



Department
for International
Development



Evidence in Policymaking

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March 2018

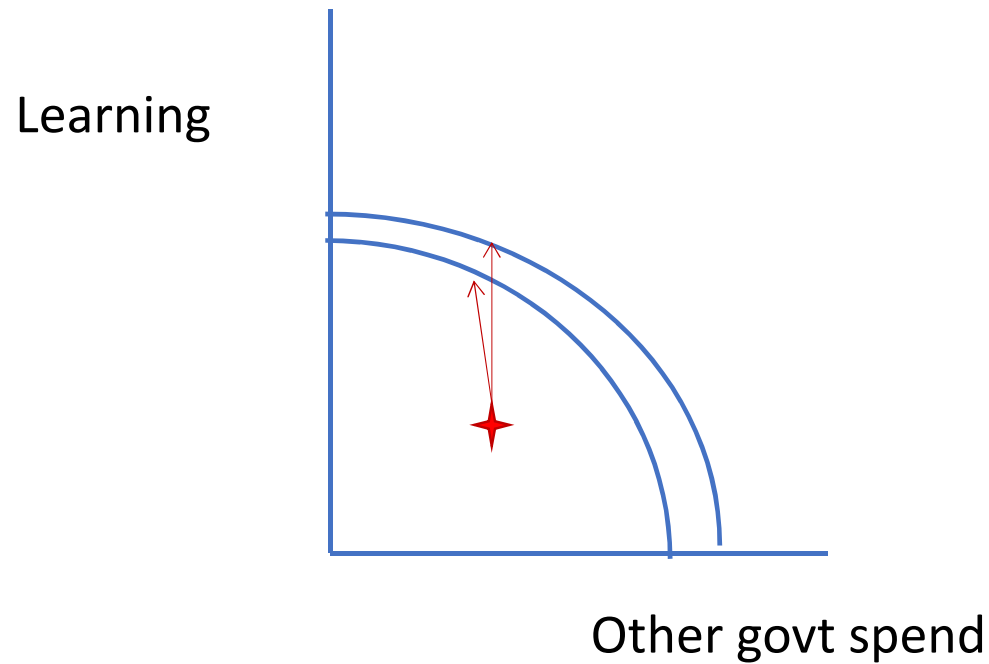
Outline

- **Why** do evidence based policy?
- **How** to do evidence informed policy?
- Implications for research and researchers
- Policy as a career
- Asks of the research community

Why do evidence based policy?

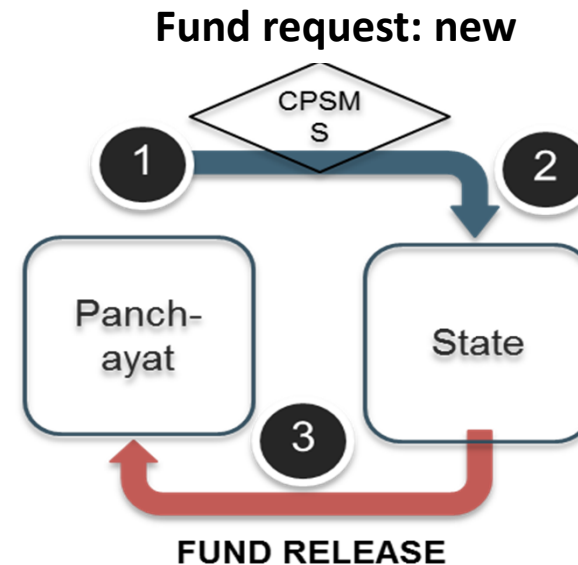
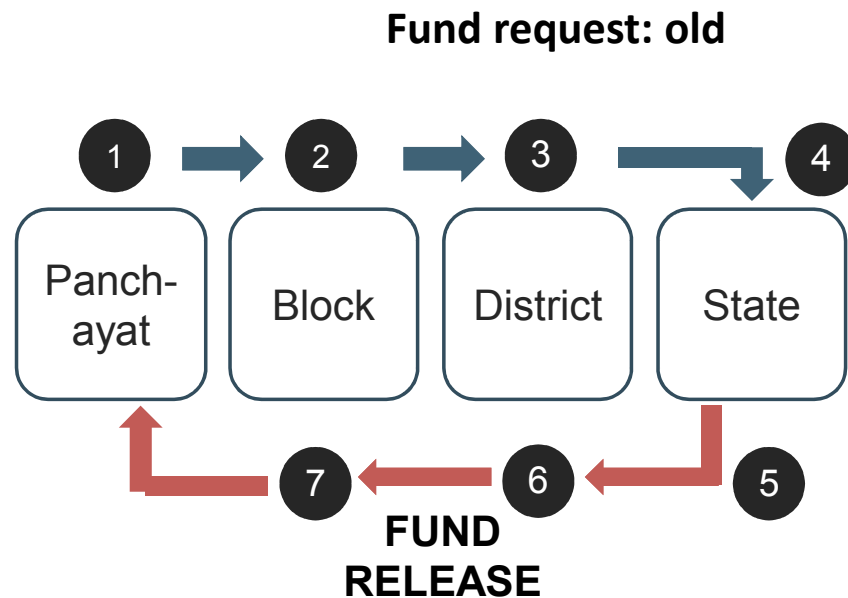
As a policy maker, as a researcher

