



Humanitarian Learning Agenda

For the Strategic Impact Evaluation and Learning Programme

This document was prepared by Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA) and the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) in 2024 for the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's (FCDO) Strategic Impact Evaluation and Learning (SIEL) Programme. It is not an exhaustive review of all rigorous evidence on this topic but is limited in scope to emerging insights from impact evaluation studies that employ experimental or quasi-experimental designs and should be considered alongside other sources of evidence. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of FCDO.

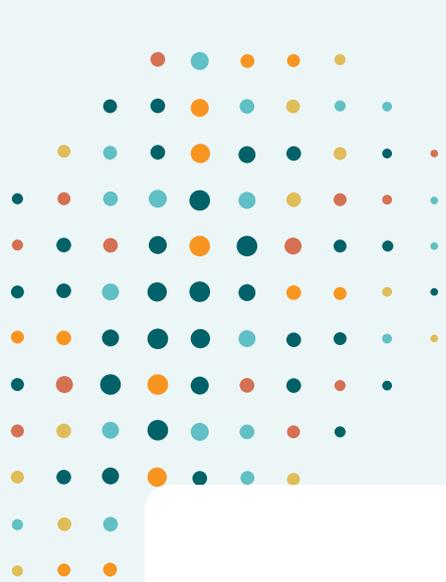
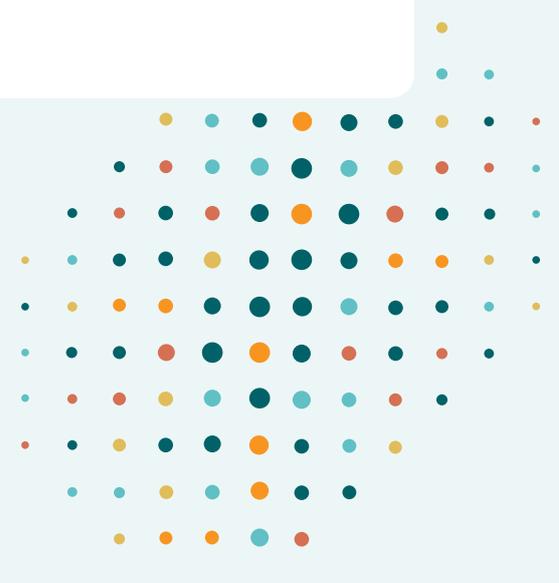


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Background

What is the Strategic Impact Evaluation and Learning programme?

The **Strategic Impact Evaluation and Learning (SIEL) programme** of the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) is a six-year learning partnership between FCDO's Evaluation Unit, Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA), and the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL). Launched in 2024, SIEL is here to support your efforts to understand what programmes and policies are most effective in driving impact. SIEL provides funding, resources, and technical capacity to help you generate evidence-based insights through impact evaluations. All FCDO staff are eligible to apply for impact evaluation funding and support through SIEL via semi-annual calls for [Expressions of Interest](#).

What is an impact evaluation?



Impact evaluations estimate intervention effectiveness by comparing outcomes of those (individuals, communities, schools, etc.) who participated in a programme or intervention against those who did not.

- » For a brief overview of different impact evaluation methods, [see this resource](#).
- » For an introduction to randomised controlled trials (RCTs), a form of impact evaluation, [see here](#).

What is a learning agenda?

SIEL Learning Agendas identify key evidence gaps in priority areas. This will guide evidence generation through the SIEL programme and other FCDO initiatives.ⁱ

The **Humanitarian Learning Agenda** is intended to guide future evaluations of FCDO initiatives and to target research to understudied areas with high potential to inform FCDO's work moving forward. The agenda is not an exhaustive list of evidence gaps, nor is it binding, but provides examples of the kinds of policy-relevant research questions that could be explored through SIEL and other FCDO-funded programmes. The agenda calls specific attention to questions that may be well suited for evaluation using (quasi-)experimental impact evaluation methods. To effectively answer many of the questions laid out below, a wide range of research and evaluation techniques could be employed that extend beyond the scope of SIEL.ⁱⁱ

ⁱ SIEL focuses on four strategic areas: humanitarian assistance, growth, climate and nature, and conflict and fragility, with migration, gender, and technology as cross-cutting themes. This learning agenda can also be used to guide evidence-generating activity beyond impact evaluation in those areas.

