India’s National Rural Livelihoods Mission
Lessons from an impact evaluation for evidence-informed decision-making

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The Program, in part funded by World Bank, aims to create efficient and effective institutional platforms of the rural poor, enabling them to increase household income through sustainable livelihoods enhancements and improved access to financial services.
The NRLM Evaluation (by 3ie)

The program started in 2011 and after 8 years of implementation, the 3ie evaluation aimed at the following objectives:

27000 Households across 9 states

- Assess the impact of NRLP program on institution building, socio-economic and empowerment outcomes
- Examine the role and contribution of federations
- Understand program implementation

The evaluation was designed to ensure ownership across all stakeholders Funded by BMGF and Ministry of Rural Development (for data collection)
Some Findings

Improved savings by 28% and reduced dependence on informal debt (20%)

Incomes increased by 19% driven by increases in wage incomes. But, in remote villages, this was driven by increases in agricultural income. Program households had 0.2 additional sources of income on an average

Women’s involvement in income generating work by secondary status increased (58% to 62%)

Women with higher education gained confidence to engage with the community due to the programme. However, intra-household bargaining is more difficult to change, and we find no impacts of the programme on women’s household decision-making
Why the Ministry valued the 3ie evaluation

- Ownership and buy-in, along with a willingness to engage with academics inside MoRD
- Co-creation of design with Ministry’s priorities in mind
- Separate inputs from State Governments
- Local agency for data collection selected by MoRD
- In-depth understanding of the programme by the research team (guidelines etc.)
- Use of administrative data to understand implementation and States of study
Challenges for policymakers

• High-capacity at MoRD to engage with evaluation findings, but differing capacities at State-levels
• Rigorous evaluations with understanding of context
• Needs of evaluation agency for rigorous evidence may be different from the immediate needs of policy-makers
• Constraints of time (that may be required for evaluations) and ability to engage
• Continuously evolving nature of the programme due to demands across several areas (e.g. health, equity and gender)
• The intervention needs to play out fully for policy change to be considered
Some food for thought

There is “value” in evaluation, but academics could help make using results easier:

• Develop high-level summaries of research as learning notes, with less focus on the methods

• Highlight actionable results but consider the operational reality

• Research professionals to engage with policymakers

• Continuous engagement with the policymakers

• Involvement of various stakeholders – dissemination of results

• Two-way communication – Interesting stories
Thank you