We are far from production possibility frontier



National rural employment guarantee, India

Innovation: New fund-flow system from state directly to village council



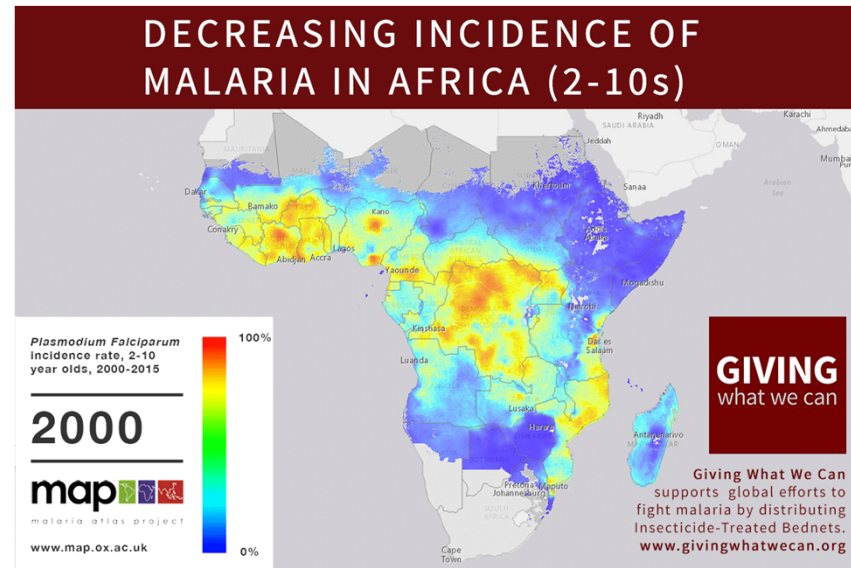
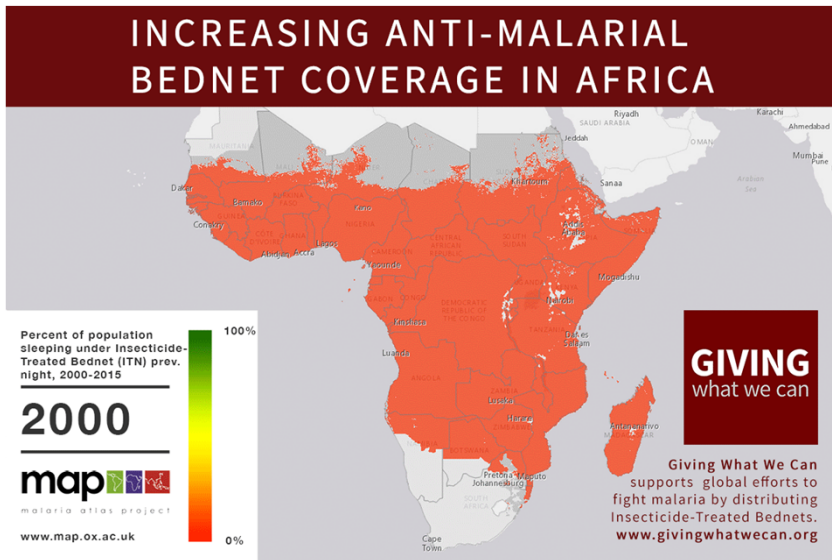
Program: \$6bn, 33m beneficiaries

Evaluation: 24% decline in expenditure, no fall benefits

Scale up: 21 states

Banerjee, Duflo, Imbert,
Mathew, and Pande (2016).
NBER No. 22803.

Mass free distribution of bednets



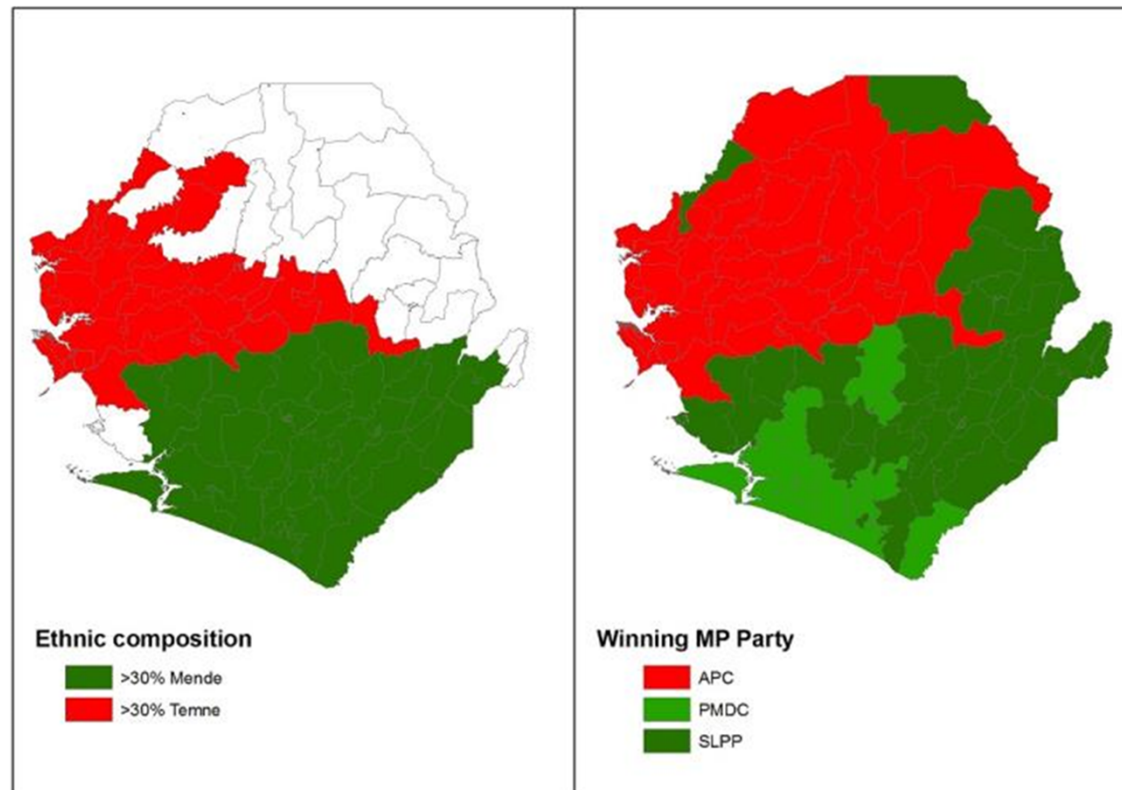
- 450 million fewer cases of malaria from 2000-2015
- 4 million fewer deaths

www.givingwhatwecan.org, based on data in Bhatt, 2015.