ⁱⁱ Given SIEL's focus on impact evaluations, the evidence cited in the 'emerging insights' boxes throughout this document primarily draw from (quasi-)experimental research.



How was the learning agenda created?

The agenda was produced through close consultations with FCDO staff, including members of FCDO's humanitarian cadre and external partners. It was informed by FCDO resources, including FCDO Best Buys reports, the [UK Humanitarian Framework](#) (2022), FCDO Areas of Research Interest (2023), and spending reviews. It also draws directly from resources developed for J-PAL and IPA's [Humanitarian Protection Initiative](#) and [Governance, Crime, and Conflict Initiative](#), both made possible by FCDO's support, and IPA and J-PAL's [Displaced Livelihoods Initiative](#).

Who is the learning agenda for?

This learning agenda is intended to spur interest in impact evaluation and wider evidence generation among FCDO staff working on humanitarian assistance programmes and policy, for example, humanitarian advisers, programme managers, and development directors. Whether you're looking to inform your programme design with robust evidence, enhance your evaluation skills, or collaborate with top researchers, SIEL offers the tools and support you need to drive meaningful change—on humanitarian response and other strategic priority areas. SIEL is open to those who want to evaluate initiatives at the design stage, or initiatives which have already been completed and robustly evaluated, where there is interest in uncovering the long-term impact.

SIEL can help you generate the evidence you need

To fill these priority evidence gaps, SIEL is partnering with FCDO teams to provide funding and training for a range of evaluation methodologies, such as:

- » **Quantitative impact evaluations:** These determine the causal impact and cost-effectiveness of interventions by comparing a treatment to a control group, generating high-confidence insights.
- » **Nimble evaluations:** Quick, cost-effective RCTs that generally focus on outputs and shorter-term outcomes, helping to identify what's working and adapt interventions in real time to improve effectiveness.
- » **Pilot studies:** Small-scale projects that explore new ideas or evaluate interventions on a smaller scale before full implementation.
- » **Adaptive management support:** Get ongoing support to adapt and improve your programmes based on real-time findings.

Why apply now? SIEL offers a unique opportunity to:

- » Secure funding and support for timely and strategic evaluations
- » Access hands-on guidance from experts (IPA, J-PAL, and others)
- » Help your team generate and use evidence that matters

For more information, visit [our website](#) or contact the [SIEL Help Desk](#). We are eager to help you think through evaluation opportunities.

Why focus on humanitarian assistance?

The importance of identifying effective humanitarian assistance interventions

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) estimated that nearly 300 million people would need humanitarian assistance in 2024, with more people experiencing displacement than at any other time this century.¹ Humanitarian crises often lead to the loss of life, human suffering, and violations of human rights and dignity. These crises disproportionately harm marginalised groups, including women and girls, reducing their agency and resilience to future shocks and perpetuating cycles of vulnerability.^{1,2} With entrenched conflicts, the climate crisis, disease outbreaks, and complex economic and governance dynamics driving humanitarian need, the scale of the challenge is likely to persist.^{1,2}

Despite growing concern and investments in humanitarian prevention, preparedness, and response, there are critical evidence gaps around (cost) effective ways to anticipate, respond to, and recover from humanitarian crises.ⁱⁱⁱ Additional evidence on the impact of FCDO-supported humanitarian programmes can support the development and delivery of more cost-effective and efficient humanitarian investments globally. Strengthening this knowledge base is critical to achieving a world where crises are minimised and communities thrive.

