3. Increasing evidence use

Evidence is often just one of the multiple factors that influence decision-making. Political exigencies, competing interests and varied institutional capacity make evidence-informed decision-making a complex area. CEDIL's third programme of work supports research to improve how evidence is used to inform decision-making. The goal is to apply the same rigour and innovation with which we approach development interventions to understanding the processes and methods by which we seek to increase evidence use.

CEDIL projects

A team from the African Centre for Evidence at the University of Johannesburg will be conducting an evidence synthesis on evidence-informed policymaking. They will also produce an evidence map of evaluations of interventions promoting evidence-informed policymaking in low- and middle-income countries. This will enable them to publish a set of guidelines for strengthening evidence use Privacy & Cookies Policy with

multiple government departments and ministries. Another project, based at Mekong Economics Myanmar, will conduct an experimental study to examine how programme evaluation rubrics influence evaluative thinking and judgements about evidence use in decision-making. Other projects will examine the most effective methods of using an evidence base to make policy decisions in novel contexts, and how to avoid bias in the use of evidence.

See below the CEDIL funded projects under this programme of work:

Completed and Closed Projects

Engaging stakeholders with evidence and uncertainty

Country-specific evidence and gap maps

Disability evidence portal

The art and science of using evidence: an evidence map, synthesis and evidence-informed guidelines for supporting the use of evidence in low- and middle-income countries

How biased are observational methods in practice? Accumulating evidence using RCTs with imperfect compliance

Predicting optimal policies for new contexts using existing studies

Enhancing evaluation use: rubric methodology in programme evaluation

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Country-Specific Evidence And Gap Maps

Programme of work	Increasing evidence use
Principal investigator(s)	Howard White
Host institution	Campbell Collaboration
Project type	Evidence and gap map
Country/ies	Kenya, Malawi, Pakistan and Uganda

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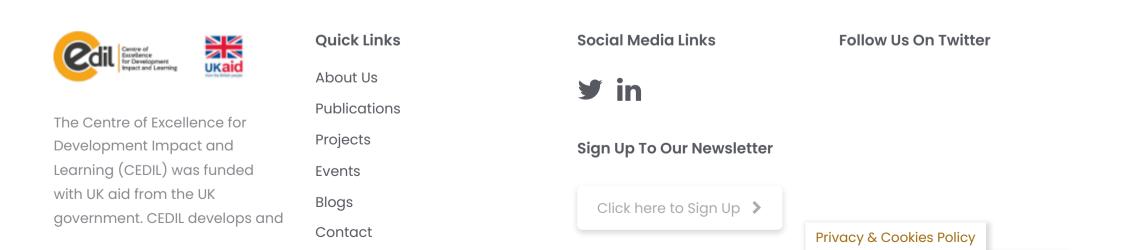|	
Research question	The research team will produce four country-specific evidence and gap maps (C-EGMs), which will include all the evaluations of interventions carried out within a specific time period. The four C-EGMs will be built for Kenya, Malawi, Pakistan and Uganda and will be organized by sector of intervention and outcomes.
Research design	A systematic search will be conducted to identify evidence to include in the maps, drawing on evaluation databases and repositories of international agencies. The map will be co-produced with a central government agency and local researchers.
Data source	All evaluations of interventions published within a specific period
Policy relevance	C-EGMs will facilitate the access and use of evidence and enable policymakers and researchers to identify areas which should be prioritised for further research.
Project Outputs	• Development impact evaluations in Pakistan: A country evaluation map – Syntheses Working Paper • Development evaluations in Uganda 2000-2018: A country evaluation map – Syntheses Working Paper • Development project evaluations in Malawi: A country evaluation map – Syntheses Working Paper

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Disability Evidence Portal

Programme of work	Evaluating complex interventions
Principal investigator(s)	Tom Shakespeare
Host institution	London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine
Project type	Evidence portal
Country/ies	Multi-country

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Research question	The research team will develop a user-friendly, web-based platform for evidence-informed decision making on disability-inclusive development in low- and middle-income countries. The platform will provide a database of existing impact evaluations and evidence syntheses related to disability and will provide guidance aimed at policymakers.
Research design	The portal will be developed based on CEDIL's evidence gap map on disability. The process will include extensive consultation with relevant policymakers and programme planners to ensure the portal is relevant to their needs.
Data source	CEDIL's evidence gap map on disability
Policy relevance	The portal will be a useful and accessible evidence resource for policymakers, funders, programme planners and researchers working on disability projects.
Project Outputs	Disability Evidence Portal

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Engaging Stakeholders With Evidence And Uncertainty

