

Navigating Constraints to Impact Evaluations in Humanitarian Contexts

Impact Insights: Expanding Our Evidence Base to Improve Humanitarian Response

January 30, 2024



USAID
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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.



Funding six impact evaluations



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

Overview of *Impact Insights* Series

1

Webinar 1: What is an impact evaluation?

2

Webinar 2: How can we conduct impact evaluations in humanitarian settings?

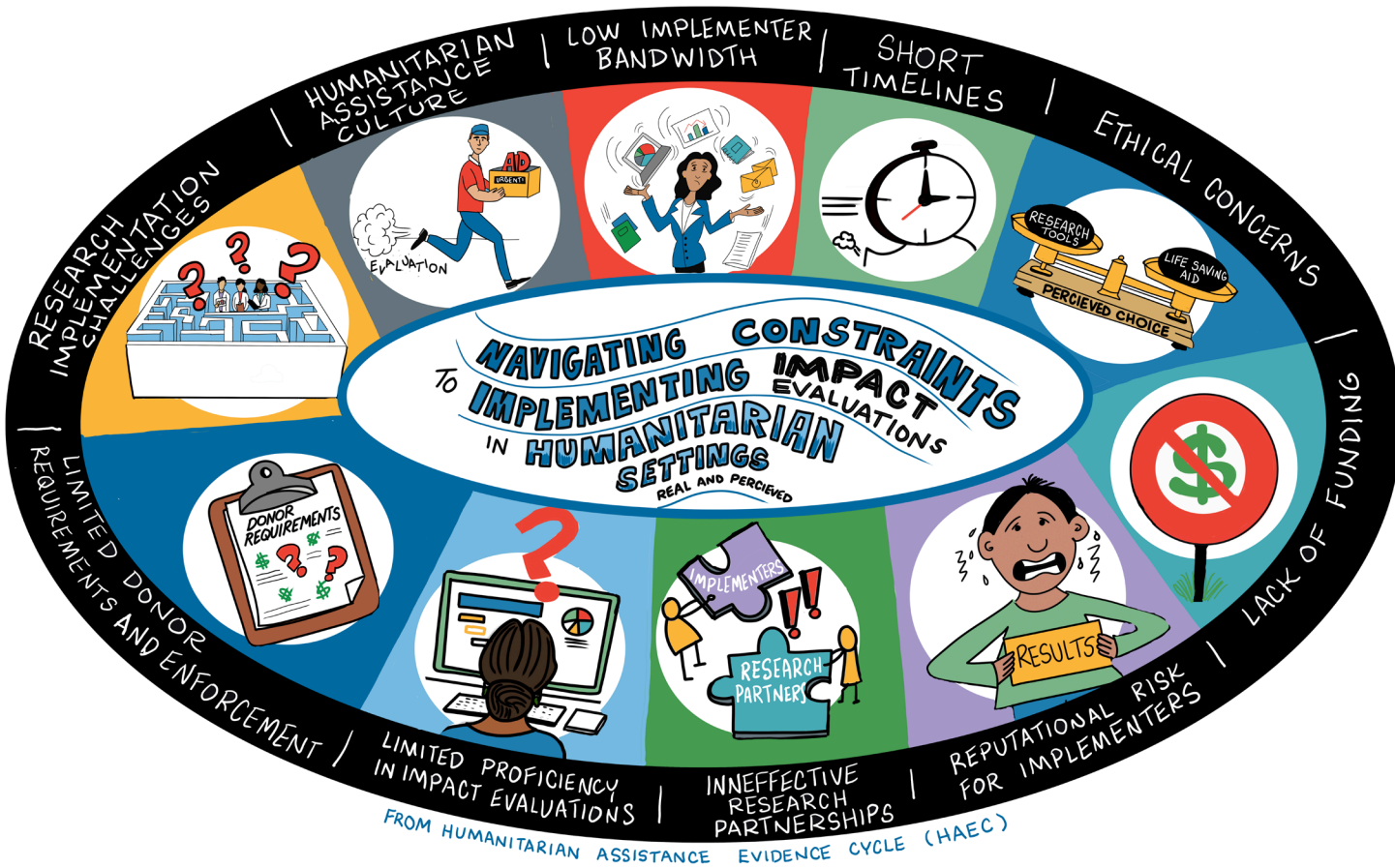
3

Webinar 3: Why are we using impact evaluations including how we use findings?

