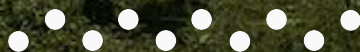




Best Bets

Emerging Opportunities for Impact at Scale



USAID Agency Learning and Evidence Month: What Works and Where to Find It

May 24, 2024

What Works and Where to Find it is at the core of what IPA does



1. Create Stronger Evidence

To deepen knowledge
on how to reduce
poverty



2. Share Evidence Strategically

To influence
conversations & inform
decisions



3. Equip Decision-Makers to Use Evidence

To improve the lives of the
global poor

Outline



1. Motivation behind IPA's Best Bets initiative
2. Overview of IPA's Best Bets
3. Different partnership models to move Best Bets forward
4. A final note on Exploratory Innovations
5. Q & A

Housekeeping



- **Q&A:** Submit questions through chat at any point during the presentation. You can also ask questions live during the Q&A segment.
- Webinar will be **recorded** and added to USAID's Event Program and IPA's website together with **slides**.
- For any **technical issues** during the presentation, please contact **Cara Vu** via chat.

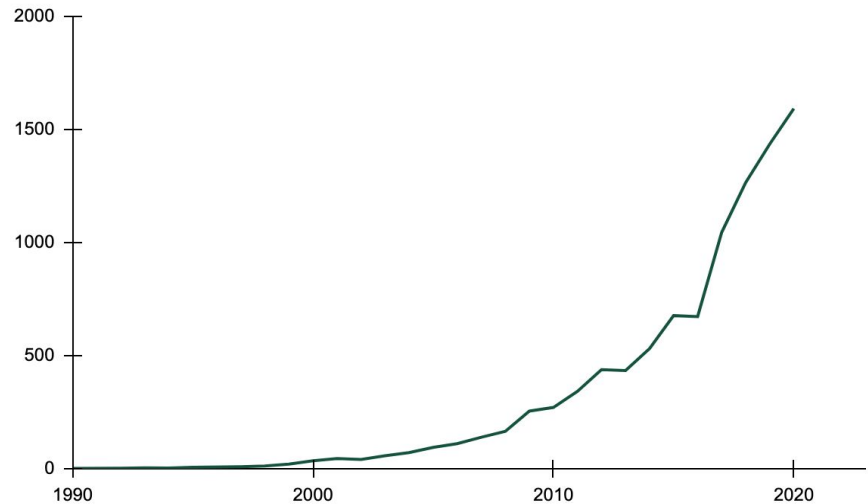
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From 1990 to 2020
we witnessed a
significant **increase**
in the generation of
policy-relevant
evidence

Number of Impact Evaluations Published by Year



Source: 3ie Development Evidence Portal

Yet evidence-based programs remain sparse at scale



Established Innovations



Cash transfers and Universal Basic Income

Cash transfers target financial aid to low-income groups, while Universal Basic Income (UBI) ensures a minimum living standard with regular payments to households.



Graduation Approach

Program aimed at “graduating” households from extreme poverty through a holistic set of services including livelihood training, asset transfers, consumption support, savings and health services, and life skills coaching.



Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL)

Educational approach that focuses on building foundational literacy and numeracy skills by grouping children based on skill level rather than age or grade.



Structured Pedagogy

Core supports for teaching and learning typically include teacher training, lesson plans, guides, learner materials such as textbooks and worksheets, and ongoing teacher support through coaching and refresher training.



EXAMPLE

IPA's work in developing and scaling Established innovations

IPA and partners have conducted extensive research demonstrating that grouping children by level significantly improves student attendance, enrollment, and test scores.

This approach is widely acknowledged as cost-effective.

- The **NGO Pratham** initially **developed and pioneered** this approach. **IPA and partners conducted rigorous research** to prove its effectiveness across contexts.
- **Ghana's Ministry of Education is scaling Differentiated Learning** to 10,000 schools, with IPA supporting a rigorous evaluation to assess the effectiveness of different teacher training strategies.
- IPA is also supporting some of the **research activities** on the approach in **Zambia and Cote d'Ivoire**.



There is strong interest in identifying and investing in what works in other areas



“We believe there are **billions of dollars**’ worth of **annual cost-effective** giving opportunities that we have yet to identify”.

GiveWell

Cause Exploration Prizes

“We invite you to suggest a new area for us to support, or respond to our suggested **questions on health, development, or worldview investigations**. We are most interested in responses to the *new area* prompt”.



“We want to hear what **new cause areas we should be working on**. What are the world’s fixable problems and how can we spend money effectively to address them”.

