

Humanitarian Assistance Evidence Cycle (HAEC)

Breaking Down Obstacles to Impact
Evaluations in Humanitarian Settings



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



Today's Objectives

- Understand the **constraints our sector faces** to conducting impact evaluations in humanitarian contexts
- Acknowledge the current **evidence base** - and associated gaps - of **rigorous impact evaluations** of humanitarian programming



Photo Credit: Sacha Myers/ Save The Children

Humanitarian Assistance Evidence Cycle (HAEC)

HAEC works to increase the **efficiency and effectiveness** of emergency food security activities funded by the USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) by increasing the use of **cost-effective and timely impact evaluations in humanitarian contexts**.



Funder: USAID/BHA, **Duration:** 2021-2024
Implementers: TANGO International,
Causal Design, 3ie and Save the Children

Today's presenters and speakers



**Dean Karlan, Chief
Economist, USAID**



**Christy Lazicky, Director
of Impact Evaluation,
Causal Design**



**Cem Yavuz, Research
Associate, 3ie**



**Keith B. Ives, CEO,
Causal Design**



**Gary Glass, Director,
Monitoring and Evaluation,
Blumont**



**Suzanne Ammari, Activity
Director (Acting), Save the
Children/IDEAL**



**Aprille Knox, Senior
Policy Manager, J-PAL
Global**

The Problem

- There is a **dearth** of impact evaluations **in humanitarian settings**
- This results in a **missed opportunity** to ensure that programs are designed and resources are channeled **most effectively to help the most vulnerable**



Photo Credit: Sacha Myers/ Save The Children

Why Focus on Impact Evaluations?

- Impact Evaluations are a key tool to better understand program/policy **effectiveness**
- They use **methodologies that rigorously establish causality** to determine which interventions are responsible for outcomes, both positive and negative
- Findings allow for **data-driven decisions** to inform replication and scaling



Photo Credit: Louis Leeson / Save The Children

**Why are more
impact evaluations
not done in
humanitarian
settings?**



Unpacking the problem

- HAEC conducted over **60 consultations** with implementers, funders, and researchers across the sector
- We asked about the **key barriers stakeholders perceive** to conducting impact evaluations in these settings



Photo Credit: Louis Leeson / Save The Children

Potential Constraints

```
graph TD; A[Potential Constraints] --> B[Low demand for impact evaluations]; A --> C[Low supply of skills or funding];
```

Low demand for
impact evaluations

Low supply of skills or
funding

Low demand for impact evaluations

Poor Incentives

Not required by funders

Perceived funding or reputational risks

Lack of awareness of spectrum of rigor

Humanitarian culture or importance and urgency

Low demand for impact evaluations

Execution not feasible

Bandwidth Constraints

Design Challenges

Ethical Concerns

Poor Partnering

Low IP bandwidth to coordinate

Short timelines

Security Constraints

Population Movement

Costs reallocated away from beneficiaries

Programming withheld from vulnerable populations

Respondent burden from surveys

Conflict from misaligned priorities

Lack of Awareness of Diversity in Research Partners

Low supply of skills or funding

```
graph TD; A[Low supply of skills or funding] --> B[Funding not available]; A --> C[Researchers not available]; C --> D[Low interest]; C --> E[Low skills]; E --> F[Low technical capacity of IPs]; E --> G[Low Contextual skills of external researchers];
```

