



# Factors that Help or Hinder the Use of Evidence in Policymaking

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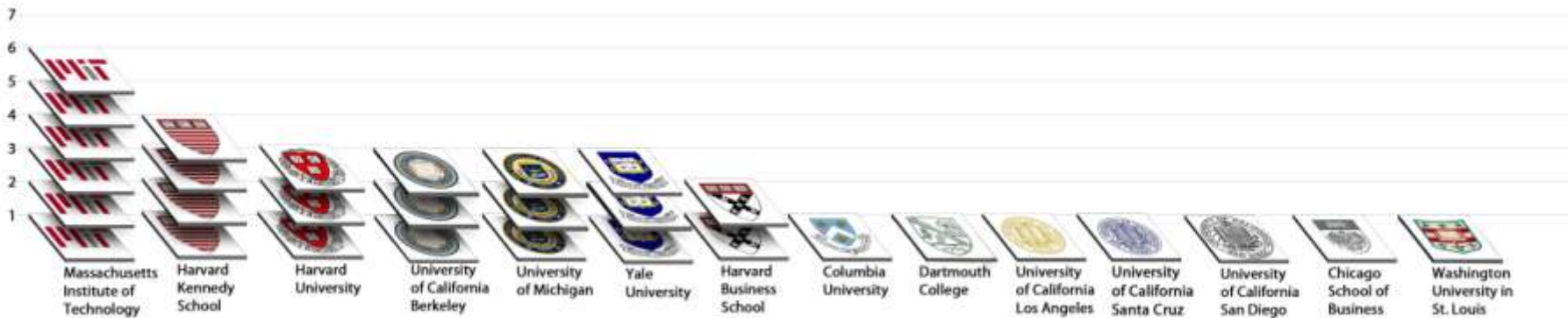
# Outline

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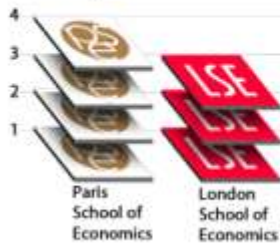
- ➔ 1. What sort of evidence would you want as a policy maker?
- 2. Factors that Help or Hinder the use of Evidence in Policy (*How could these cases have had more policy influence*)
- 3. Is it the job of researchers to influence policy?
- 4. Do governments only want to evaluate programs they think work?

J-PAL is a Network of 55 Professors from 29 Universities using Randomized Evaluations in Development. **But Mission is Broader:** *Policy is based on evidence and research is translated into policy*

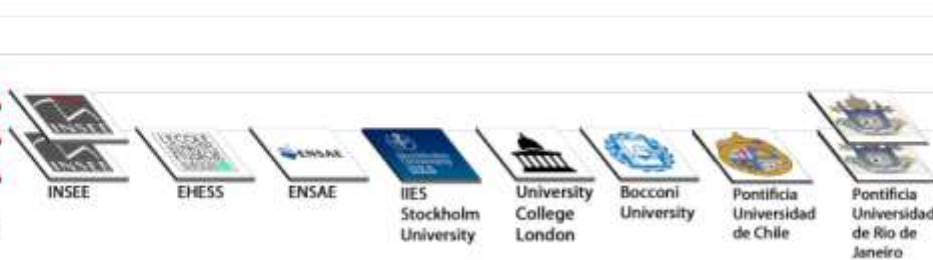
United States



Europe



Latin America

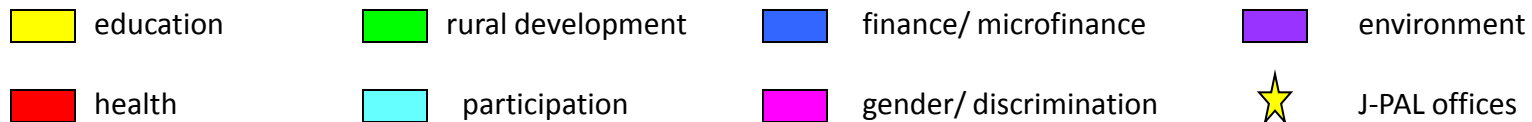


South Asia



With 250+ projects in 42 countries, we deal with lots of policymakers, but recognize that:

