

Systematic Review Questions: Further Information

Full Systematic Reviews

1. What is the evidence of the effectiveness and efficiency of cash-based approaches in protracted and sudden onset emergencies?
2. What policies and interventions have been strongly associated with reductions in in-country income inequality?
3. What is the evidence supporting the technology selection for low volume, rural roads in low-income countries and what evidence is there to support the sustainability of different rural road technologies?
4. Under what conditions do the following elements of an education system improve system efficiency, service delivery and learning outcomes, especially for the poorest?
 - a. A) Monitoring systems
 - b. B) Inspection systems
 - c. C) Assessment systems

Please note- this question has the potential to develop into 3 SRs depending on how much evidence is found following a systematic search.

5. What is the evidence around how the location of decision-making within an education system affects the delivery of services and the quality of education?
6. What is the evidence around the impacts of reforms at scale to increase teacher effectiveness at scale in developing countries?
7. What is the evidence on what makes an effective urban planning framework in low-income or informal settlements?
8. What policies and other interventions have been strongly associated with the translation of growth into reductions in income poverty?
9. Does the extension of the rural road network have a positive impact on poverty reduction and resilience for the rural areas served? If so how, and if not why not?

Completing Systematic Reviews from protocol stage

10. Working with non-state providers in post-conflict and fragile states in primary healthcare service delivery: a systematic review. The protocol is already complete and can be found here:
http://r4d.dfid.gov.uk/PDF/Outputs/SystematicReviews/FINAL-Q41-Working-with-non-state-providers-fragile-states-Protocol-DFID-ICDDR.B.doc_P1.pdf

Question 1: What is the evidence of the effectiveness and efficiency of cash based approaches in protracted and sudden onset emergencies?

Population: Poor people in low-income countries affected by humanitarian crises.

Intervention: Cash-based approaches to assistance in humanitarian contexts, both rapid and slow onset. This could include interventions such as cash grants or relief, conditional cash transfers, and cash for work schemes.

Voucher schemes will not be within the scope of this systematic review.

Comparison (optional): n/a

Outcome:

Existing evidence on cash-based approaches in humanitarian crises suggests the following benefits from cash programming as opposed to in-kind assistance¹:

- **Flexibility:** Cash enables beneficiaries to choose a more appropriate set of goods and services corresponding to individual priorities rather than a 'one size fits all' in-kind assistance package, where beneficiaries tend to sell items certain items to free up cash;
- **Efficiency:** Provision of support via a cash transfer avoids the significant costs involved with the shipping, storage, transport and distribution of in-kind humanitarian assistance. Cash may also mean that beneficiaries are not forced to sell, at a large discount, the in-kind assistance they receive in order to meet their wider needs;
- **Economic impact:** Markets tend to recover rapidly so transfers further inject cash into local markets, providing a multiplier effect that can stimulate the local economy, and support an early recovery;
- **Dignity and choice:** Cash provides assistance to beneficiaries in a manner that enables them to make decisions about their own welfare in ways that in-kind assistance does not.

Rationale

The use of cash as a tool in humanitarian and development contexts has a long history. Cash transfers can be traced back as far as the Franco-Prussian in the nineteenth century, with more recent examples of effective cash programming from Somalia, Chechnya, and Myanmar. The process of diffusing and scaling up cash-based responses has been slow. As of 2011, the largest example of a humanitarian agency delivering cash transfers at scale was an Oxfam programme in Pakistan which reached 20,000 households. It is likely that these levels were surpassed in response to the Somalia famine in 2011.

Donor preferences appear to be evolving with the increasing utilisation of cash in small- and large-scale emergencies. This is particularly the case for

¹ Harvey, P., Bailey, S. Good Practice Review: Cash transfer programming in emergencies. 2011

programming with food assistance objectives where a cash transfer is used to complement, or replace, in kind assistance.

DG ECHO, for example, supports a pro-cash policy to meet food assistance objectives and has rapidly increased the amount of cash transfer programmes it funds; in 2010 40% of ECHO-funded NGO projects included a cash component compared to 20% in 2007. Also WFP funding to cash transfers in 2010/11 was \$368 million (about 7% of total programmed funding) with a commitment to deliver 20% of programming through cash transfers by 2015. Outside of donors there is a strong movement to improve the quality of emergency cash transfer and voucher programming across the humanitarian sector.

As the use of cash-based approaches has increased so too have evaluations and studies aimed at demonstrating its effectiveness and capturing learning. However, beyond a handful of Good Practice Reviews aimed at a practitioner audience little has been done in the way of rigorous research synthesis.

The findings of this Systematic Review will directly inform DFID humanitarian policy and programming in relation to cash-based approaches as opposed to in-kind assistance. The findings will also be disseminated to other donors and multilateral organisations who have a role in humanitarian policy and programming. The findings of this Systematic Review will also be used to target DFID investment into further primary research into cash-based approaches in humanitarian crises.

Question 2: What policies and interventions have been strongly associated with reductions in in-country income inequality?