Funding not available

Researchers not available

Low interest

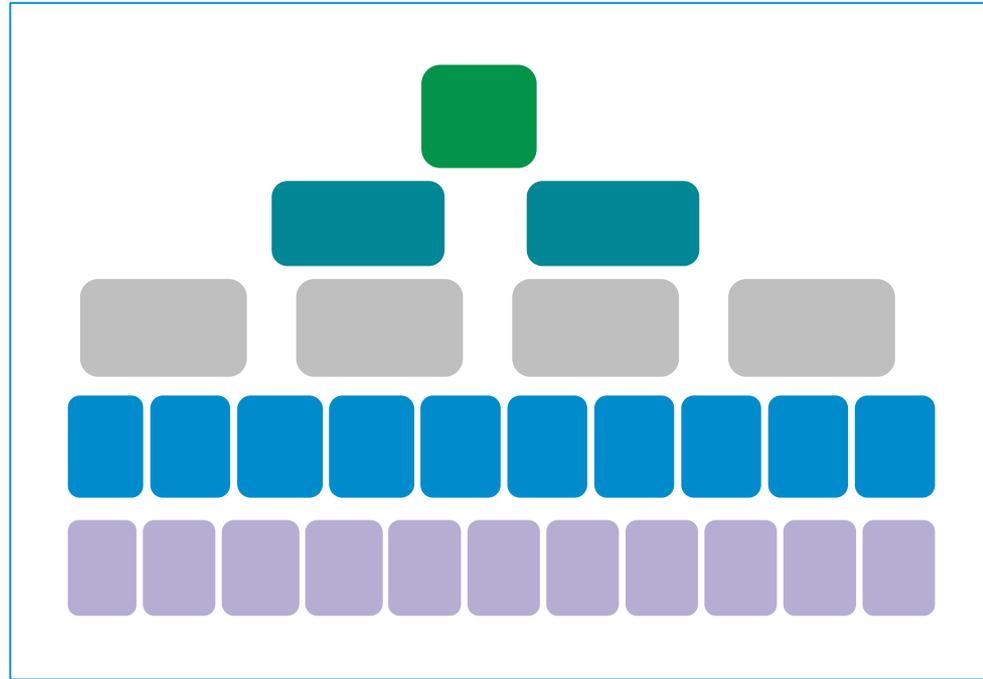
Low skills

Low technical capacity of IPs

Low Contextual skills of external researchers

Problem Tree

- While these constraints are not unique to humanitarian settings, they are **amplified in this context**
- There are **real and perceived constraints**, and they sector needs to overcome both



**How will HAEC
address these
constraints?**



How HAEC Addresses Constraints

Constraints

Perceived reputational
&
financial risks

Misaligned
partnerships

Low IP bandwidth to
coordinate

Activities

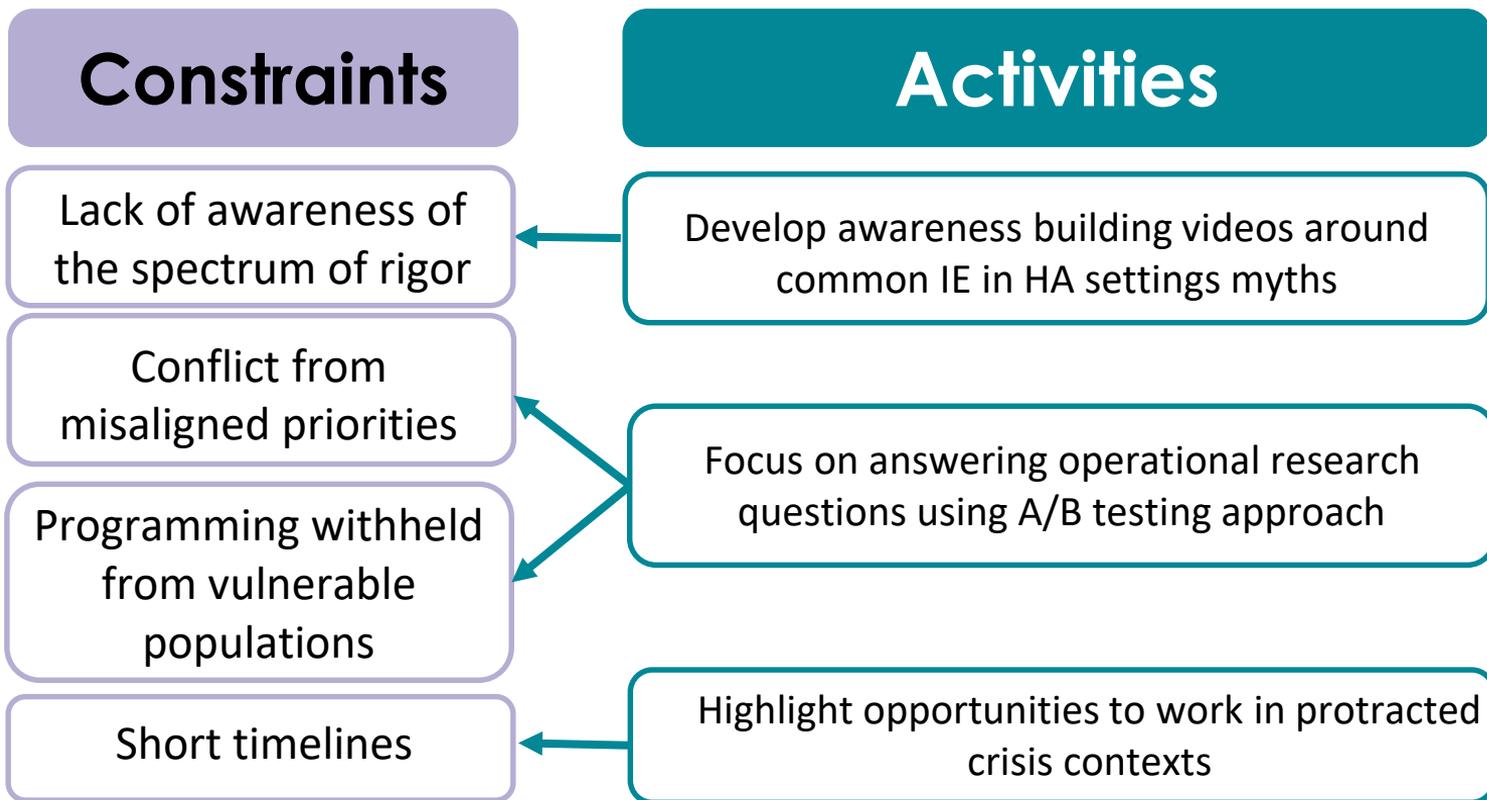
Disseminate ongoing and completed impact
evaluations in the humanitarian sector