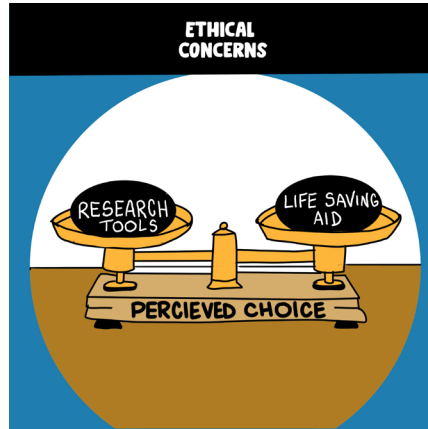
Welcome from Arif Rashid

Chief Design-Monitoring-
Evaluation and Applied
Learning (DMEAL) Division





Today's Focus



**Vaidehi Krishnan
&
Grace Chebet**
Mercy Corps Nigeria

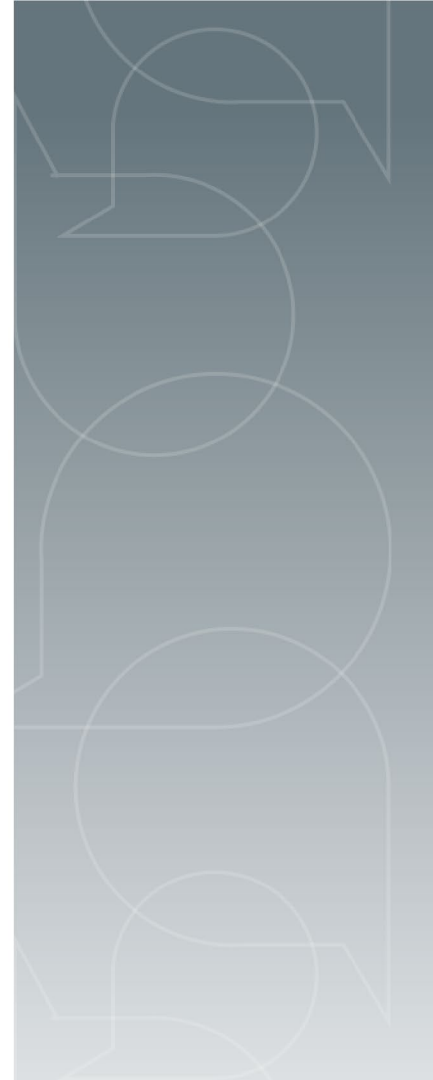


Maria Melo Torres
i-APS
Honduras



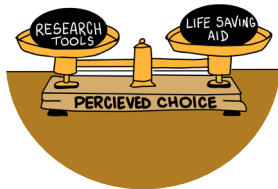
Gary Glass
Blumont
Colombia

Ethical Considerations



What do you think?

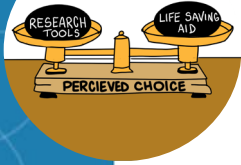
Can impact evaluations in humanitarian contexts be ethical?



Ethical Concerns (Perceived)

- Two common concerns:
 - Research activities **divert funding** away from life-saving aid
 - Impact evaluations require **withholding programming** from a group of vulnerable people

*"There is normally a universal approach to coverage for humanitarian response that makes **having a control group really hard**. Everybody that needs attention should get it."*



Navigating Ethical Concerns



MYTHS

Research activities
divert funding away from
life-saving aid

Impact evaluations
require **withholding**
programming from a group
of vulnerable people



REALITY

Impact evaluations **inform** which
interventions are most cost-effective
allowing assistance to reach more
people

Impact evaluations can be designed to
work within implementer targeting
processes and/or **not withhold**
programming from any group (e.g.,
A|B testing)