Critical evidence gaps must be addressed

Given the rising need for effective humanitarian programmes, it is important that existing evidence gaps are filled to best deliver on the core objectives of the [UK's Humanitarian Framework](#).

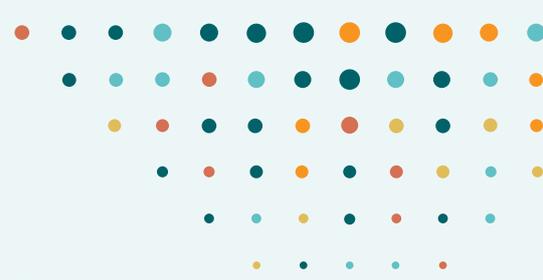
These gaps are organised around three key categories:

- 01 **Prioritising humanitarian assistance to people in greatest need**
- 02 **Protecting the people most at risk**
- 03 **Preventing and anticipating future shocks and building resilience²**

The work of both global humanitarian actors and local actors could be strengthened by answers to the range of open questions highlighted below, with examples of some of the highest priority questions noted with a **BOLD ORANGE LABEL**.

ⁱⁱⁱ Despite humanitarian preparedness and response programming being a Top 20 spend area for FCDO, few rigorous impact evaluations exist and often do not account for cost-effectiveness (this is especially true relative to other high-spend areas for FCDO, e.g. global health or foundational learning). For instance, on the topics of humanitarian protection, integrating displaced people into local service provision, or localisation of humanitarian aid, DFID 2019's "Humanitarian 'Best Buys' Analysis" notes that the evidence on impact and of cost-effectiveness is limited. Even in other areas regarded as having "high potential," evidence is often lacking and/or mixed.

Evidence gaps



01 Prioritising humanitarian assistance to people in greatest need and improving assistance across sectors

Humanitarian actors have to make impossibly difficult decisions on where and how to target assistance amid funding shortfalls.³ Tightening budgets have led to spending cuts in key areas, making it all the more critical to effectively allocate remaining resources. The decline in humanitarian financing globally leaves people at risk of starvation, disease, and more.^{3,4} Given these risks, it is crucial that effective assistance can be delivered to people most in need. Across sectors, there are a range of cross-cutting research questions that could impact the effectiveness of humanitarian programmes, including important questions on targeting and programme delivery.

1.1 How can programmes be best targeted to both maximise effectiveness and reach the most vulnerable people in need of assistance?

- **HIGH PRIORITY:** What are the trade-offs between blanket targeting approaches vs. categorical targeting vs. developing new locally-informed vulnerability criteria through community-based targeting?^{iv}
- Who may fall through the cracks under different targeting approaches, including when accounting for the dynamic nature of vulnerability over time?
- Does who you target matter for different programmes and outcomes (e.g. household decision-making, intimate partner violence (IPV), or child health)?
- Beyond direct beneficiaries, how does a programme impact the wider community? Who benefits most and who may be left out?
- How can technology improve targeting for the pre-positioning or advanced delivery of aid before a crisis occurs?

^{iv} Blanket targeting refers to providing a programme to an entire population without identifying who may be most vulnerable or in need; categorical targeting refers to providing a programme to a specific group expected to need the programme most (e.g. women, elderly people).



©WFP, Tim Dirven (supported by the EU).