Facilitate research partnerships between
implementers and researchers

Develop in-person and online capacity-
strengthening curriculum



How HAEC Addresses Constraints



Funding Impact Evaluations

- HAEC will fund up to 7 impact evaluations in under-researched humanitarian food security interventions, contexts, and emergencies **informed by our Evidence Gap Map**
- HAEC is committed to demonstrating impact evaluations are:
 - Feasible,
 - Provide value, and
 - Provide timely results

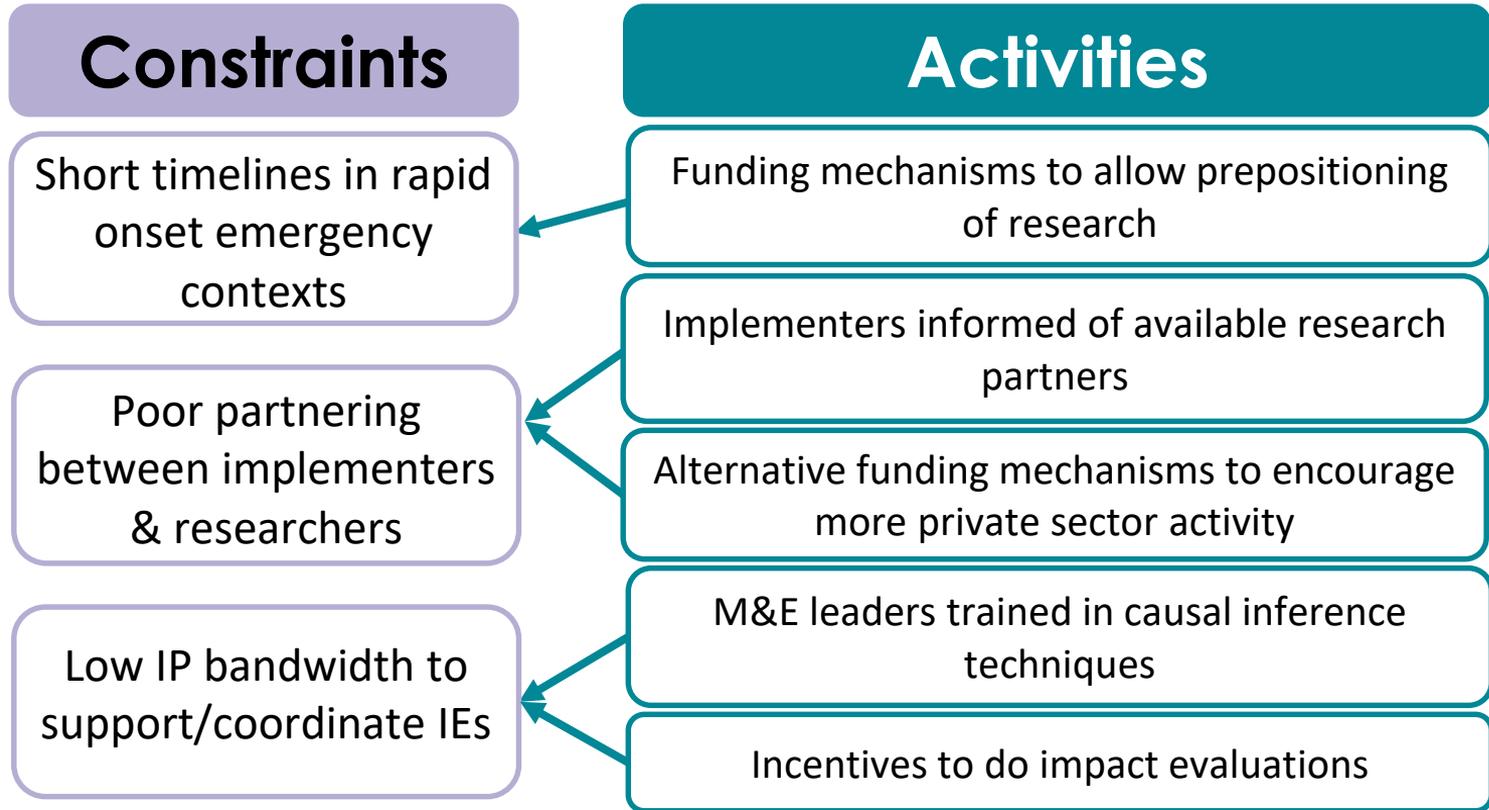


Photo Credit: Victoria Zegler

How can the larger humanitarian assistance sector address these constraints?



