2021. “Community Health Provision at Scale: Evidence from a Randomized Trial in Uganda” *Registered Report accepted at Journal of Development Economics, 2021*

IMPACTS

- The first RCT of Living Goods-supported CHWs in Uganda found increased access to a set of key maternal, newborn, and child health services, and a 27 percent reduction in under-five child mortality (Nyqvist et al., 2019).
- Preliminary results from a second RCT of Living Goods-supported CHWs in Uganda show a 30 percent reduction in under-five mortality, and a 27 percent reduction in infant mortality (Living Goods, 2021 [Year-End Report](#)). The results also show increased access to key maternal, newborn, and child health interventions, and better health knowledge among CHWs.

SCALING-UP QUESTIONS

- Do the Uganda RCT results replicate in other contexts?
- Part of Living Goods' strategy is to support governments to take on community health programs: Do results hold when the government takes the lead of the program?

POTENTIAL FOR IMPACT AT SCALE

The Living Goods approach overcomes many of the global challenges of taking community health programs to scale in a cost-effective way.

COMPARED TO OTHER APPROACHES/ COST-EFFECTIVENESS

Given the lack of evidence, it is not possible to compare different programs and relative cost-effectiveness. Additional research is needed to understand if there are contextual factors that impact the effectiveness of the approach.

⁷ López-Ejeda, Noemí, Pilar Charle Cuellar, Antonio Vargas, and Saul Guerrero. “Can community health workers manage uncomplicated severe acute malnutrition? A review of operational experiences in delivering severe acute malnutrition treatment through community health platforms.” *Maternal & child nutrition* 15, no. 2 (2019): e12719.

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Writer: Laura Burke

Contributors: Paul Adams, Nathanael Goldberg, Daniela Graney, Savanna Henderson, Victoria Isika, Tanvi Jaluka, Sarah Kabay, Julie Kedroske, Nessa Kenny, Elizabeth Koshy, Ricardo Morel, Doug Parkerson, Karla Petersen, Pace Phillips, Brianda Romero, Rebecca Rouse, Rebecca Smith, Jeni Sorensen, and Shana Warren

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