1.2 How can programmes and services be optimally designed and delivered in areas of insecurity, violence, or crisis?

- **HIGH PRIORITY:** How can the cost-effectiveness of cash transfer programming be maximised, e.g. by varying transfer sizes, modality, timing (such as before or after a crisis starts, or timing with agricultural seasons), or target beneficiaries (such as female versus male household members)?
- **HIGH PRIORITY:** Can localising humanitarian response by giving affected populations more control over the design, implementation, or targeting of programmes improve the quality and efficiency of aid? What strategies are most effective in ensuring that affected populations have agency and their voices and needs are reflected in humanitarian programming decisions?
- Can bundling complementary interventions enhance programme impacts? For instance, could adding cash components (“cash plus”) to sectoral programmes like livelihoods, education, or agriculture support households in adopting targeted behavioural changes (e.g. by shifting incentives or relaxing constraints)?
- What is the most effective mode of delivering time-sensitive, vital services like nutritional, health, or WASH programmes, and does this differ in various humanitarian settings (e.g. urban, camp)?
- What approaches are most effective for preventing and treating different forms of malnutrition in emergency settings? Can programmes commonly delivered in noncrisis settings (e.g. school meal programmes) improve health and nutrition when delivered in humanitarian contexts?
- How can interventions be scaled effectively and cost-efficiently in contexts where trained professionals (e.g. clinical providers, teachers) are scarce and infrastructure has been damaged or destroyed?

Emerging insights snapshot: Lessons from recent impact evaluations

Social protection in crisis contexts

In humanitarian and displacement settings, **cash and voucher assistance programmes are often an effective tool for improving food security, nutrition, education, livelihoods, consumption and spending.**^{5–10} These programmes can help reduce households' harmful coping strategies, like restricting meals or selling assets.⁷ Cash transfers are typically cheaper to deliver than in-kind transfers and preferred by households for their flexibility in humanitarian settings, making them a cost-effective option.^{5,7,11–13} Beyond cash, emerging quasi-experimental research suggests that protective programmes like Index-Based Livestock Insurance or workfare programmes can equip households to be more resilient to climate-related shocks and can mitigate the risk of conflict.^{14–16}



Dominic Chavez, World Bank, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

Emerging insights snapshot: Lessons from recent impact evaluations

Delivery and design of food security and nutrition programmes

In settings where trained health professionals are often scarce, **nonspecialised healthcare providers can effectively deliver nutrition programmes, improving food security and child nutrition.**^{17,18} Programmes that target immediate causes of malnutrition may be more effective when paired with broader programmes that address the nonfood drivers of malnutrition, like behavioural change or livelihoods programmes.^{19,v}



Drawing from evidence in non-crisis settings

More broadly, policymakers can build on generalisable lessons from a wide experimental evidence base conducted outside of humanitarian contexts to inform humanitarian programming, especially in protracted crises.^{vi} For example, **relatively inexpensive interventions have shown potential in increasing trust and social links between groups**, which could be relevant in cases where crises have damaged social bonds and networks.^{vii, 20–22} Prior research on information diffusion through social networks could also inform how humanitarian actors share information on rights, support services, and recommended behaviours to vulnerable groups.^{23–26}

^v See [Yavuz et al. \(2022\)](#) for a related evidence gap map.

^{vi} For a broader overview of evidence and considerations on improving service delivery, see [J-PAL \(2019\)](#). See [J-PAL \(2022\)](#) for further discussion of evidence on women's agency and gender-based violence (GBV), [J-PAL \(2024\)](#) for a review of the use of behaviour change techniques to address crime and violence, [J-PAL \(2021\)](#) for a review of peacebuilding, conflict prevention, and violence reduction programming more broadly, and [Blattman and Annan \(2016\)](#), [Lyall, Zhou, and Imai \(2019\)](#), or [Blattman, Fiala, and Martinez \(2018\)](#) for examples of vocational training in fragile contexts.

^{vii} Nevertheless, it is important to guard against potential unintended negative impacts of programmes aiming to increase social cohesion (e.g. intergroup contact), as bringing together opposing groups in a single programme could cause distress or increase the perceived threat of other groups if not carefully implemented. For examples that discuss potential risks further, please see [Cilliers, Dube, and Siddiqi \(2016\)](#), [Ghosh et al. \(2024\)](#), [Hangartner et al. \(2019\)](#) or [Enos et al. \(2019\)](#).