But its all political bargains, nothing changes.....

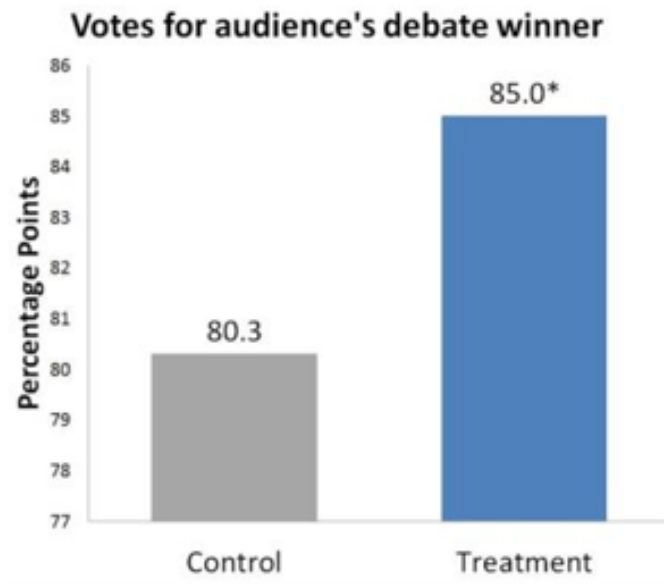
.....except when it does.

Politics is more movable than you might think



High correlation between vote shares for political parties and ethnic composition of districts. Casey 2015.

Politics is more movable than you might think



Bidwell, Casey and Glennerster, 2017

Vote shares of major parties across strongholds

	2001	2007	2012	2018
	APC	APC	APC	APC
North west	52.8	76.8	89.8	69.4
South east	2.8	9.5	18.9	10.8
	SLPP	SLPP	SLPP	SLPP
North west	32.8	17.1	6.4	11.1
South east	94.5	56.2	75.2	82.9
				Other
North west				14.1
South east				2.4

Meriggi 2018, International Growth Centre

DIV innovations reaching > 1 million beneficiaries



Voter report cards
10 million reached
India



Dispensers for safe water
2.3 million reached
Kenya, Uganda, Malawi
Annual net benefits \$30m



Election monitoring technology
6.5 million reached
Afghanistan, Kenya, Uganda,
South Africa,



Digital attendance monitoring
1.8 million reached
India



Road safety stickers
3 million reached
Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania
Annual net benefits \$13.9m



Psychometric credit assessment
1 million reached
\$1.5 billion in loans facilitated
15 countries

DIV made 43 awards from 2010-12 totally 17million. Just taking 3 investments generated **at least \$3 in social benefits for every \$1 in costs incurred and at least a 39% return on investment** – likely significantly higher, given conservative assumptions

How to do evidence based policy?

Substance and style

Policy makers constrained by cognitive bandwidth

- Evidence use is a classic behavioural economics problem
 - It has high payoff but uptake is below optimal
 - Short term cost, long term gain
- Behavioural insights useful to promote evidence uptake
 - Make it easy and cheap for policy makers to apply it
 - Salience matters (hearing it once isn't enough)
 - Framing matters, use their language not yours

Bring your whole tool box

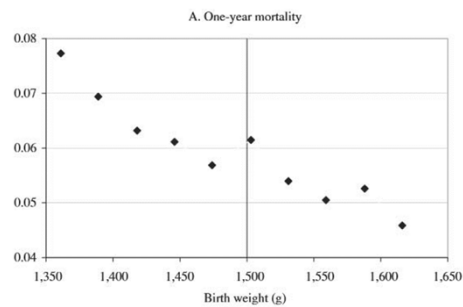
Context/institutional knowledge



Descriptive data



Well identified causal evidence



Theory

Thus total demand $D(p, \mu)$ is

$$D(p, \mu) = (Y_2 + Y_1) / p$$

$$D(p, \mu) = Y_2 / p$$

$$D(p, \mu) = 0$$

if $p < \mu$
 if $\mu < p < 3\mu/2$
 if $p > 3\mu/2$.

1. Good theory for behaviour change.
2. Descriptive data/correlations that are consistent with theory
3. Rigorous causally identified studies which test and support the theory

POLICY CHALLENGE



LOCAL CONDITIONS (needs assessment)

1. Representative survey data (DHS, LSMS etc)
2. Administrative data (tax data, number schools)
3. Results from qualitative interviews
4. Institutional info (incl pol econ)