- Chris Smith, Open Phil



But how do we **identify the innovations** that can successfully improve lives at scale?



Innovations **aiming to make a positive impact** on people's lives

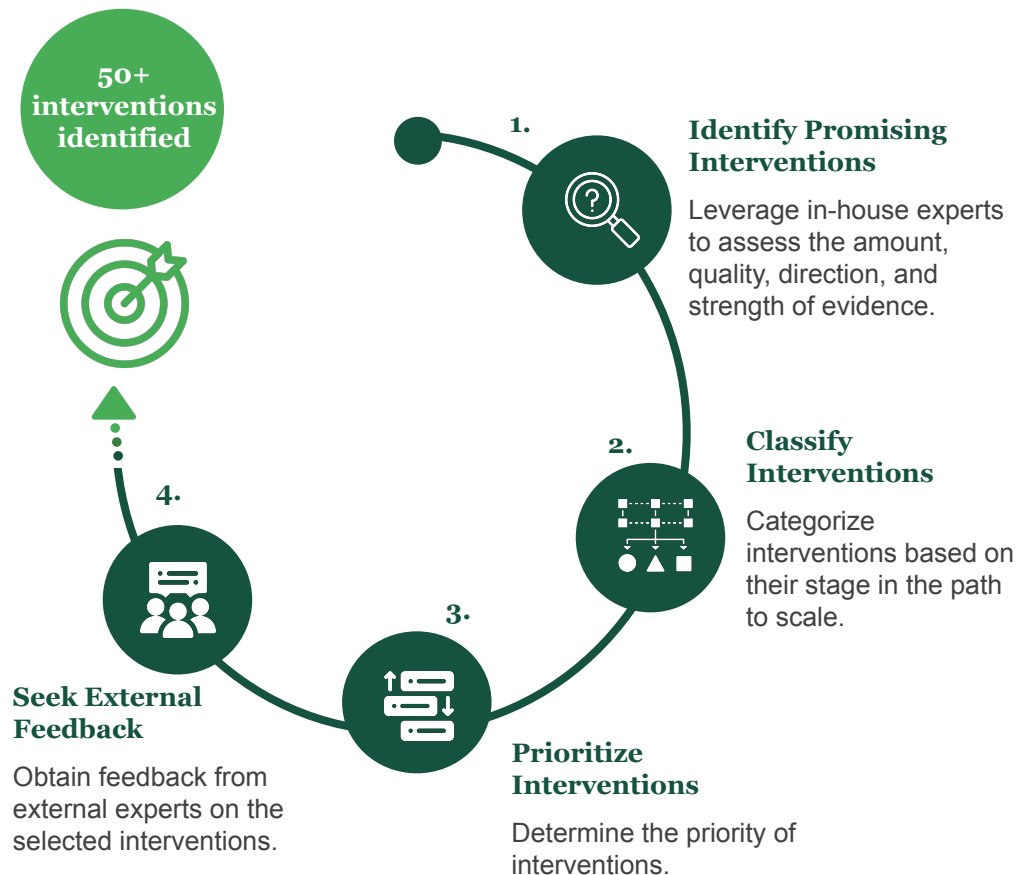


Established Innovations that have **proven successful** at improving lives and can operate in real-world settings



“At **IPA**, we discover and advance what works to improve the lives of people living in poverty.”

IPA's sectoral experts and scientific advisors reviewed hundreds of studies looking at the evidence and other scalability factors