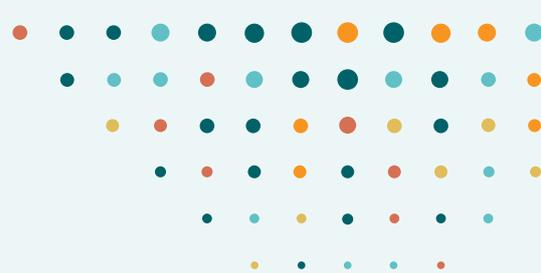


Alfa Net, Shutterstock.com, 2023.

Evidence to action example: Digital delivery of humanitarian aid

In 2021, Afghanistan fell into a severe humanitarian crisis following the Taliban's seizure of the government. Researchers conducted a randomised evaluation to test the impact of delivering digital aid payments on food security and mental well-being for vulnerable female-headed households in the country. Digital payments led to improved food security and mental well-being for beneficiaries. Digital delivery of aid was also cost-effective and transparent, showing no evidence of diversion to the de facto Afghan authorities. Based on these findings, the World Food Programme is currently scaling digital aid payments to 100,000 vulnerable households in Afghanistan.²⁷ *This research was funded by FCDO through J-PAL's Crime and Violence Initiative.*

Evidence gaps



02 Protecting people at the greatest risk of harm

With conflict and protracted humanitarian crises on the rise, people are increasingly at risk of physical, psychological, social, and legal harm. Approximately 10 percent (or £2.5 billion) of global reported funding for humanitarian aid in 2023 was directed towards protection-focused programming.²⁸ Despite major investments and growing need, major evidence gaps remain on effective programmes to protect conflict-affected populations from violence, coercion, and deliberate deprivation, including through programmes like support services for sexual and gender-based violence, legal aid, and international humanitarian law compliance. For instance, DFID 2019's humanitarian Best Buys analysis identified few evaluations of programmes aimed at improving protection for civilians, and none had cost-effectiveness data.¹¹ Examples of key open questions may be divided into two groups, prevention or mitigation of harm.

2.1 What interventions are most effective in preventing physical, psychological, social, and legal harm in humanitarian settings?

- **HIGH PRIORITY:** What sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and IPV reduction strategies are effective in conflict settings? Are socioeconomic or normative interventions with populations at risk of harm(ing) more effective in reducing the incidence of SGBV?
- To what extent can direct dialogue and/or training with armed actors reduce the use of violence and promote adherence to international humanitarian law? Can the influence of third parties (e.g. religious groups or influential elders) be leveraged to improve protection outcomes?
- **HIGH PRIORITY:** How can social and digital networks be better leveraged to disseminate information on rights, support services, and recommended behaviours to support self-protection capabilities and empower individuals to make informed decisions to effectively reduce exposure to violence and improve their legal situations?
- How can humanitarian actors structure their work to ensure affected communities have agency to communicate how assistance can best be delivered without creating protection risks?
- What is the impact of downscaling assistance on negative coping mechanisms for vulnerable groups (e.g. survival sex, dangerous work, child labour, trafficking)?



Yagazie Emezi, Getty Images, Images of Empowerment

2.2 Which protection interventions are most effective in mitigating harm?

- **HIGH PRIORITY:** What outreach, targeting, and case management strategies are most effective at reducing the psychological effects of conflict-induced distress within resource-constrained settings?
- What tiered mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) interventions, such as safe spaces for women and children, are both feasible in humanitarian settings and effective? Can tasks traditionally performed by specialists be transferred to nonspecialist providers?
- How can digital solutions to identify missing persons support family reunification while respecting the privacy of those missing and their families? How does combining psychological support with economic empowerment interventions for family members of the missing affect mental health outcomes in the long term?
- How can humanitarian organisations improve their processes and procedures, such as client feedback channels, to ensure they are alerted to abuse and exploitation in their operations?
- How can protection programming be integrated into the work of other humanitarian response interventions, and what are the possible protective benefits of these interventions (e.g. to what extent can food security, cash and voucher assistance, health, or other programmes contribute to protection outcomes)?