- (a) There are many channels to inform policy, though focus here on those used by J-PAL
- (b) There is no “one size fits all” strategy to use impact evaluations to inform policy (example of four different scale up models)



# What sort of evidence would you want as a policy maker?

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1. *Unbiased*: Independent evaluation and not driven by an agenda
2. *Rigorous*: Used best methodology available and applied it correctly
3. *Substantive*: Builds on my knowledge and provides me either insights that are novel, or evidence on issues where there is a robust debate (find little use for evidence that reiterates what are established facts)
4. *Relevant*: To my context and my needs and problems
5. *Timely*: When I need it to make decisions

# What sort of evidence would you want as a policy maker?

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6. *Actionable*: Comes with a clear policy recommendation
7. *Easy to Understand*: Links theory of change to empirical evidence and presents results in a manner easy to understand
8. *Cumulative*: Draws lessons from not just one program or an evaluation, but the body of evidence
9. *Easy to Explain to constituents*:
  - Helps if researchers have been building up a culture of getting the general public on board with Op-Eds, conferences etc.

# Outline

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We recognize that:

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- (b) *There is no “one size fits all” strategy to use impact evaluations to inform policy (example of four different scale up models)*

1. What sort of evidence would you want as a policy maker?
- ➔ 2. Factors that Help or Hinder the use of Evidence in Policy
3. Is it the job of researchers to influence policy?
4. Do governments only want to evaluate programs they think work?

# Factors that Help or Hinder the use of Evidence in Policy: **Research Side**

Hinder	Help
1. Disconnect of evaluator from Program Design	Willingness to engage with policymaker in the concept and design of the program to be evaluated. <i>E.g. Rajasthan Police</i>
2. Unilateral decisions on design of evaluation	Work with policymakers to understand their main program concerns, and how the evaluation can be structured to answer them. <i>E.g. Immunization</i>
3. Inflexibility in evaluation approach	Consider alternate evaluation design to accommodate political constraints and field realities without compromising rigor and objectivity. <i>E.g. Minister's District</i>
4. Only measuring "ideal", but long term outcomes	Construct additional short term evaluation outcomes while continuing to design long-term measures. <i>E.g. NRHM attendance vs. health outcomes.</i>



# Factors that Help or Hinder the use of Evidence in Policy: **Research Side**

Hinder	Help
5. IE that only measure impact, not reasons	Qualitative data collection during IE to understand if program implemented per plan, and what worked or not. <i>E.g. Nurses breaking machines</i>
6. Begin policy engagement only at start of project	Actively participate in policy conferences, meet key policymakers, contribute to civil society debate via op-eds, books etc. in region of interest. <i>E.g. Bihar conference</i>
7. End relationship at completion of project	Willingness to stay engaged as a “technical” resources for policymaker even after publication, especially for scale-ups. <i>E.g. Pratham (they provided expertise for TCAI).</i>
8. Not report negative results	Maintaining rigor and absence of bias in evaluation and reporting results despite above close relationship. <i>E.g. Flour fortification with Seva Mandir.</i>

# Factors that Help or Hinder the use of Evidence in Policy: **Research Side**

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Hinder	Help
9. Shifting evaluation objective	Register hypothesis ahead of time to avoid allegations of data mining. <i>E.g. JPAL and partners for RCTs</i>
10. Discuss only one study (own research) and information overload	Explain “policy findings” from the entire body of research, not just own narrow research and how this evaluation links to the body of evidence. <i>E.g. DC Education Evidence Workshop, Cost Effectiveness Analysis</i>
11. Original evaluation vs. replications	Be willing to evaluate the replication of a program found to have succeeded in another context and well suited for this problem, not just “new and innovative” programs. <i>E.g. Bihar immunization, our partner IPA</i>

