WHERE POVERTY EVIDENCE IS MOST NEEDED: AN EVIDENCE GAP MAP SHOWS WHAT WE KNOW

ADDITIONAL Q&A RESPONSES

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What effort did/ could you make to gather evidence that might be available locally/ non peer reviewed/ not published?

We put no restriction on the inclusion of studies on publication status or language, that is, we included both published and grey literature in any language. Our search for impact evaluations covered the 3ie Impact evaluation repository (which covers 19 academic databases and journal collections and 26 sources of grey literature, institutional websites and libraries), plus four academic databases and nine sources of grey literature, institutional websites and libraries. Our search for systematic reviews covered the 3ie database of systematic reviews (which covers 14 academic databases and 15 sources of grey literature, institutional websites and libraries) plus 9 academic databases and libraries. A detailed account of our search, including specific databases and search terms, will be available in the accompanying report for this evidence gap map, which will be published in the next few months on the 3ie website.

While the search will inevitably not be as comprehensive as a search conducted for a systematic review, we hope that the breadth of our search means that we have captured most of the relevant studies in this area. We welcome people to send us suggestions for inclusion.

How much do evidence gap maps typically cost, how long do they take to do and how specific does the research question need to be?

Evidence gap maps do not answer a specific research question, but focus on providing a broad overview of the existing evidence in the chosen area. The cost and length of time it takes to complete an evidence gap map really depends on the scope of the map well as the size of the evidence base. In our experience, it takes between 2 to 6 months to complete an evidence gap map, and we estimated costs at 30,000 to 55,000 GBP depending on the scope of the evidence gap map and number of identified studies.

Why did you choose to call this an "Evidence Gap Map" instead of just an "Evidence Map?"

The structure of the evidence gap maps, that is, a matrix of interventions and outcomes, allows us to present visually the universe of evidence in a specific area and at the same time highlight the gaps in that evidence base. These gaps can help identify areas of high policy relevance where evidence is lacking and can feed into setting research priorities. This is one of the key functions of the maps, and hence why we decided to call them ‘evidence gap maps’.

Does 3ie have a plan to update these map? If so how often?

3ie hopes to update these maps on a regular basis, however this is dependent on capacity and funding for these projects.

Have you any thoughts about 'open sourcing' this type of tool? Would a sort of controlled wiki be possible to allow collaboration?

This is something that 3ie is considering but we do not have concrete plans as of yet to do this.
Please can you explain the indicator and variable on which basis you measure poverty? How did you measure reduction in poverty, or effects on income?

We captured any outcomes in our included impact evaluations and systematic reviews that measure the incidence, depth, severity and density of income poverty, rate of impoverishment and poverty reduction, with a person being defined as poor, in absolute terms, if his or her income level falls below some minimum level determined to be necessary to meet basic needs (e.g., poverty headcount, poverty gap, squared poverty gap). Studies that looked at these outcomes are captured in the ‘Income Poverty’ column in the gap map. We also coded outcomes in our included studies that reported findings on measures of income, expenditure or savings, captured by studies in the Income/Consumption/Savings column of the evidence gap map. These covered outcomes measuring the amount of individual or household monetary income and expenditure per unit of time and the amount of consumption of goods (excluding food) per unit of time, as well as measures of savings. These include agricultural / microenterprise-related income and expenditure as well as measures of debt and debt repayment.

Knowing how much of study findings are context specific requires a great deal of knowledge not only about the context of the place where the study took place, but also where development policy makers are planning to apply lessons learned. How does 3ie ensure that enough local knowledge is possessed?

The evidence gap maps are not intended to provide recommendations or guidelines for policy and practice in and of themselves, but rather to be one of the many sources that can inform policy development and guidelines for practice. Due to their broad scope the evidence gap maps do not provide details about the contextual background of the included evidence, nor do they synthesise the findings of included systematic reviews and impact evaluations. It is therefore up to the individual user to draw conclusions on whether findings of studies included in the evidence gap map are relevant for their own context. The evidence gap maps help facilitate this by providing access to the included evidence through the 3ie evidence databases.

Many development interventions don’t “stick”. How do these maps account for backsliding or project failure?

3ie evidence gap maps map out impact evaluations and systematic reviews of intervention effectiveness that meet the scope of the map. They do not present or synthesise the findings of included impact evaluations or systematic reviews. It is therefore up to the individual user to explore the findings of each included study themselves. The findings of these included studies may be able to shed some light on issues such as back-sliding or project failure. 3ie promotes and funds theory-based impact evaluations and theory-based systematic reviews that evaluate not only whether interventions are effective, but also explore evidence about why they do or do not work, for whom they are effective and in what contexts. However, not all impact evaluations and systematic reviews collect this type of information / conduct this type of analysis so not all included studies will be able to speak to this issue.

It sounds like you might be limiting yourselves by assuming many development groups use the same theory of change, which might not be (or shouldn’t be) the case, right?
The organisation of the outcome categories in the evidence gap map is a very rough simplification of a theory of change and certainly does not reflect the only way to causally organise outcomes along a causal chain (and to classify outcomes within categories). The causal chain approach is used to help develop outcome categories that are relevant for the sector and the interventions that are mapped out, and to give some logical order to the way they are displayed. The aim of the evidence gap map is to ensure that evidence on all relevant outcomes is mapped out, rather than develop a full theory of change for these interventions. Thus, even under different theories of change, the evidence gap map should hopefully cover the main relevant outcomes in the sector and help identify relevant evidence for decision-making. To facilitate the use of the evidence gap map, each map should be accompanied by a detailed account of the search, inclusion criteria, outcome and intervention category definitions and data extraction procedures. The accompanying report for this evidence gap map will be published in the next few months on the 3ie website.

*What possibility is there to pull summaries and assessments from different gap maps into a newly created gap map based on a particular theory of change or causal relationship?*

The aim of the evidence gap map is to ensure that evidence on all relevant outcomes for a sector is mapped out, rather than to develop a full theory of change for a particular sector or intervention. For development/testing of a programme theory of change, a more suitable approach would be to conduct a *theory-based systematic review*. This involves the development of a full theory of change for an intervention, followed by identification and synthesis of evidence along the causal chain. For an example of a theory-based systematic review, see a recent 3ie review of Farmer Field Schools for Improving Farming Practices and Farmer Outcomes in Low- and Middle-income Countries.

If you are interested in exploring 3ie’s collection of evidence gap maps, please follow the link below: [http://www.3ieimpact.org/en/evidence/gap-maps/](http://www.3ieimpact.org/en/evidence/gap-maps/)