Programme of work	Increasing evidence use
Principal investigator(s)	Sandy Oliver
Host institution	EPPI-Centre, University College London
Project type	Conceptual paper
Country/ies	Not applicable

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Research question	This is a conceptual paper presenting a framework to determine the most appropriate approaches to engaging stakeholders given different types and degrees of uncertainty. It will generate a practical guide about choice and application of stakeholder engagement models for impact evaluation and synthesis.
Research design	Qualitative work will be carried out to assess different models for stakeholder engagement.
Data source	Stakeholder engagement models
Policy relevance	The paper will provide practical advice to evaluators and producers of evidence synthesis for enhancing their capability to effectively engage stakeholders. Stakeholder engagement is unanimously considered a key factor influencing the use of evidence for informing decision-making.

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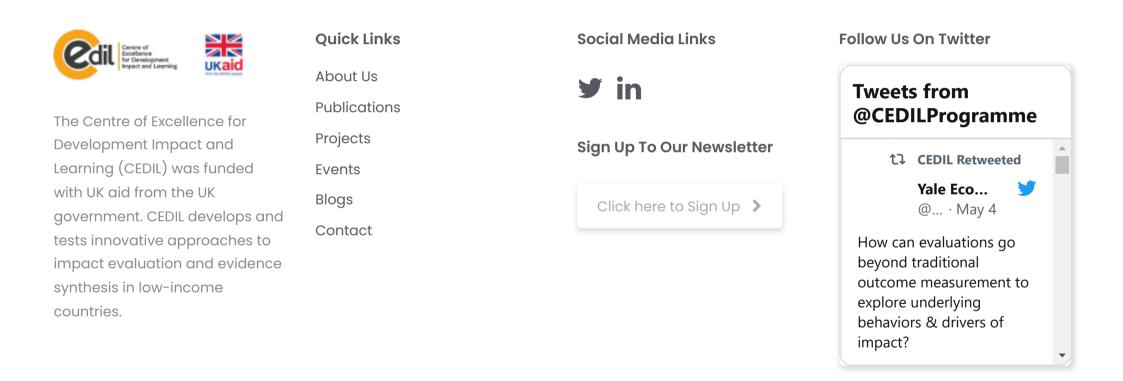## Enhancing Evaluation Use: Rubric Methodology In Programme Evaluation

Programme of work	Increasing evidence use
Principal investigator(s)	Sten te Vogt
Host institution	Mekong Economics Myanmar Ltd

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Other institutions	University of Tennessee Knoxville
Dates	February 2020 to January 2021
Budget	£72,195.97
Project type	Exploratory project
Country/ies	Myanmar
Research question	This study aims to look at how program evaluation rubrics influence evaluative thinking among stakeholders in Myanmar, and how to build evaluation capacity to increase the use of evaluation findings.
	The proposed questions relate to both research on methods (i.e. How do different stakeholders view the credibility of different methodological approaches?) and research on context (i.e. What contextual factors alter the evaluation? How do they affect evaluation methods?) to help evaluators select appropriate practices and advance evaluation use among stakeholders.
Research design	The study will use a randomised experiment to investigate the impact of program evaluation rubrics on evaluative thinking and judgements.
	Myanmar participants with a university degree from Yangon will be recruited to participate in the study under the guise of seeking community involvement in evaluating a social programme. Each participant will be randomised into one of two conditions: groups with rubrics and without rubrics. Participant demographic information will be collected along with previous evaluation experience.
Data source	The survey construction will use exploratory focus groups to study the significance and meaning of information credibility and decision transparency.
Policy relevance	The study can provide insights on how rubrics work in different contexts and how the motivational, attitudinal and relational aspects of using rubrics can inform evaluative judgements.

Project Outputs

- CEDIL Design Paper 11: Enhancing evaluation use: An experimental assessment of rubric methodology on collective judgements in Myanmar

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How can evaluations go beyond traditional outcome measurement to explore underlying behaviors & drivers of impact?