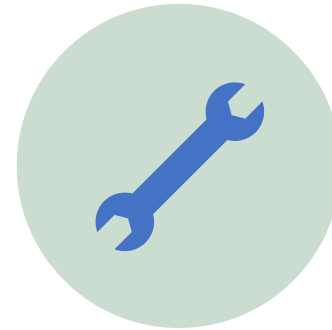
Two types of impact evaluations

Impact Evaluation of a
Program



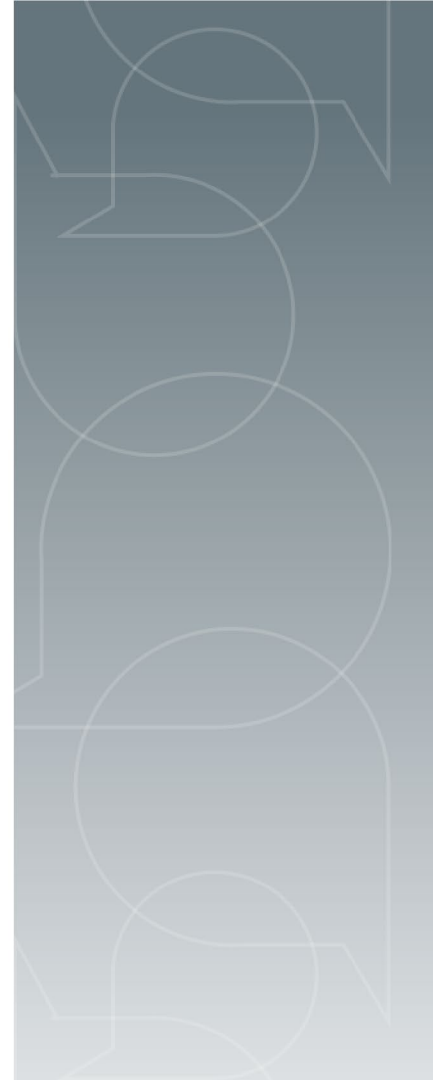
**Did the
program work?**

Impact Evaluation of a
Program Change



**How do we make
the program better?**

Cost and Perceived Lack of Funding



Cost & Perceived Lack of Funding

"They're **expensive** and a lot of work. We already struggle to resource our evaluations."

"Are you really trying to create **generalizable research**? Because if so, you're going to **need more money** than that."

"**There's no funding** for [impact evaluations]. So, this raises the question of who's going to pay for it?"



Impact Evaluations **can cost more** than other evaluation types.

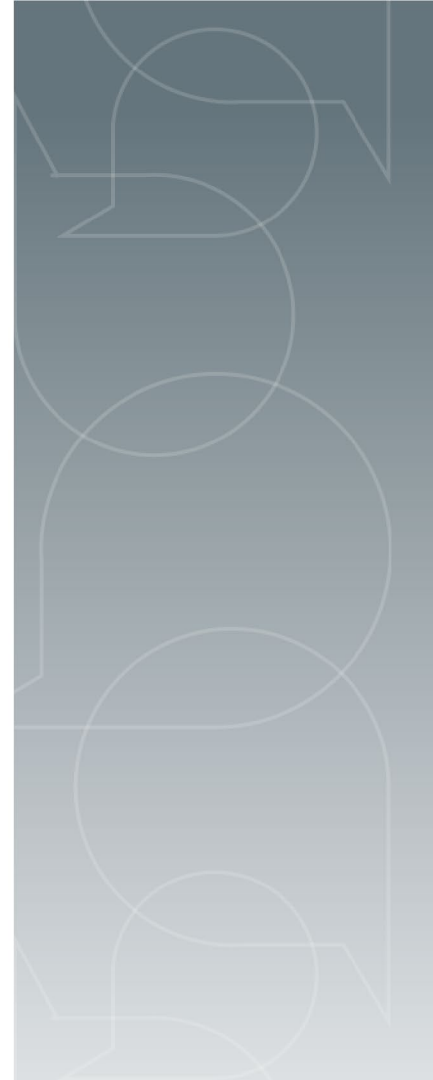


Utilizing monitoring systems and organizational capacity to **lower the cost** of impact evaluations.



Often an impact evaluation can be done in place of a more traditional evaluation approaches, mitigating the costs.

Low Implementer Bandwidth





Low Implementer Bandwidth

“On the emergency side, most of us are just so **overwhelmed.**”

“Everyone is **understaffed.** And people work around the clock.”

“People are habitually running around with their **hair on fire.**”

“There is a **culture of crisis.** People are so desperate to get things done.”

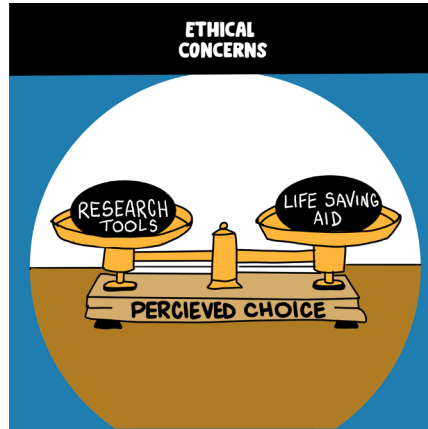
Navigating Low Implementer Bandwidth

Centralized research
support units

Education and
Training



Thank you to our presenters!



**Vaidehi Krishnan
&
Grace Chebet**
Mercy Corps Nigeria



Maria Melo Torres
i-APS
Honduras



Gary Glass
Blumont
Colombia

Looking ahead

Additional Engagement Opportunities

- Office Hours for Emergency Application Guideline Applicants
- Sign up for our Newsletter



Register Today!

- **March 21st:** Evaluation in Action: Examples from HAEC-Funded Studies

Thank you!



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