Emerging insights snapshot: Lessons from recent impact evaluations

Violence against women and children (VAWC)

Identifying interventions that consistently reduce VAWC in conflict and crisis settings is challenging.^{29,30} Still, emerging evidence suggests that programmes—like media campaigns or economic interventions—may be **more effective at reducing VAWC when designed to address household gender norms, engage wider communities and networks to shift social norms, and target across generations and genders to disrupt cycles of violence.**^{31–37} In low- and middle-income countries more broadly, there is growing evidence on the mixed impact of increasing access to financial resources on women’s exposure to IPV.³⁸



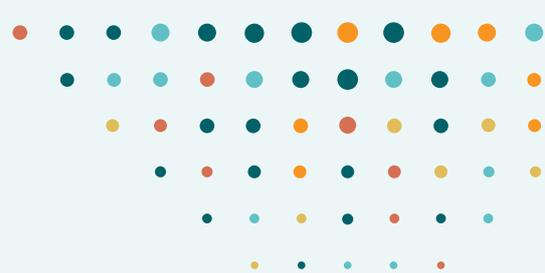
South Sudan, ©Anouk Delafortrie, European Union, 2018.



Mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS)

MHPSS programmes that share delivery tasks with social workers, peers, or other nonspecialised healthcare providers can be effective at reducing severe depression in cost-constrained environments.^{39–42} However, existing studies of MHPSS programmes in humanitarian settings often target varied populations (e.g. from different age groups or geographies), face design and measurement challenges, or focus on one-off or rare delivery models while more common programmes go unevaluated, making it challenging to draw out actionable lessons.^{43,44}

Evidence gaps



03 Preventing, anticipating, and building resilience to future shocks

Proactively working to prevent, anticipate, and build resilience to climate, natural disaster, health, economic, and conflict-related shocks may help communities manage crises and minimise harm more efficiently than traditional humanitarian responses. There are important open questions on how to best anticipate and prepare for shocks, including how to tackle underlying drivers of crises. There is also more to learn on how to build people's resilience and ability to withstand future shocks. Finally, as displacement experiences are increasingly protracted, there is an increasing need for cost-effective, long-term solutions to support displaced people's livelihoods and inclusion after a crisis.

3.1 What programmes can help communities better anticipate and take early action on future crises?

- **HIGH PRIORITY:** Can early warning systems (EWS) and anticipatory action programmes change communities' responses and resilience to crises? What is the impact of these programmes on the likelihood of future conflict, famine, or other crises?
- How can advanced technologies and monitoring be leveraged to take early action against severe weather events, identify and address early warning signs of conflict, or contain disease outbreaks rapidly to reduce future humanitarian need?
- What types of information campaign messages, messengers, or delivery modalities are most effective in getting communities and individuals to prepare for and take action in times of crisis?
- How can disaster risk financing be strengthened and scaled to help communities respond to and recover from humanitarian crises?

3.2 What programmes can build communities' resilience to future crises and shocks?

- **HIGH PRIORITY:** Which interventions enable individuals and communities to effectively build their resilience to crises and shocks, including to maintain their wellbeing and avoid poverty traps?
- **HIGH PRIORITY:** Can interventions which enhance resilience also generate jobs, promote innovation and greater economic activity? Which of these are most effective?
- **HIGH PRIORITY:** How can displaced people be integrated into local service delivery systems? Can better access to services, legal status (and common associated benefits, like the right to work), or social networks improve livelihoods and resilience to future shocks and reduce negative coping strategies?
- How do different resilience-building and livelihood programmes impact migration decisions among displaced people? Do they support the creation of local social and economic networks and deter further migration, or increase people's ability to move in search of different opportunities?
- How do dispersed networks and remittances shape individual resilience and migration decisions for displaced people?