This 50+ path breaking approaches span across ten different sectors



Education

Social Protection

Human Trafficking

Peace & Recovery

Entrepreneurship &
Private Sector
Development

Intimate Partner Violence

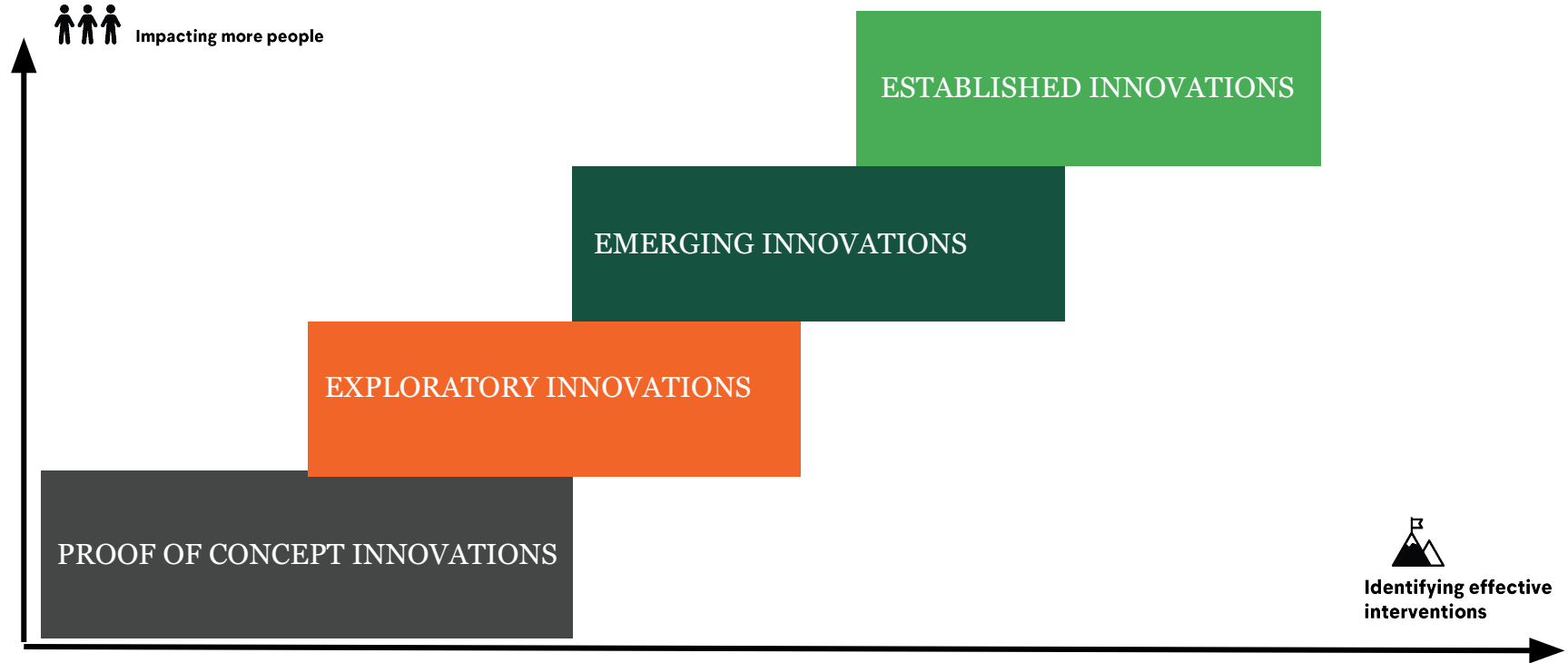
Health

Nutrition

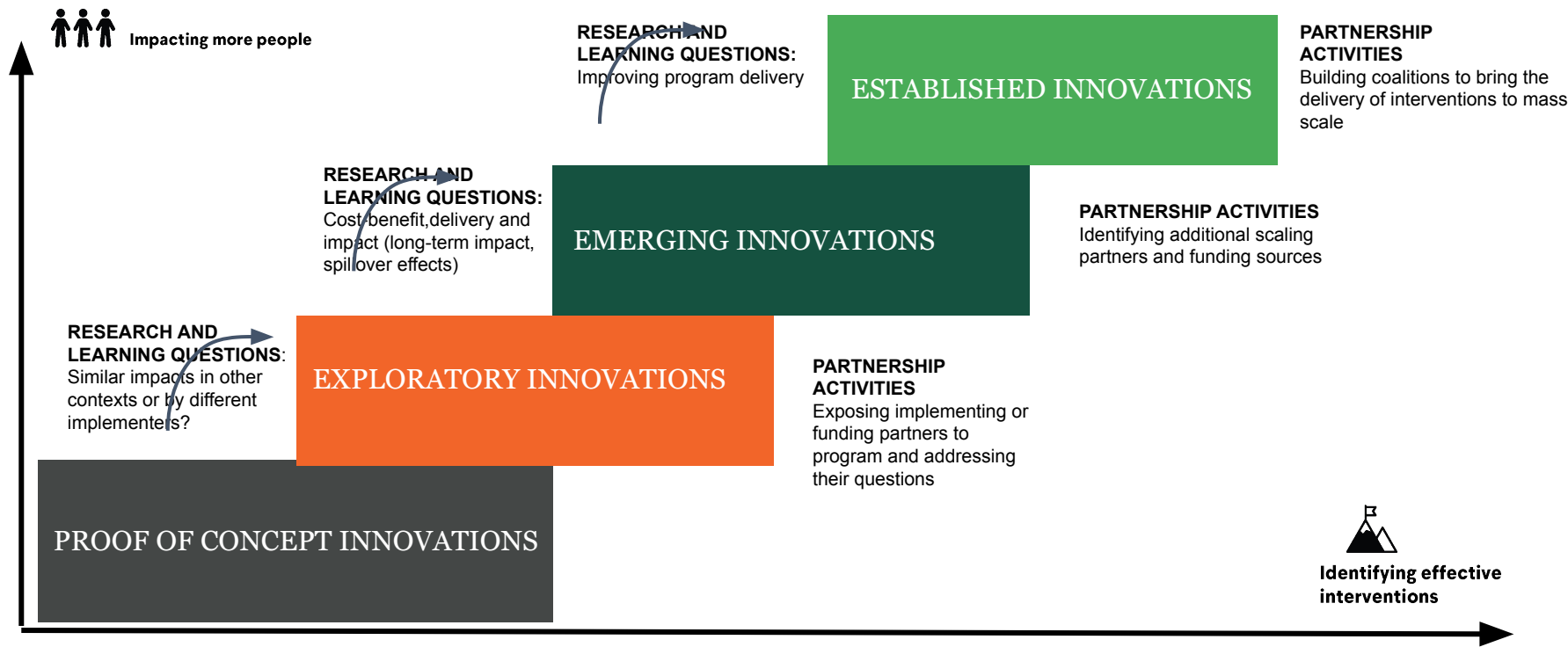
Financial Inclusion

Climate change and
environment

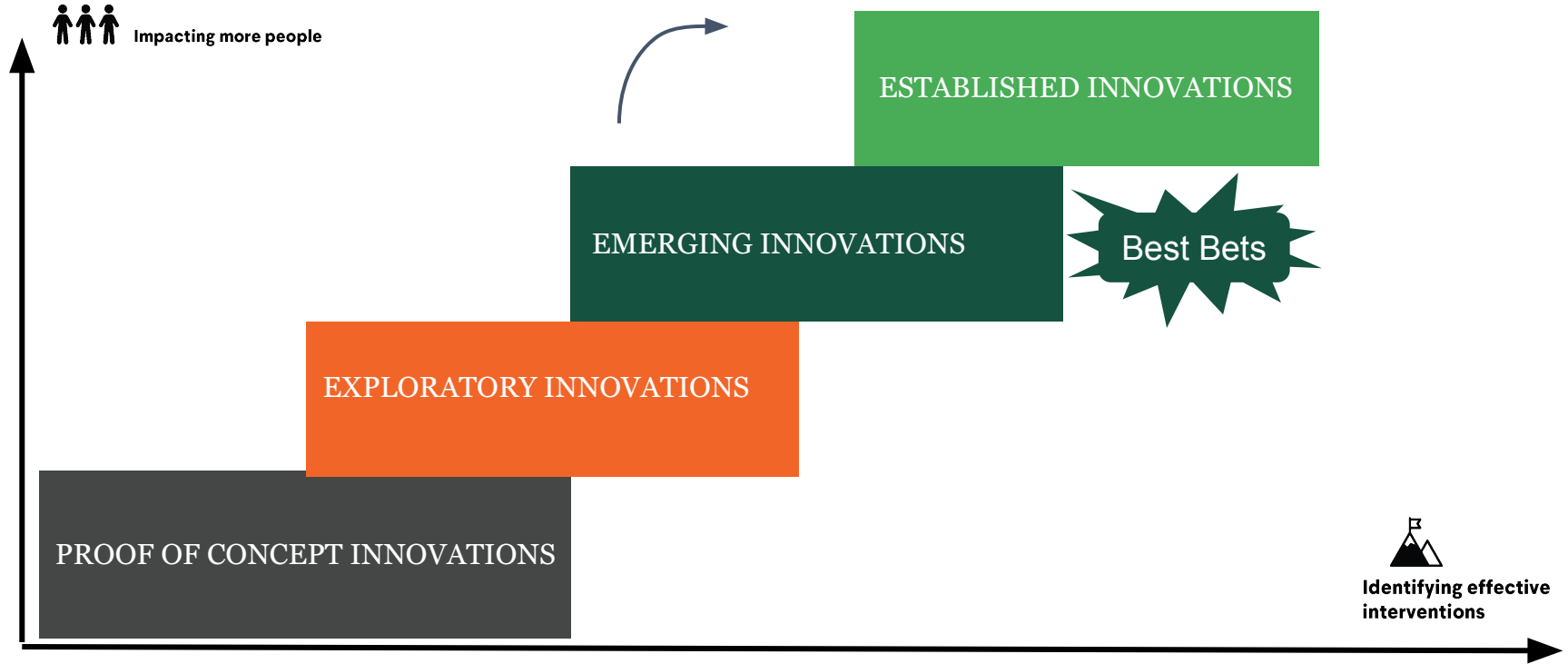
... and have been classified in different stages along the path to scale



Research and partnership activities are required to move from proof of concept to impact at scale



Emerging Innovations are our *best bets* for future opportunities for impact at scale



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Best Bets hold the most promise for making an impact at scale...