How can the humanitarian assistance sector address some of the more systemic constraints?



Thank you!

Email: christy.lazicky@causaldesign.com



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Improving Food Security in Humanitarian Emergencies: An Evidence Gap Map

Presented by Cem Yavuz (3ie)



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Agenda

1. Overview of 3ie and evidence gap maps (EGMs)
2. Background of this EGM
3. Our EGM's main results



Image from Storyset.com

About the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie)

- 3ie is an international NGO promoting **evidence-informed development policies and programs**
- We work closely with governments, foundations, development institutions, NGOs and other partners working in low- and middle-income countries to **curate evidence and strengthen their evidence-systems**
- Since 2008, we have managed over **250 impact evaluations** of interventions **implemented in 63 countries**, conducted over **40 systematic reviews** and **30 EGMs**, and written nearly **100 policy briefs**

Evidence Gap Map (EGM): An Overview and their Purpose

- EGMs are **thematic collections of information** about impact evaluations and systematic reviews
- They present an **overview of existing and ongoing studies** or reviews in a sector or sub-sector
- Online EGMs can be filtered by users to **identify studies of relevance in specific areas** such as by study design or geographically

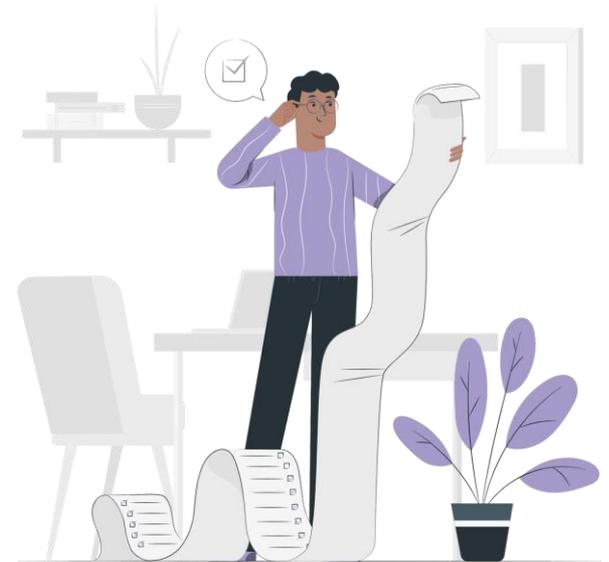


Image from Storyset.com

EGM Background



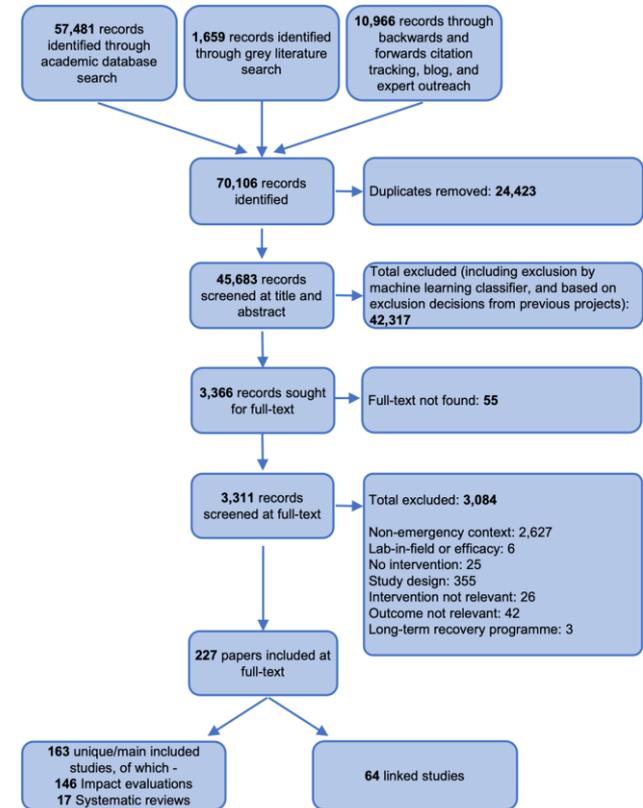
What type of studies did we include?