GENERALIZED LESSONS ON BEHAVIOR



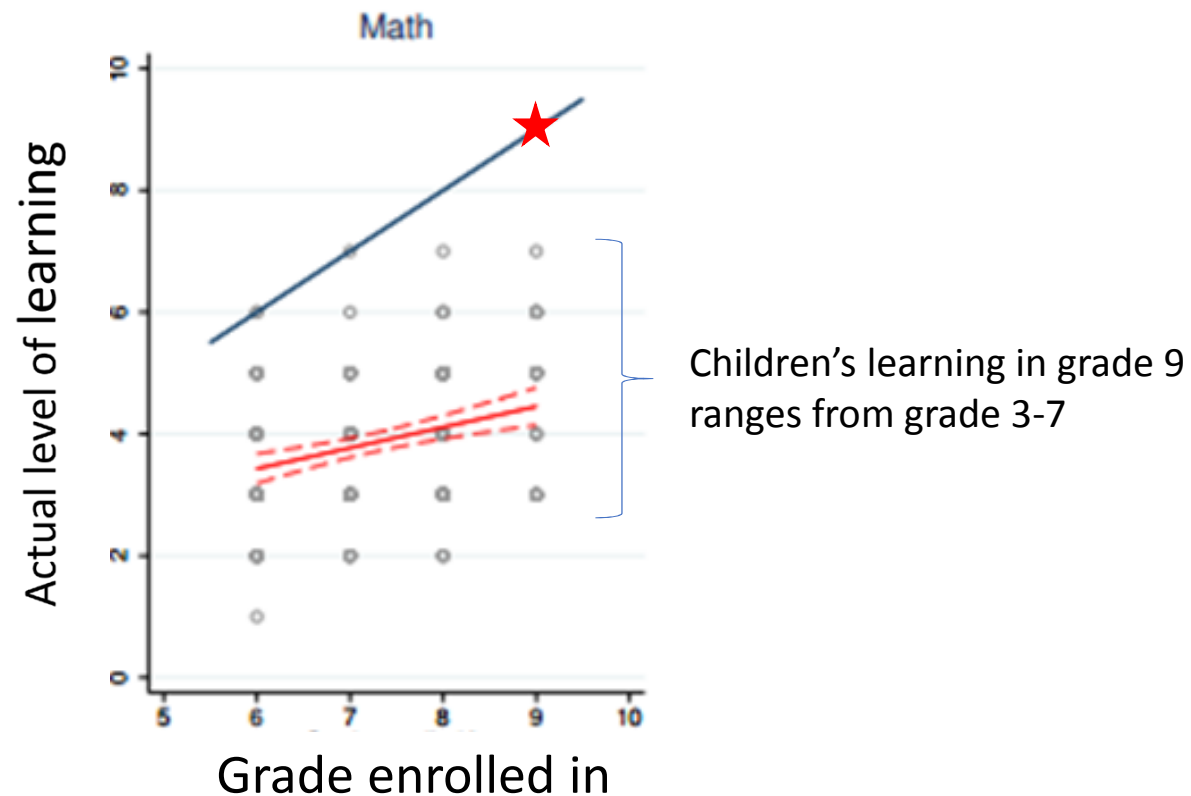
LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION

1. Is it possible to implement proposed program given local constraints
2. How should design details be modified to adapt to local conditions?