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How Biased Are Observational Methods In Practice? Accumulating Evidence Using RCTs With Imperfect Compliance

Programme of work	Increasing evidence use
Principal investigator(s)	Gharad Bryan
Host institution	London School of Economics
Other institutions	Toulouse School of Economics Institute for International Economic Studies, University of Stock-holm

Dates	January 2020 to June 2021 (TBC)
Project type	Evidence synthesis
Country/ies	Low-income, fragile and conflict-affected states
Research question	In commissioning impact evaluations, experimental methods, such as randomised controlled trials (RCTs), that are often preferred as observational methods are considered to be at risk of biases of unknown size and direction. This project will undertake a large-scale standardised approach to assessing the performance of observational methods to better understand the size and direction of biases, and how bias depends on measurable characteristics of programmes and settings.
Research design	The team will undertake data analysis and synthesis before developing online tools. Data collection and cleaning will take place, followed by developing and testing empirical tools, then data analysis. This will be followed by the development of an online platform for researchers.
Data source	Electronic databases and websites.
Policy relevance	This project is relevant to both practitioners who use observational impact evaluation methods and policymakers who care about the impact of their policies. It will help to inform practitioners what methodologies they should use for evaluating a particular programme and how best to implement that method. It will help policymakers better understand the strengths and weaknesses of different methods used in existing and new evaluations and therefore enable them to make better decisions. Given the large-scale and standardised approach of this project, it will be beneficial for policymakers and evaluators in all countries and many different topics.
Project Outputs	CEDIL webinar: Webinar page
	Research Project Paper 9 – How Biased are Observational Methods in Practice? Accumulating Evidence Using Randomised Controlled Trials with Imperfect Compliance

This project is no longer supported by CEDIL due to UK aid cuts during COVID-19.

Predicting Optimal Policies For New Contexts Using Existing Studies

Programme of work	Increasing evidence use
Principal investigator(s)	Rajeev Dehejia
Host institution	Development Research Institute, New York University

Other institutions	Pennsylvania State University Columbia University
Dates	January 2020 to April 2021 (TBC)
Project type	Evidence synthesis
Country/ies	Multiple countries
Research question	This study aims to answer the question of how to use the evidence base of a set of high-quality impact evaluations to generate policy recommendations for new contexts that address specific welfare considerations in those contexts? It will answer questions on how methods based on middle-range theories compare to flexible a-theoretic approaches by representing middle-range theories as structural economic models of behaviour fitted to pre-existing experiments and descriptive data. These models generate predictions for various counterfactual scenarios that can inform policy recommendations.
Research design	Develop a policy recommendation methodology that uses impact evaluation microdata from various contexts to formulate recommendations for new target contexts. This will be done by investigating the performance of five prediction methods; three in the a-theoretic category, and two middle-range theoretical models. The methods will be evaluated using a 'leave one out' approach.
Data source	Microdata from seven experimental evaluations of conditional cash transfer programmes.
Policy relevance	This project will develop methods for evaluating the quality of recommendations derived from various methods in terms defined by welfare considerations in a target context. It aims to develop an 'engine' that takes both a policymaker's preferences and an evidence base as inputs and then generates a policy recommendation for a specific target context.

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The art and science of using evidence: an evidence map, synthesis and evidence-informed guidelines for supporting the use of evidence in low- and middle-income countries

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The Art And Science Of Using Evidence: An Evidence Map, Synthesis And Evidence-Informed Guidelines For Supporting The Use Of Evidence In Low- And Middle-Income Countries

Programme of work   Increasing evidence use

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Principal investigator(s)	Laurenz Langer
Host institution	Africa Centre for Evidence, University of Johannesburg
Dates	January 2020 to March 2021 (TBC)
Project type	Evidence synthesis
Country/ies	Low- and middle-income countries
Research question	This research project will identify what works in supporting evidence-informed policymaking in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) and develop evidence-informed guidelines for strengthening evidence-use in LMICs. The project will address the following questions: 1. What is the size and nature of the existing evidence base on evidence-informed policymaking in LMICs? 2. Which interventions are effective in supporting evidence-informed policymaking and in what contexts? 3. How can the evidence base on evidence-informed policymaking in LMICs be used to inform improved practical guidance for policymakers that supports strengthened individual and institutionalised evidence use?
Research design	The study team will use systematic review methodology to produce: 1. An evidence map of existing evaluations and assessments of evidence-informed policymaking interventions in LMICs; 2. A rapid evidence synthesis on what works for evidence-informed policymaking and in what contexts; and 3. Evidence-informed guidelines for strengthening evidence-use.

Data source	The team will draw on a full range of available empirical evidence on applied evidence-informed interventions in LMICs, including grey literature and programme data.
Policy relevance	This project will directly support the demand for evidence-informed policymaking in LMICs by (1) establishing an open-access hub collating the existing knowledge on what works for evidence-informed policymaking; and (2) producing evidence-informed guidelines on how to implement and institutionalise strategies and interventions to support evidence-use. The guidelines will be piloted with the Department of Monitoring and Evaluation in South Africa, the Office of the Prime Minister in Uganda, and the ministries of health in Ethiopia and Burkina Faso.

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How can evaluations go beyond traditional outcome measurement to explore underlying behaviors & drivers of impact?

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