Criteria	Description
<u>Population</u>	Studies implemented in a humanitarian emergency consisting of participants residing in low- and middle-income countries. We also included studies including participants residing in a selection of high-income countries if the intervention was implemented in a refugee camp.
<u>Interventions</u>	i) early warning systems; ii) interventions pre-arranging household finance for disasters; iii) food, cash and other in-kind transfers; iv) agriculture and livestock interventions; v) nutrition interventions; vi) market-based recovery interventions; vii) water security interventions.
<u>Comparison</u>	A study must have included a comparison group, though there were no exclusion criteria based on the comparison condition of a control group.
<u>Outcomes</u>	i) agricultural production; ii) food trade; iii) markets; iv) food decisions; v) hunger; vi) economic; vii) food safety; viii) nutrition; ix) food intake; x) sustainability of food security; xi) health; xii) composite measures of food security.
<u>Study designs</u>	We included both impact evaluations, including randomized and non-randomized evaluations, and systematic reviews.

Details of the Literature Search

- We searched 14 academic databases and 44 grey literature websites and performed forwards and backwards citation tracking
- A total of 45,683 records were screened

After screening these records, we ultimately included **146 impact evaluations** and **17 systematic reviews**

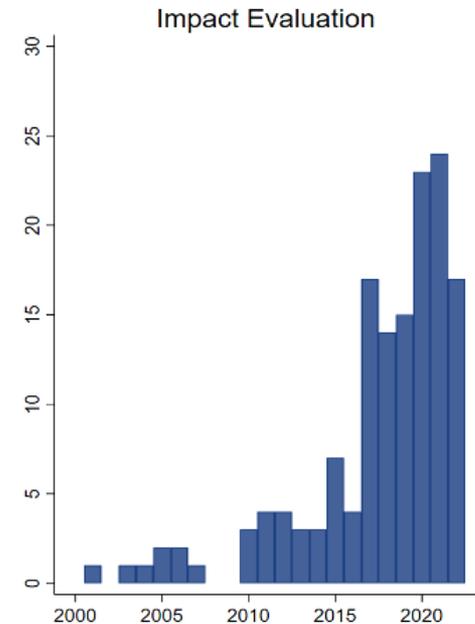


Main Results

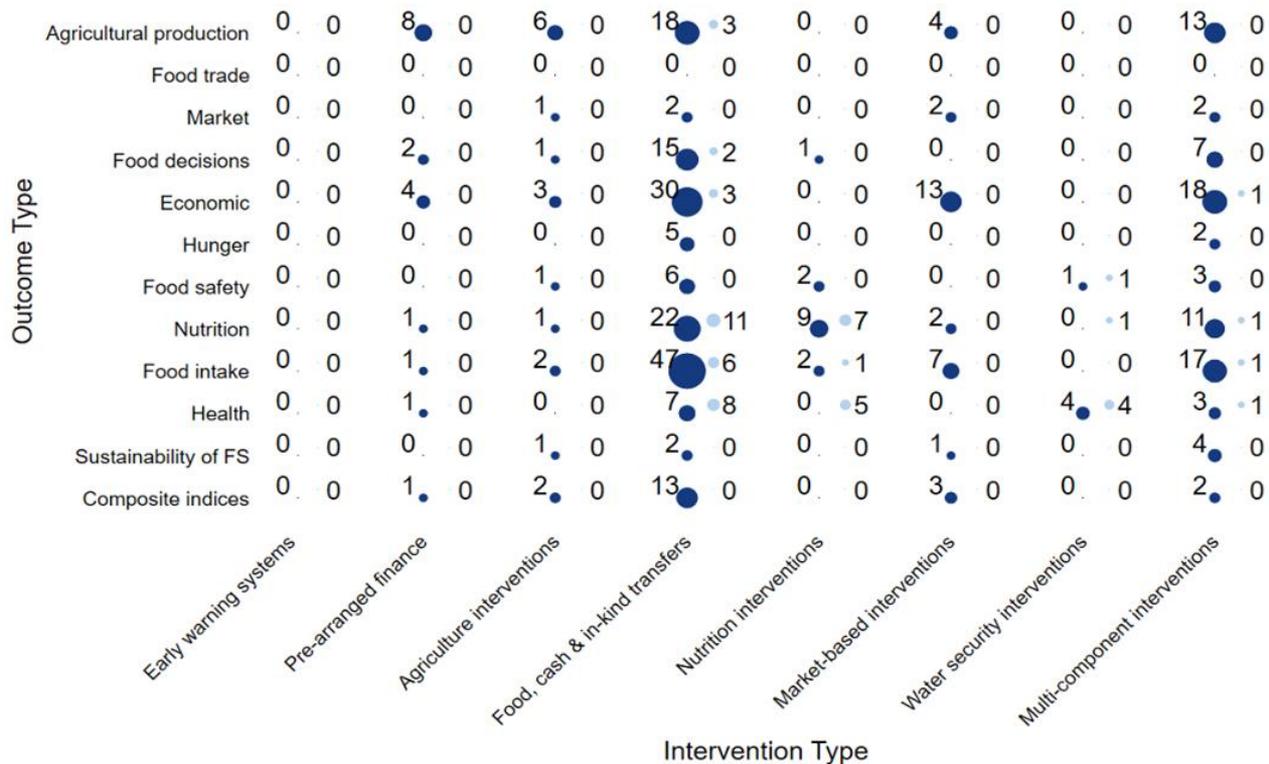


1. There is a rapidly growing evidence base on the effects of humanitarian interventions on food security

- Humanitarian settings are **challenging contexts to conduct impact evaluations** due to the **need to respond quickly** to emergencies, which leaves little time to prepare or collect data
- **The volume of evidence** on the effects of humanitarian interventions **has tripled during the last five years**