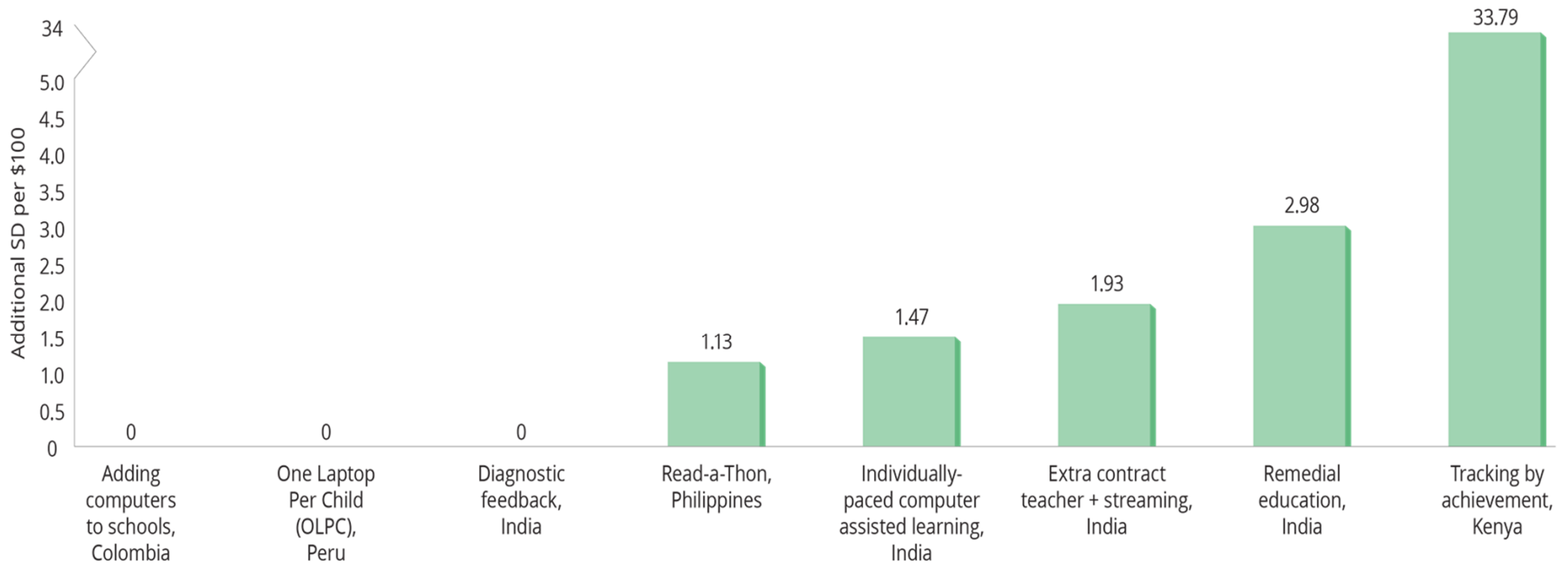
IMPROVEMENTS IN OUTCOMES

Improving learning: diagnosing the problem

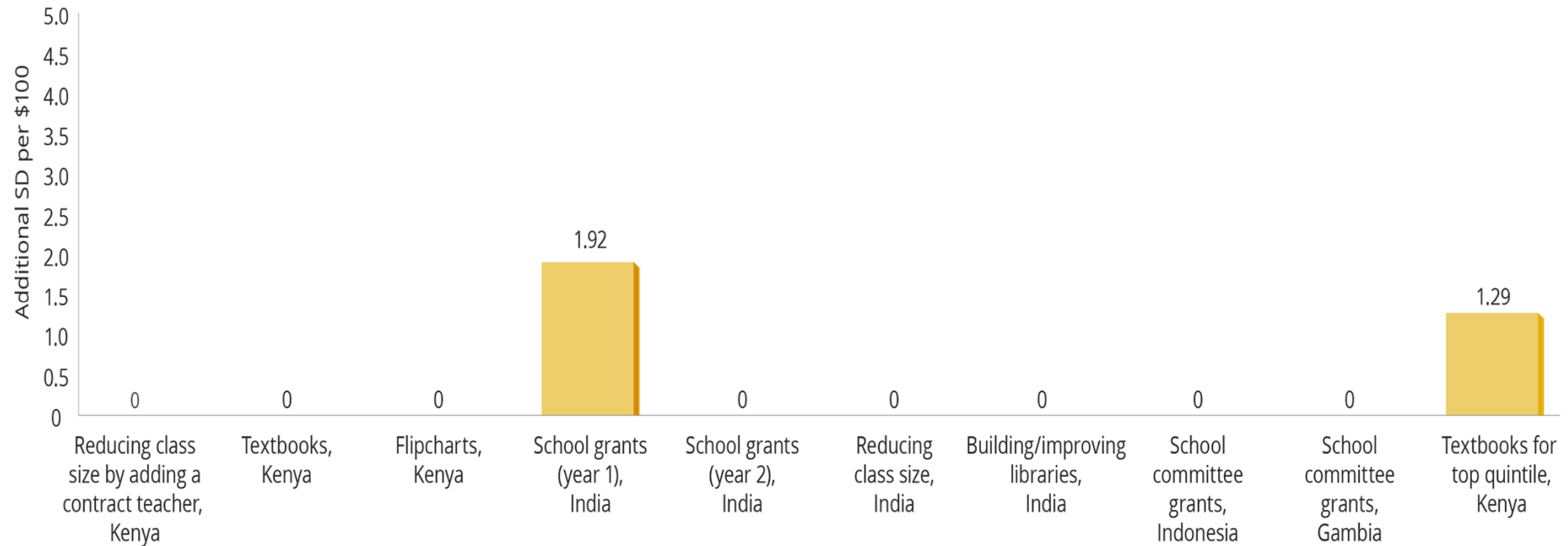


“Disrupting education” Muralidharan et al 2017

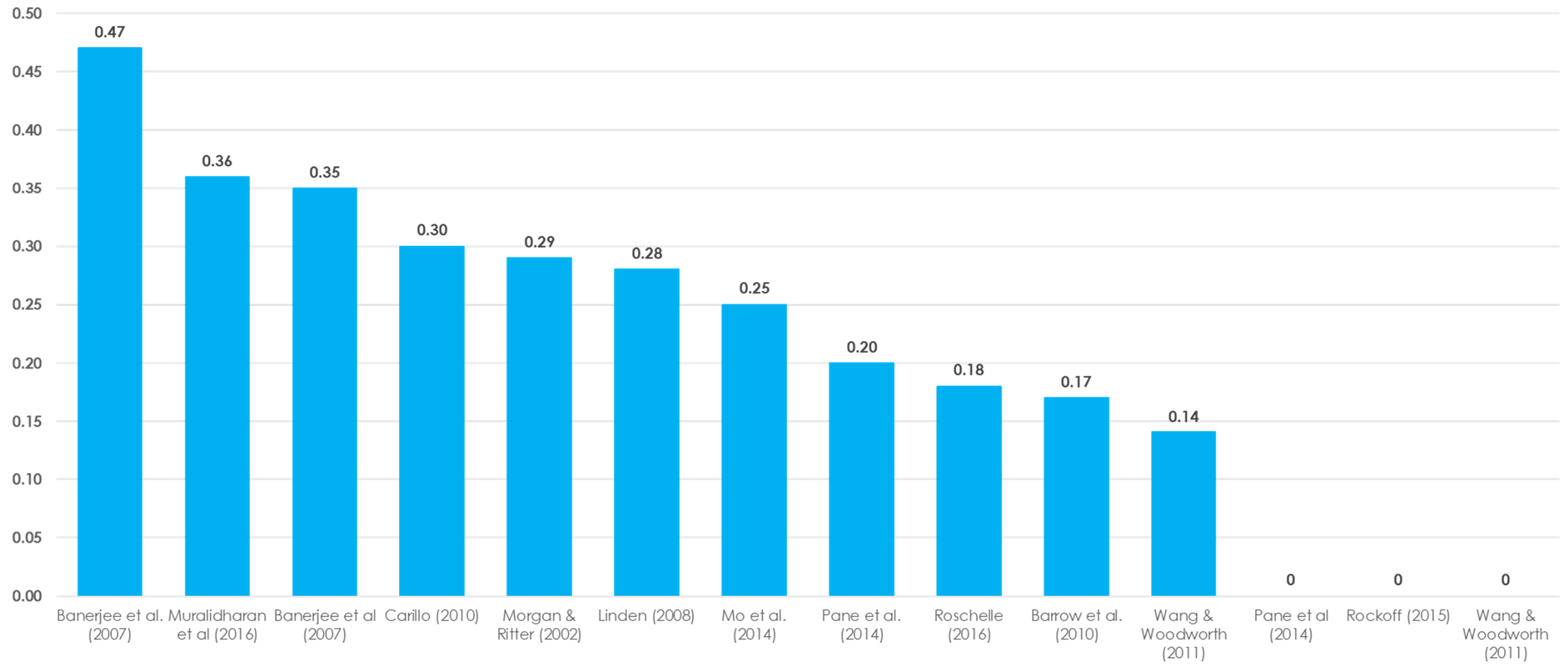
Tracking and remedial education are effective