Population: Middle-income and low-income countries

Intervention: Policy prescriptions, including taxation, public spending and employment and more local, targeted interventions across LICs and MICS that lead to reductions in income inequality.

Comparison (optional):

Outcome: Reduction in inequality

Rationale

There is no clear trend of income inequality across all developing countries. In all regions there are almost as many nations where in-country income inequality is increasing as there are nations where inequality is decreasing².

Case study evidence exists of the impact of different policies on inequality in different countries both from country specific studies and some comparisons across different countries e.g. Brazil, South Africa and China³. But there is a lack of overarching analysis of temporal and spatial trends in in-country inequality and analysis of what policies and interventions are strongly associated with reductions in income inequality, across different contexts.

The systematic review should draw out which interventions and policies are strongly associated with reductions in income inequality using comparable measures available. As part of this enquiry, it would also be useful to establish which policies have been associated with increases in income inequality. There are significant difficulties with current measures such as the gini coefficient, which is subjective and fails to capture the incomes for the richest groups adequately. The study should acknowledge this and seek to review the impact of policy on other measures of inequality in addition to gini measures. It should also draw out whether policies and interventions that are strongly associated with reductions in income inequality change as a country gets richer or as the proportion of people living in poverty gets smaller. The analysis should cover a range of policies and interventions e.g. around growth, jobs, human development, social welfare and those focused on addressing discrimination.

The systematic review is focused on income inequality, as a narrow focus will produce more concrete findings that will be of most use to policy makers.

² Pedro Olinto and Jaime Saavedra (2012) "An overview of global income inequality trends." World Bank Inequality in Focus.

³ Calva (2012) "Declining income inequality in Brazil: the proud outlier" World Bank Inequality in Focus. See Duncan Green blog Brazil v South Africa: what can the BRICS tell us about overcoming inequality? <http://www.oxfamblogs.org/fp2p/?p=14020>

However it is important that existing analysis of horizontal and social inequalities and how they relate to trends in income inequality are included.

This work is of importance in better understanding what mix of country level policies in different contexts are most effective for reducing income inequalities. It is possible to tackle extreme poverty and have rising inequalities, such as in China and India, but this review is specifically looking at policies which have reduced income inequalities. It will help programme managers in developing supportive programmes to DFID priority countries.

Question 3: What is the evidence supporting the technology selection for low volume, rural roads in low-income countries and what evidence is there to support the sustainability of different rural road technologies?

Population: Rural communities in low-income countries

Intervention: Low volume, rural road projects (primarily funded by low-income country governments and development agencies).

Comparison (optional):

Outcome: Improved quality of rural roads over time.

Rationale

A range of studies identify rural road investments as providing positive impacts on rural poverty. This premise justifies large investments in rural roads programme by low income countries and development agencies. The efficiency and sustainability of these investments is greatly affected by the choice of the rural road technology used to construct the roads. A variety of factors affect the choice of technology decisions: economic, technical, social and often political. The lack of a systematic review of how different choices perform often leads to poor choices based on preference and practice, rather than existing evidence. For example; many low income countries have imported or inherited road specifications which are now out dated or were inappropriate to start with.

There is however a very large number of research papers, trials and pilots of different rural road technologies that could be used to better support evidence based decision making. This global systematic review with additional focus on South Asia region will enable DFID (and others) to understand what the available evidence is and what it implies in terms of technology choice in the region. It will also help to identify gaps where additional research may be justified.

Finally by specifically analysing the sustainability aspects of the existing evidence it will allow whole life costs approaches to be more easily adopted (rather than the investment cost led approaches which are more commonly adopted currently).

Question 4: Under what conditions do the following elements of an education system improve system efficiency, service delivery and learning outcomes, especially for the poorest and most marginalised?

- a. Monitoring systems, including using administrative data systems (e.g. EMIS) as well as more targeted monitoring mechanisms.
- b. Inspection systems
- c. Assessment systems

This might become three separate reviews depending on the scale of the evidence base. The team will be expected to carry out an initial scoping review before proceeding.

Population: Education systems in low and middle income countries (LMICS), students in LMICS

Intervention: development/reform and implementation of i) monitoring systems ii) inspection systems and iii) assessment systems

Comparison (optional): pre-introduction of change to the system, comparable countries without changes to the system, in some (few) cases reform may have been introduced step wedge or randomly allowing for comparison within countries.

Outcome: functioning of the education system, learning outcomes

Rationale

Education research in development has recently witnessed a rapid increase in randomised controlled trials and quasi-experimental approaches to measuring impact.⁴ This movement has done much to increase quality, and the debate around rigour, in education research. However, there have been recent criticisms that this approach has missed an important aspect of understanding service delivery by the state- how and why such policies are implemented (or not). Pritchett et al argue that “the overwhelming majority of scholarly and policy attention in development is given to the modernisation of the economy, polity and society, and to the ex-ante design and ex post evaluation of policies, yet our collective understanding of the administrative dynamics shaping the capability for (and quality of) implementation of these policies is conspicuously thin.”⁵

Accountability is a key area in the performance of education systems and the delivery of service. Adapting from the OECD, there are three categories of accountability that are relevant for this review:⁶

⁴ See for example the Poverty Action Lab with over 90 studies across more than 20 countries <http://www.povertyactionlab.org/education>

⁵ Pritchett, Lant, Woolcock, Michael & Andrews, Matt “Looking Like a State: Techniques of Persistent Failure in State Capability for Implementation” *The Journal of Development Studies*, 49:1, 1-18, 2013, p.3

⁶ The literature offers several different categories. OECD categories have been highlighted as they are the best defined.