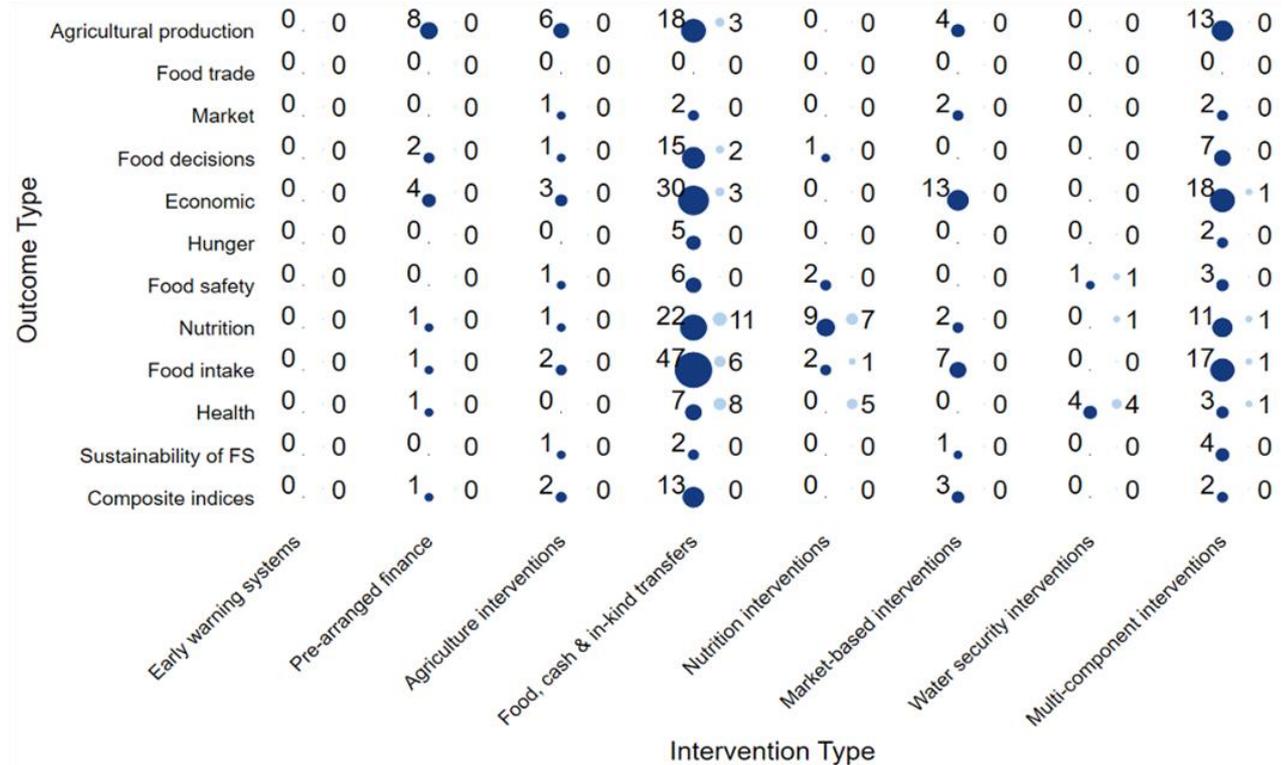


2. However, evidence is generally spread thinly across interventions and outcomes



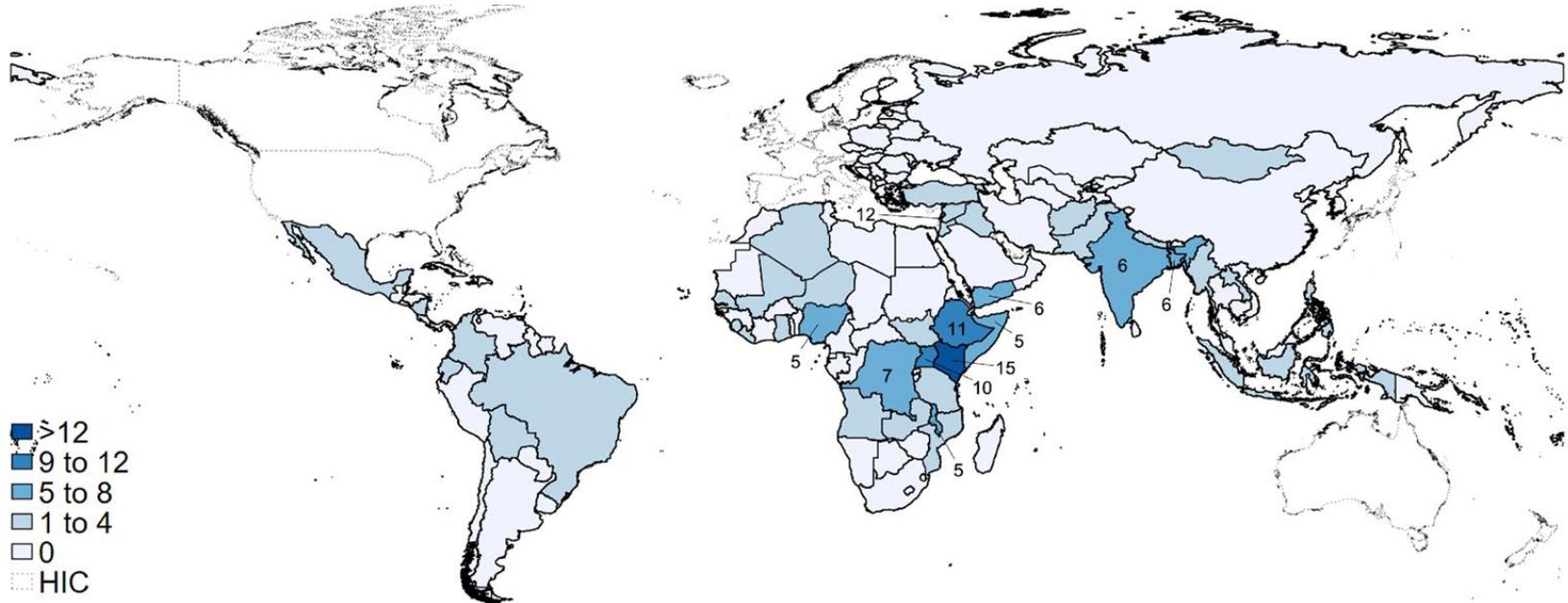
2. However, evidence is generally spread thinly across interventions and outcomes

- The only noticeable cluster of evidence relates to the effects of food, cash and in-kind transfer interventions (n = 79)