# Factors that Help or Hinder the use of Evidence in Policy: **Research Side**

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Hinder	Help
12. Technical jargon	Frame discussion in easy to understand language, communicate in a style policymakers are familiar with, and customize outreach to audience. <i>E.g. Policy Bulletins, Briefcases, academic papers</i>
13. Funding may be difficult	More and more organizations require impact evaluations in the programs they fund and dedicated funding groups makes this easier. <i>E.g. DIME @ WB, 3ie, IGC, JPAL Initiatives, IPA Funds</i>

# Factors that Help or Hinder the use of Evidence in Policy: *Policy Side*

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Hinder	Help
1. Political agenda trumps evidence	Target those who are open to evidence, so they use it as an input along with other factors like political agenda, budget constraint and ability of bureaucracy. <i>E.g. TCAI in Ghana</i>
2. Low capacity to consume, generate or institutionalize evidence	Help train staff, establish M&E divisions, recruit technically competent people and motivate them by giving credence to their research and via formal linkages with leading academics. <i>E.g. Government of Haryana</i>
3. Short term horizon	Combine short term outcome measures with long term outcomes via phased rollout. <i>E.g. NRHM</i>

# Factors that Help or Hinder the use of Evidence in Policy: *Policy Side*

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Hinder	Help
4. Risk aversion and failure-avoidance	Setup institutions that allow innovation and risk tolerance. <i>E.g. Chile Compass Commission, French Evaluation Fund</i>
5. Inability to build coalitions to support new programs	Work with other government agencies that are most receptive to evidence, even if not social development departments. <i>E.g. Finance, Governor's Special Cell</i>
6. Change in "rules of the game" viz. evaluation or lack of institutional continuity	Sign MoU and stick to the agreement in terms of phased roll out, control group, sample size, data publication, and scale up if found to be successful. MoU to survive change of personnel and governments. <i>E.g. Government of Karnataka state in India</i>

# Factors that Help or Hinder the use of Evidence in Policy: *Policy Side*

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Hinder	Help
7. Lack of pressure from civil society or legislature to conduct evaluations	Convince these institutions to demand evaluations via contribution of civil society debate (Opeds, workshops, legislation). <i>E.g. Mexican legislature created CONEVAL.</i>

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We recognize that:

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- (b) *There is no “one size fits all” strategy to use impact evaluations to inform policy (example of four different scale up models)*

1. What sort of evidence would you want as a policy maker?
2. Factors that Help or Hinder the use of Evidence in Policy
- ➔ 3. Is it the job of researchers to influence policy?
4. Do governments only want to evaluate programs they think work?

# Is it the Job of Researchers to Influence Policy

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1. Research should not be the end in itself:
  - If research is not translated into policy, it is a huge waste of the resources that go into funding it (universities, NSF, 3ie, foundations, etc.)
2. Researchers bring credibility to evidence:
  - Unbiased and rigorous research has much better potential to influence policy in a unique way if disseminated well
3. Researcher best placed to help translate research into policy recommendations
  - They understand well the evidence from around the world, were closely involved with the program design, independently observed the implementation (qualitative data) and measured the impacts



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1. What sort of evidence would you want as a policy maker?
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- ➔ 4. Do governments only want to evaluate programs they think work?

# Do governments only want to evaluate programs they think work?

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1. **Yes**: If the program finalized and the government has put its full political capital behind it:
  - Rely on internal M&E departments to undertake evaluations and tightly control the results emerging from the evaluations
  - Best resolution maybe to evaluate variations in program (benefits, beneficiary selection and program delivery process)
2. **No**: If evaluator involved in the program conception and design from beginning, then may be able to convince the government to:
  - Conduct pilot programs to test the proof of concept
  - Phased rollouts that allow you to conduct evaluations and also influence policy