Textbooks worked for the top of the class



Computer-Assisted Personalized Learning's Impact on Math Outcomes



Escueta et al 2017

Designing implementation details for Zambia

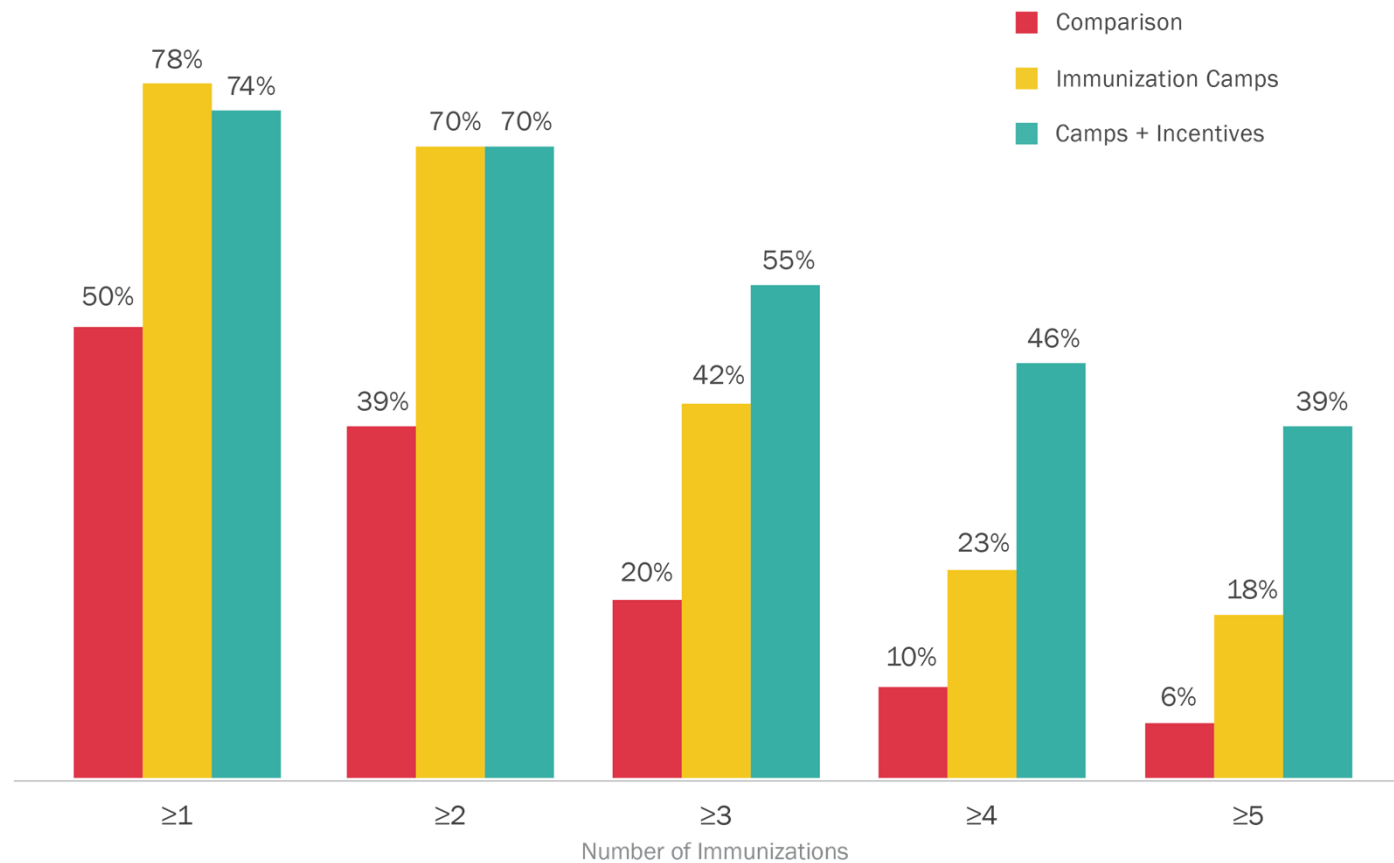


Mahuba Hazemba (Senior Officer, Ministry of General Education's Directorate of Standards) helps a student with a TaRL exercise.

Low take-up of late in schedule immunisations

Immunization rates by antigen		
	Country 1	Country 2
DPT1	84	47
DPT3	74	41
Measles	67	41
Fully immunized	49	38

RCT of incentives for immunization

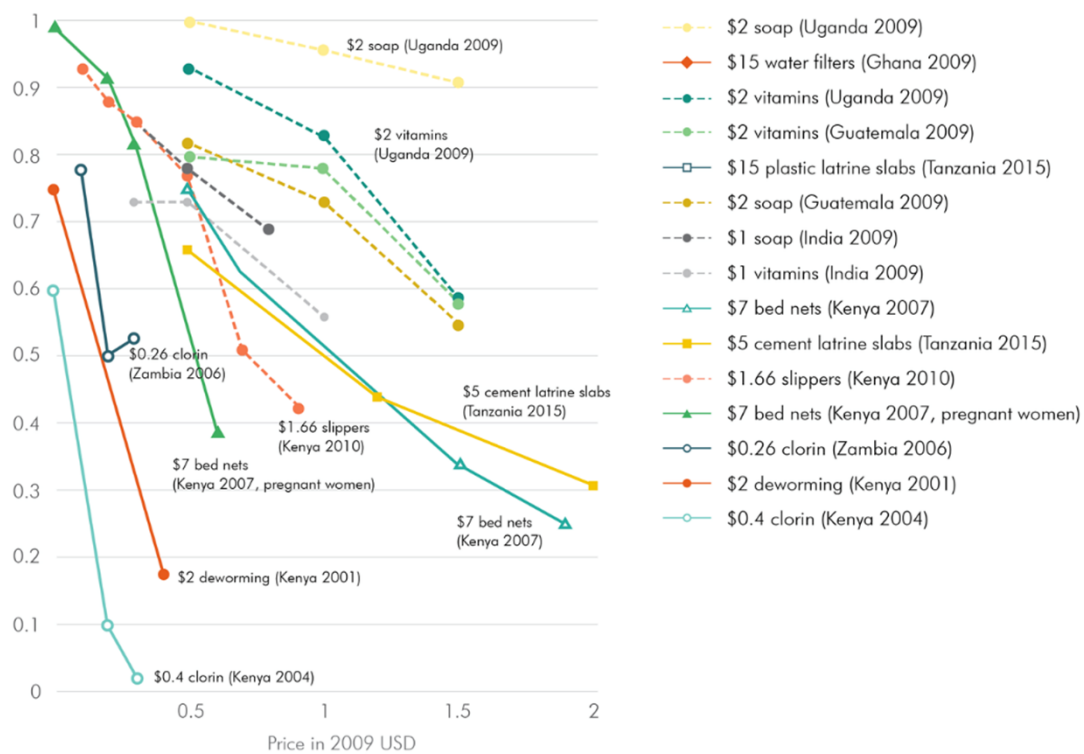


Source: Banerjee, Duflo, Glennerster, and Kothari, 2010.