- Multicomponent interventions (n = 38) make up the second largest intervention group



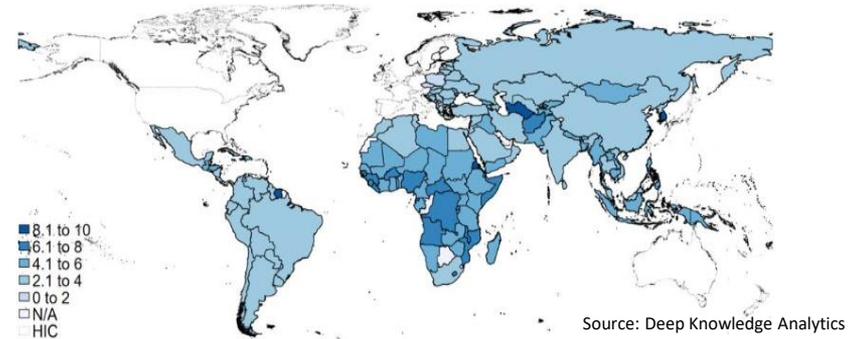
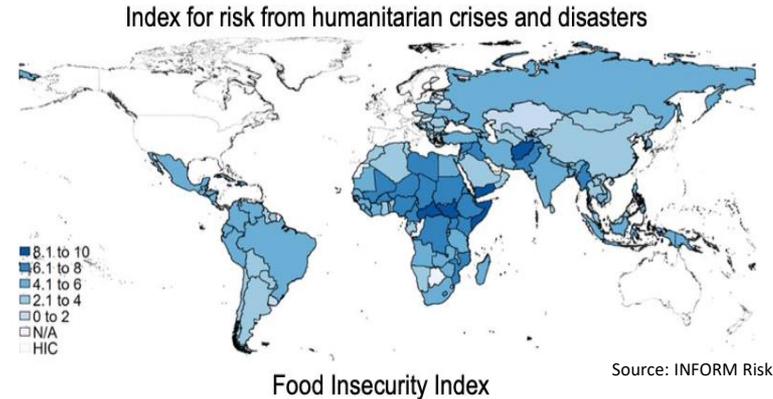
3. Evidence exists across all world regions but is largely clustered in Sub-Saharan Africa (n = 79), with very little evidence from large parts of Latin America and Asia