Emerging insights snapshot: Lessons from recent impact evaluations

Early warning systems (EWS)

EWS, which are used to help predict natural disasters, disease outbreaks, and other hazardous events, have favourable cost-benefit ratios.⁴⁵ While EWS are increasingly accurate in predicting hazards, open questions remain on how to best communicate information from EWS to communities to encourage them to take the early actions needed to protect themselves and on how to build response capabilities.^{46–48} Preliminary findings from one of the first randomised evaluations of a flood early warning system in India found that households in communities that experienced severe flooding were more prepared for floods, reported fewer illnesses, and experienced a 30 percent reduction in medical costs.⁴⁹



Anticipatory action

A growing body of evidence suggests that **providing quick financial support—such as cash transfers or emergency loans—to families in advance of extreme weather events can improve their resilience and recovery.**^{50–55} In Bangladesh, Nepal, and Niger, giving families cash when they were forecast to experience extreme weather, such as floods or droughts, helped them better afford food and, in some cases, improved their mental health and well-being.^{51–53} In Niger, when researchers compared the benefits of cash transfers before, during, and after a drought, they found that the families who received cash the earliest fared the best, underscoring the importance of early action.⁵³ However, the only way to implement a truly anticipatory cash transfer program is to be able to predict with accuracy when and where weather emergencies will happen, underscoring the need for accurate weather forecasts and effective early warning systems. Despite positive early findings, further research is needed, particularly to understand long-term impacts and trade-offs regarding the most effective targeting of this form of support.



Bangladesh, Sk Hasan Ali, Shutterstock.com, 2024.

Annex: Responsible research in humanitarian settings

Conducting rigorous impact evaluations in humanitarian contexts can pose unique challenges that require careful planning and foresight to address. In these settings, researchers and their partners need to plan ahead to safely and ethically conduct fieldwork amid insecurity, with mobile populations, with limited research infrastructure, and under short implementation timelines.

For randomised evaluations specifically, randomisation itself can pose challenges, particularly when it may seem to be at odds with humanitarian principles such as impartiality, which prioritise need-based treatment allocation. Contextually appropriate options for responsible randomisation may include A/B testing to compare approaches without a pure control group, testing cross-cutting treatments to assess bundled interventions’ trade-offs, encouragement and phase-in designs, and more discussed in the resources below.

This table provides a non-exhaustive list of resources on responsible research to help teams develop and follow an ethical research plan, emphasising resources related to research in humanitarian settings. In addition, research teams must always have their research reviewed and approved by a certified Institutional Review Board (IRB), and adhere to the policies and protocols approved by the IRB, to ensure that participants are [protected from potentially harmful research](#).

Resource	Content
Elrha’s evidence review “Gender-based violence research methodologies in humanitarian settings: An evidence review and recommendations”	This document provides an evidence review and recommendations on research methodology and ethics to support researchers conducting research on GBV in humanitarian settings.
Elrha’s toolkit “Ethics for humanitarian innovation”	This toolkit guides brainstorming on the development, evaluation, and implementation of ethical humanitarian innovations.
Falb et al. (2019)’s “The ethical contours of research in crisis settings: Five practical considerations for academic institutional review boards and researchers”	This article discusses challenges related to ethical research in crisis settings, including conflict settings.
IPA’s “The safe and ethical conduct of violence research”	This report provides guidance on policies and best practices for conducting surveys for violence research.
IPA’s “IPV field research: When all the questions are hard questions”	This report shares guidance on conducting research related to IPV ethically and safely.
IRC’s “Humanitarian research toolkit”	This is a resource for conducting research in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, comprising guidance, training documents, and other practical tools.

