



Small and Medium Enterprise Program

Five Years in Review: 2011-2016





Programa Pequeñas y Medianas Empresas

Cinco años en perspectiva, 2011-2016



SME Program: Five Years in Review (English and Spanish)

Over the past five years, the SME Program at IPA has grown from an ambitious idea to a thriving, prolific, and influential initiative. It is with great enthusiasm that we share this report highlighting some of our accomplishments—which would not have been possible without the collaboration and support of so many of you.

Our work began at the end of 2010, when we sat down with leading practitioners and academics working on entrepreneurship and SME growth in developing countries, and assessed the most pressing knowledge gaps in the sector. At the time, only a handful of impact evaluations had been conducted on SME support programs in developing countries, and there was an urgent need for evidence to help guide decision-making.

Following that initial event, IPA launched the SME Program (formerly known as the “SME Initiative”), with the goal of addressing the existing knowledge gaps and generating evidence on the most effective solutions to the constraints SMEs face in developing countries. Since

then, our network of researchers and practitioners has continuously expanded, and has regularly come together at our conferences, working group meetings, roundtables, and workshops. New partnerships have emerged from these gatherings and from the SME Program's support in identifying and promoting new research opportunities.

Over the past five years, IPA's research portfolio in the SME sector has grown to include more than 85 studies in 32 countries, leading to valuable lessons learned that can inform the design of more effective policies and programs. Our hope is to see this research used to help SMEs succeed and generate sustainable livelihoods.

In this report, we present some highlights from the SME research portfolio, lessons learned in each of our program's focus areas, details about the events we have hosted, and information about what we do to support, create, and promote evidence in the SME sector.

The relationships we have built and the evidence we have helped generate over the past five years have already started to make a difference in the SME sector. These achievements would not have been possible without the commitment, passion, expertise, generosity, and hard work of our research affiliates, partners, donors, and IPA staff across the world. To all of them, we are deeply grateful.

Many important questions remain unanswered and there is still much to be done to bridge the gap between the worlds of research and practice. We are eagerly embarking on the next phase of bringing a culture of evidence-based decision-making to the SME sector.

April 24, 2017