Strong evidence



Big impact



Low-cost



Simple to implement



Committed partnerships

... but **additional research** and policy development is still needed

Cost-benefit

- Lowering costs
- Optimizing the intervention

Delivery

- Standardization
- Simplification for gov'ts
- Targeting
- Digital delivery

Impact

- Validity in other contexts
- Indirect effects
- Variations within target population
- Long-term impacts

Our Best Bets Agenda:

Interventions that hold the greatest potential for impact at scale in the future



Small-quantity lipid-based nutrient supplements (**SQ-LNS**) to treat **malnutrition**.



Cognitive behavioral therapy (**CBT**) to reduce **crime**.



Consulting services to support small and medium **businesses**.



Mobile phone **reminders** for routine childhood **vaccines**.



Social signaling for routine childhood **vaccines**.



Livelihoods for Adolescents (**ELA**) to promote **girls' empowerment** and health.



Couples' counseling to reduce intimate partner violence (**IPV**).

Our Best Bets Agenda:

Interventions that hold the greatest potential for impact at scale in the future



Teacher coaching to improve **student learning**.



Digital payments to improve **financial health**.



Responsive care to promote **early childhood development**.



Edutainment to change **attitudes and behavior**.



Soft-skills training to boost **business profits** and sales.



Childcare for women's **economic empowerment** and **child development**.



Payment for ecosystem services to protect the **environment**.



EXAMPLE

Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES)

Pay people not to cut down trees, or to make other investments in maintaining watersheds and other ecosystems.

- **Conserving and restoring forests and other ecosystems is key to mitigating climate change.**
- In 2022, **tropical primary forest loss increased** to 4.1 million hectares. This forest loss **produced 2.7 gigatonnes of carbon dioxide emissions.**
- PES has the **potential to mitigate climate change while providing needed economic benefits** to households in low- and middle-income countries.
- The **cost is moderate**, and more cost-effective than other carbon mitigation programs.



Overview of the evidence



- A randomized evaluation of a PES program in Uganda 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.
- **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.

Areas for future research and policy work in Payment for Ecosystem Services to protect the environment



Financing

Larger PES programs tend to be in wealthier countries (e.g, Mexico and China).

Few or no PES programs are operating at scale in low-income countries.

Program design & contracting

Is the conditionality of PES even needed? Or might targeted cash transfers be sufficient?

How large would payments need to be to maintain or increase tree cover?

Monitoring & compliance

Newer technologies have the potential to reduce monitoring costs dramatically.

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Best Bets, Invitation for coalitions (implementers, researchers, funders) to:



Use existing evidence to tackle global issues effectively



Invest in resolving remaining questions



Take interventions to scale

IPA will build
and support
coalitions to
move Best Bets
forward



EXAMPLE

Becoming One (B1): Couples' counseling to reduce intimate partner violence

Faith leaders are trained to implement a curriculum that focuses on communication, emotional regulation, conflict/anger management, financial management, sexual consent and mutual pleasure.

- More than a **third of women** around the world **have experienced physical or sexual violence**, most commonly committed **by an intimate partner**.
- In rural Uganda, B1 significantly **decreased all forms of intimate partner violence**, **shifted power** within the relationship, and **improved overall quality** of relationships 12 months after implementation.
- The **cost is low**; the program can easily and sustainably be integrated into core church programming.



Areas for future research and policy work for Becoming One to reduce intimate partner violence



Replicability

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**

Financial sustainability

Could **charging for couples' guides** increase sustainability without excluding couples in need?

Operational model

Refine the operational model and collaborate with World Vision and local churches to adapt and scale the program

Partnering with **faith leaders** to move Becoming One forward



IPA is partnering with the **Church of Uganda** to scale Becoming One to all of its **38 dioceses**:



Research

- Testing whether faith leaders can charge for couples' guides
- Refining operational model



Partnerships

- Deep collaboration with network of partners for long-term success of B1 at scale: IRC and World Vision
- Connect regularly with gov't, local academics, and other partners in ecosystem



Technical assistance

- Ensure partner learning alongside research
- Designing tools to select progressive faith leaders
- Training, materials, and capacity development with partners for evidence-informed implementation of B1



Fundraising

- Mobilize resources for learning-informed scaling
- Resource coalition to eventually implement B1 as an evidence-based program at scale



EXAMPLE

Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) to reduce crime

A short-term, pragmatic form of psychotherapy that prompts people to think differently about and change their behavior.