Resource	Content
Inter-Agency Standing Committee's “Operational guidance on data responsibility in humanitarian action”	This operational guidance provides concrete steps to ensure that data is safe, ethical, and effectively managed in humanitarian action, laying out a set of principles and actions for data responsibility.
J-PAL's summary of ethical conduct of randomised evaluations	This resource is intended as a practical guide for researchers to use when considering the ethics of a given research project. It draws heavily from J-PAL's own ethics training for research staff and Rachel Glennerster and Shawn Powers's chapter in the <i>Oxford Handbook of Professional Economic Ethics</i> (2016).
J-PAL's learning agenda “Randomised impact evaluation in humanitarian action”	This learning agenda sets out key open questions in the humanitarian space that randomised evaluations may be suited to address, a discussion of common implementation challenges, and tips on responsible randomisation design in humanitarian settings.
J-PAL's repository of measurement and survey design resources	This repository provides a list of resources on measurement and survey design relating to various topics, <i>including resources on relevant outcomes</i> like trust or GBV.
Quattrochi et al. (2020)'s “Contributions of experimental approaches to development and poverty alleviation: Field experiments and humanitarian assistance”	This paper shares reflections on the opportunities and risks of running experiments in humanitarian settings, and provides insights from field experiments of large-scale humanitarian aid programmes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

For additional resources, please refer to IPA's [Research Good Practices in Fragile and Displacement-affected Contexts](#).

Strategic Impact Evaluation and Learning (SIEL)



Myanmar, IPA, 2022

What is SIEL?

The FCDO's Strategic Impact Evaluation and Learning (SIEL) programme is a partnership between FCDO's Evaluation Unit (EvU), Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA), and the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL). SIEL is here to build our understanding of what programmes and policies are most effective in driving impact. SIEL offers support—including funding, resources, and technical support—to help FCDO teams generate evidence that informs policy decisions and 'what works' to maximise the impact of FCDO activities.

SIEL aims to close knowledge gaps in four strategic priority areas: growth, humanitarian assistance, climate and nature, and conflict and fragility. Cross-cutting themes include women and girls, technology and innovation, and migration. All FCDO staff are eligible to apply for impact evaluation funding and support through SIEL via semi-annual calls for Expressions of Interest.

What SIEL offers

SIEL provides a range of opportunities and resources to support your work and professional development.

Funding and support for evaluations

SIEL focusses on filling a gap in providing funding for evaluations which employ experimental or quasi-experimental techniques to answer questions about impact:

- » **Quantitative impact evaluations:** Access funding for high-quality impact evaluations, including randomised controlled trials, long-term follow-ups, and nimble evaluations.
- » **Pilot studies:** Test new ideas or assess interventions on a smaller scale before full implementation.
- » **Adaptive management support:** Get ongoing support to refine and improve your programmes based on real-time findings.
- » **Matchmaking with experts:** Connect with leading researchers from IPA and J-PAL to collaborate on impactful evaluations tailored to your programme's needs.

Training and capacity strengthening

- » SIEL offers training on managing, commissioning, and understanding impact evaluations.
- » Open to all staff and free of costs, the training sessions are designed to help you understand how to use evidence to support delivery of your priorities.

Identifying, sharing, and using evidence

- » **SIEL learning agendas** identify key evidence gaps in the four strategic priority areas to spark rigorous impact evaluations of FCDO interventions. The agendas intend to guide future evaluation of FCDO interventions and target evaluations to understudied areas with high potential to inform FCDO's work moving forward.
- » **Research uptake:** SIEL will support the wide dissemination of findings across FCDO and beyond. All staff will have access to key insights from all evaluations undertaken, including through webinars, presentations, and other resources. This will help strengthen knowledge management and organisational learning and deliver more impactful and sustainable programmes and policies.

GET INVOLVED

SIEL could be relevant to you if any of these apply:

- » You are looking to start a new initiative or generate evidence about a past initiative.
- » You would like to learn 'what works', improve your programme, and/or enhance your evaluation skills.
- » You are working in one of SIEL's priority areas.

SIEL offers:

- » A partnership approach, helping you answer priority learning questions with the support of world-class researchers.
- » Training and support from leading organisations in the impact evaluation field.



For more information, visit our [SIEL website](#) or contact the [SIEL Help Desk](#) with any questions.

Endnotes

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