Substantial evidence on incentives

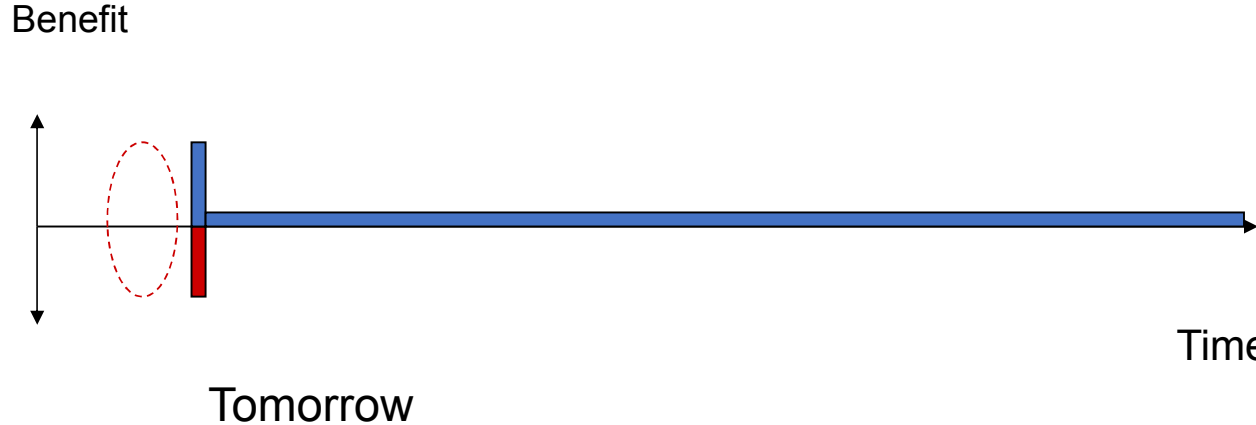
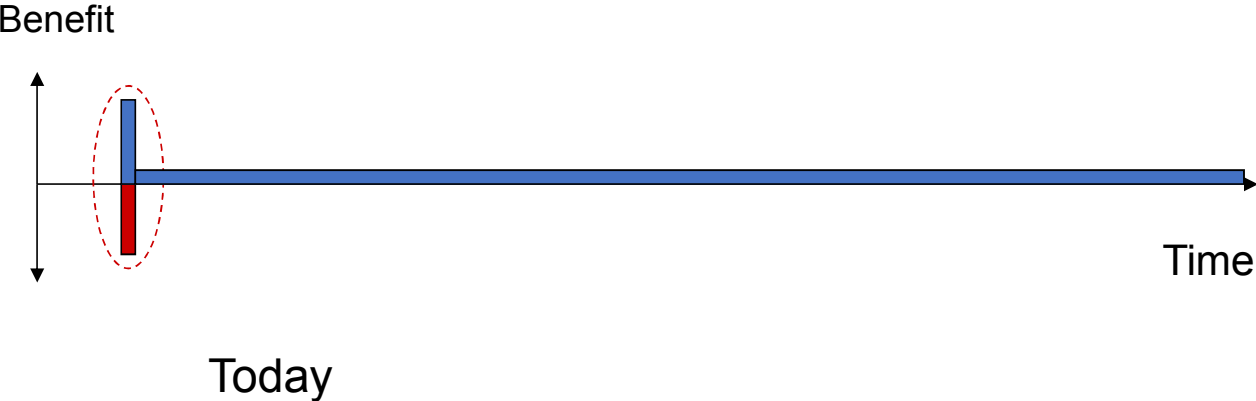
- 30+ RCTs of CCTs but usually much bigger incentives (Fiszbein and Schady, 2009)
- Malawi: smaller CCT same impact as bigger CCT (Baird et al 2010)
- Small incentives for HIV testing (Thornton 2008 Malawi), age of marriage (Field et al, in progress Bangladesh)

Price sensitivity of preventative health



Dupas, 2011 (updated to include more recent studies)

A theory for behavior change: present bias



Implementation methods vary

Kenya



Gibson et al 2017

Pakistan and India



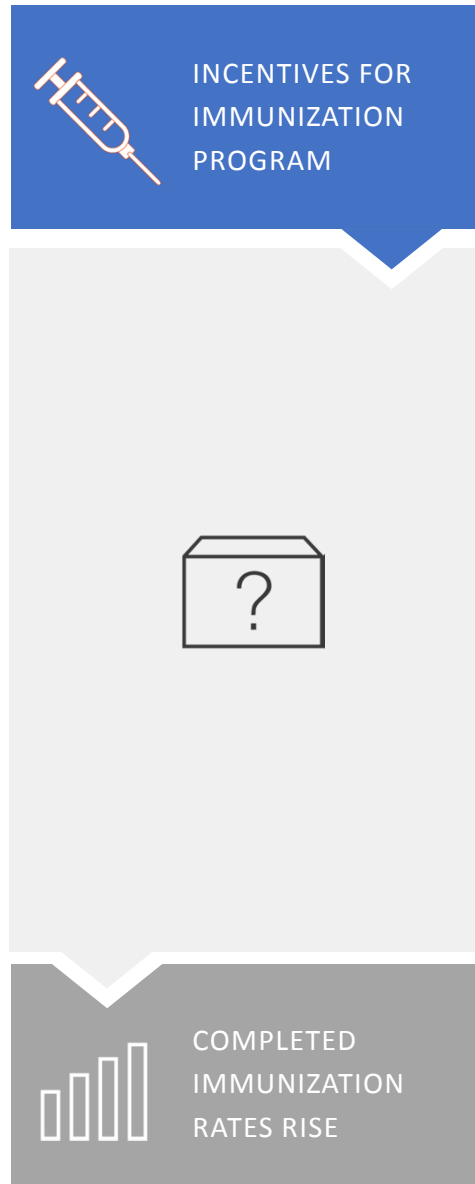
Chandir et al, ongoing.
Duflo et al, ongoing