The countries with the largest evidence bases include: Kenya (n = 15), Lebanon (n = 12), Ethiopia (n = 11), Uganda (n = 10)



4. There is limited evidence on the effects of interventions in many countries vulnerable to climatic and humanitarian emergencies

- There are 13 countries that are both food insecure and at high risk of an emergency, and for which no rigorous impact evaluations were identified
 - Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Guatemala, Honduras, Libya, Madagascar, Papua New Guinea, Sudan, and Venezuela
- Only one or two impact evaluations were identified for seven food-insecure and vulnerable countries
 - Haiti, Iraq, Mali, Mozambique, Myanmar, Syria, and Tanzania



5. There are few or no impact evaluations taking place in rapid onset emergency contexts

- Conflict-affected settings were the most common emergency type
- Drought is the only type of natural hazard with more than 10 identified impact evaluations

Emergency	No. of studies	Emergency	No. of studies
Rapid/ sudden onset emergencies	15	Slow onset emergencies	54
<i>Earthquake</i>	0	<i>Cold wave</i>	0
<i>Flood</i>	8	Drought	28
<i>Land slide</i>	0	<i>Epidemic</i>	19
<i>Tropical cyclone</i>	7	<i>Heatwave</i>	0
<i>Tsunami</i>	0	<i>Political and economic</i>	7
<i>Volcano</i>	0		
Emergencies with variable onset period	71	Other	6
Complex crisis	8	<i>Unspecified weather shock</i>	4
<i>Conflict</i>	63	<i>Extreme winter</i>	2
		<i>Technological disaster</i>	0
		<i>Wildfire</i>	0

6. There is a small evidence base on interventions which target a number of different vulnerable populations during an emergency

- Given the focus of this EGM, all populations targeted by interventions can be considered **vulnerable**
- Despite this, during an emergency there are often **overlooked populations** who may **suffer disproportionality** or face issues in accessing post-emergency resources
- Our EGM has identified a small evidence base on a interventions which target a number of different vulnerable populations

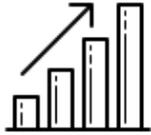
Population targeted by intervention	No. of studies
Children	26
Refugees	23
Women	23
Internally displaced people (IDPs)	18
People with disabilities	9
Older people	8

7. A small and growing body of evidence is available on anticipatory action

- 18 out of 23 studies on anticipatory actions have been published **since 2015**

Emergency phase of intervention	No. of studies
Anticipatory action	23
Post-emergency	123

Key Takeaways



There is a **growing evidence base** on the effects of humanitarian interventions on food security



However, evidence is generally **spread thinly across interventions and outcomes** and the available evidence is generally clustered around food, cash and in-kind transfers



There is limited evidence of the effects of interventions in many **countries vulnerable to climatic and humanitarian emergencies** and there are few or no impact evaluations on several key types of disasters

What happens next?



This EGM **provides a basis** for the future work of the HAEC award. Outside of the award, there are two future directions this work could take.

The evidence base collated by this EGM could be used as a basis to explore the impact of emergency food security activities through a **systematic review**.

- Our EGM has identified several **synthesis gaps** surrounding cash transfers, the direct provision of food and nutrition interventions



A **living synthesis** project.

- Given the rapidly growing evidence base, specifically in the previous three years, it is vital this EGM is **regularly updated** to ensure that researchers and practitioners have an up-to-date picture of this evidence base.

Thank you!

Email: cyavuz@3ieimpact.org



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HAEC's impact evaluation funding process overview

- **Who can apply for funding:** BHA-funded emergency food security activities
- **Who can apply for evaluability assessments:** All emergency food security activities
- **When can they apply:** January 2023 (and onward)*
- **When will the impact evaluations take place:** March 2023-July 2024
- **Amount of funding:** HAEC will allocate up to \$225,000 for each funded study

*Timing subject to change based on agreement with USAID/BHA

Application Phases

PHASE
1 Soft Expression of Interest

PHASE
2 Evaluability Assessment

PHASE
3 Invited Application

How to engage with HAEC

If you are part of a...

BHA emergency food security activity

Emergency food security activity
(non BHA-funded)

An ongoing or completed humanitarian impact evaluation

Then...

Apply for funding

Apply for an evaluability assessment

Submit to be featured in HAEC's Evaluation in Action series

Thank you!

Visit:

FSNnetwork.org/HAEC

Email:

HAEC@SaveChildren.org



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