- There is a **disproportionate concentration of violence and crime among young men in low-income settings**, both in LMICs and high-income countries.
- A growing body of evidence suggests that CBT has **potential to reduce crime and violence**, particularly among **high-risk men in urban areas**.
- The **cost is moderate**, and appears to be **cost-effective**, both alone and with cash transfers.



Areas for future research and policy work in CBT to reduce crime



Delivery modalities

More research is needed to **test different modalities**, such as app-based interventions, “booster” sessions and program bundles.

Generalizability

To **other contexts** with high levels of **urban crime**

Cost-Effectiveness

More cost-effectiveness data from other low and middle income countries.

Partnering with a **local organization** to move CBT forward

IPA is supporting NEPI to **re-launch and scale** the **Sustainable Transformation of Youth in Liberia (STYL)** program



Research

- Test adaptations, refinements, or simplifications for scale and new contexts
- Bring in external research advisory



Partnerships

- Government engagement strategy
- Global Development Incubator
- Scoping for replication opportunities



Technical assistance

- Ensure partner learning alongside research
- Building a sustainable path to scale



EXAMPLE

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.

- **Small- to medium-sized businesses** make up the **backbone of the economy** in most LMICs, but face many **challenges to growth and prosperity**.
- Soft skills trainings have been shown to **increase sales, profits, and business profits, at least in the short term**.
- The cost is **moderate**, though the range is wide. Inexpensive and **cost-effective** compared to other interventions in this space.



Areas for future research and policy work in Soft-skills training to boost business profits and sales



Delivery models

Can **online delivery** help **reduce costs** **without compromising quality**?

Targeting

Which **entrepreneurs** are most meaningfully affected by this training? What **size of firm** benefits most meaningfully?

Implementation model

Developing a scalable model for delivering such training programs while maintaining their quality.

Working with decision-makers to **incorporate a soft-skills curriculum** into existing training programs.

Partnering with a **nonprofit organization** to move soft-skills training forward



IPA is partnering with Doorways to define a scalable model and a path to scale for Personal Initiative training:



Research

- Develop and test an online version of the training
- Summarize and disseminate existing evidence



Partnerships

- Connections with government partners to explore replication opportunities
- Conversations with key partners to explore best practices and barriers to scale



Technical assistance

- Building a sustainable and scalable model



Fundraising

- Mobilize resources to develop and test scalable model

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Exploratory Innovations



Education

- Informational Interventions to Parents and Children
- Community Engagement in School Management
- Teacher Incentive Pay
- Preparation for Social Action

Entrepreneurship & Private Sector Development

- Heuristics-based Financial Literacy Training
- Business Networking Programs
- Business Plan Competitions
- Alternative Credit Scoring Models
- Export Promotion

Social Protection

- Apprenticeships and Training for Youth Livelihoods

Human Trafficking

- Targeted Awareness and Behavior Change Interventions
- Social Protection Programs for Human Trafficking Survivors and At-Risk Populations
- Law Enforcement and Judicial Capacity Building

Peace and Recovery

- Intergroup Contact to Build Social Cohesion in Fragile Settings
- Perspective-taking for Social Cohesion
- Hot Spots Policing
- Messaging for Reintegration of Ex-Combatants
- Dialogue for Reconciliation
- Cash Transfers for Resilience

Intimate Partner Violence

- Adolescent Mentoring and Soft Skills to Reduce IPV
- Cash Transfer and Cash Plus Programs to Address IPV
- Community Gender Norms Change Interventions

Health

- Immunization Education and Information
- Socially Embedded Educational Interventions to Combat Misinformation and Distrust
- Financial and In-Kind Incentives to Increase Childhood Immunization Coverage
- Cash Transfers plus Behavior Change Communication to Reduce Stunting
- Home-Based Growth Monitoring to Improve Child Growth Outcomes
- Animal-Source Foods to Improve Child Growth Outcomes
- Supporting Digitally-Empowered Community Health Workers to Save Lives

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Stay in touch!

Thank you for your attention

Read the report:
poverty-action.org/best-bets

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