Sierra Leone



World food program, J-PAL Africa

Evidence
based policy
is not about
this....



Its this

1. Minimal risk from overvaccination
2. Parents procrastinate or fail to persist
3. Parents are highly sensitive to price of preventative health



INCENTIVES FOR
IMMUNIZATION
PROGRAM



LOCAL CONDITIONS



GENERALIZED
LESSONS ON
BEHAVIOR



LOCAL
IMPLEMENTATION



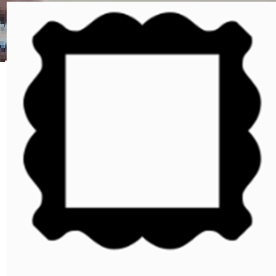
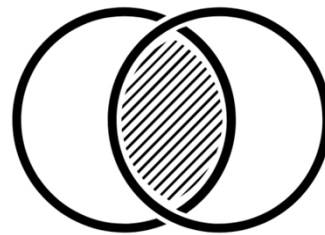
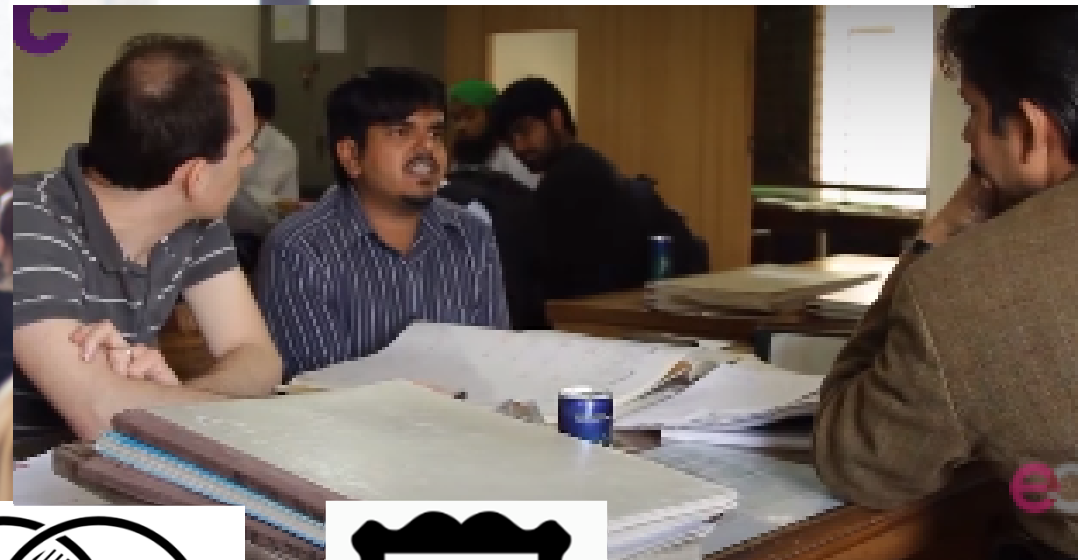
COMPLETED
IMMUNIZATION
RATES RISE

1. Parents want to vaccinate
2. Parents can access clinic
3. Provider presence sufficient
4. Full immunization schedule is salient

1. Incentives delivered to clinics
2. Incentives delivered to parents

Implications for researchers

Implication: policy engagement not presentation



Implication: do theory based literature reviews

- Systematic reviews that count number of positive results in an area can be very misleading
- Theory based reviews can be more useful
 - Bring together evidence from different evaluations that are consistent with an underlying theory
- Need more overviews that bring out the underlying behaviours found across a literature
 - This is what generalises
- Note: if you don't think anything generalises you are in the wrong business

Implication: external validity debate is confused

- The question “does this result generalize?” is three questions
- Is the problem an issue elsewhere?
- Does the underlying behaviour generalize?
- Can the policy be implemented in this context?
 - Do some of the details need to be adapted

Making policy/research partnerships work

Researchers need to

- Answer questions the partner wants answered
- Be flexible about evaluation design
- Share expertise
- Provide intermediate outputs
- Have a local presence and keep in frequent (constant) contact

Good policy partners

- Work at sufficient scale
- Are flexible
- Implement a representative program
- Have local expertise
- Have low staff turn over
- Care about knowing the truth

Glennerster, in Handbook of Field Experiments, 2017
Glennerster and Takaravasha,

Doing evidence based policy as a career

Academia

Long deadlines

Self motivate

Being novel

Direction of effect

Convince economists

Find a question you can
answer well

Become an expert on one issue

Find the optimal

Policy

Short deadlines

Good in teams

Being right

Magnitude of effect

Convince noneconomists

Answer the question
as well as you can

Apply your tools to many issues

Optimize within constraints

Ask of researchers

- Do high quality policy relevant research that both speaks to important theory (ie has generalizable lessons) and engages with details
 - Economist as plumber
- When discussing results with policy makers see their perspective
 - understand their interests
 - use their language
 - talk about the body of work not just your study
- Write pieces that synthesise the implications of body of research that brings out the underlying common patterns of behaviour
 - Theory but in accessible language

If we are not bring evidence to
policy, why are we here?