1. Regulatory school accountability: ensuring compliance with laws and regulations; focuses on inputs and processes within the school e.g. school inspections
2. Performance/Results Based accountability to improve schools: Periodic school evaluations. Mechanisms include a) standardized student testing, b) public reporting of school performance and c) rewards or sanctions. E.g. using assessment systems or monitoring systems
3. Performance based accountability to improve administration or management: use of monitoring data and targets to improve system efficiency and delivery.

We would like to know:

- The different roles monitoring, assessment and inspection systems all play in holding different actors and institutions in an education system accountable to particular stakeholders.
- Whether the way these systems are structured and function (e.g. how data is used to inform management, resource allocation or policy decisions) affect the impacts they have on improving system efficiency, service delivery and learning outcome
- Whether some elements of monitoring, inspection and assessment systems are more important than others in different education systems, whether we have evidence around what the critical elements to monitor, assess or inspect are and whether there is evidence around the sequencing of reforming/introducing these systems

We would like to know this as we are trying to build a more systematic approach to the study of education systems in development. These reviews will feed into ongoing research commissioning in these areas. Gaps identified in this reviews will help shape future research.

In addition, many of our country offices work on education system reform, often involving elements of monitoring, inspections and assessment systems. These aspects may play a larger role in future DFID programming with a renewed focus on delivering learning outcomes at scale, which will require greater focus on the incentives that help a system to deliver education rather than the inputs that go into the system.

Question 5: What is the evidence around how the location of decision making (e.g. different levels of government decentralisation) within an education system affect i) the delivery of services and ii) the quality of education?

Population: Education systems in developing countries, students in developing countries

Intervention: development/reform and implementation of administrative decentralisation or centralisation.

Comparison (optional): pre-introduction of change to the system, comparable countries without changes to the system, in some (few) cases reform may have been introduced step wedge or randomly allowing for comparison within countries.

Outcome: functioning of the education system, learning outcomes

Rationale

Education research in development has recently witnessed a rapid increase in randomised controlled trials and quasi-experimental approaches to measuring impact.⁷ This movement has done much to increase quality, and the debate around rigour, in education research. However, there have been recent criticisms that this approach has missed an important aspect of understanding service delivery by the state- how and why such policies are implemented (or not). Pritchett et al argue that “the overwhelming majority of scholarly and policy attention in development is given to the modernisation of the economy, polity and society, and to the ex-ante design and ex-post evaluation of policies, yet our collective understanding of the administrative dynamics shaping the capability for (and quality of) implementation of these policies is conspicuously thin.”⁸

One of these areas that has received significant attention is decentralisation of authority and power to the school level. A recent review brought together high quality evidence around school based management, which is the decentralisation of school level decision making to school level agents.⁹ However the review did not include evidence from decentralisation of decision making power to smaller administrative units. The review restricted itself to high quality World Bank conducted evaluations, so it is unclear whether this omission reflects a lack of evidence or is due to the method of the review.

⁷ See for example the Poverty Action Lab with over 90 studies across more than 20 countries <http://www.povertyactionlab.org/education>

⁸ Pritchett, Lant Woolcock, Michael & Andrews, Matt “Looking Like a State: Techniques of Persistent Failure in State Capability for Implementation” *The Journal of Development Studies*, 49:1, 1-18, 2013, p.3

⁹ Bruns, Barbara Filmer, Deon and Patrinos, Harry Anthony *Making Schools Work: New Evidence on Accountability Reforms* World Bank 2011

In addition, the location of decision making within an education system might become an element of a future call on education systems research in the medium-term. This review would help to inform the scoping of this area.

Question 6: What is the evidence around the impacts of reforms of education systems to increase teacher effectiveness at scale in developing countries on i. Quality of teaching and ii. Learning outcomes? How have the technical, financial and political barriers to reform been overcome?

Population: Education systems in low and middle income countries (LMICs), teachers in LMICs, students in LMICs

Intervention: development and implementation of reforms at scale to increase teacher effectiveness focusing on i) recruitment and initial training, ii) teacher development (in-service training, management, evaluation etc.) and iii) incentives.

Comparison (optional): pre-introduction of change to the system, comparable countries without changes to the system, in some (few) cases reform may have been introduced step wedge or randomly allowing for comparison within countries.

Outcome: functioning of the education system, learning outcomes

Rationale

Education research in development has recently witnessed a rapid increase in randomised controlled trials and quasi-experimental approaches to measuring impact.¹⁰ This movement has done much to increase quality, and the debate around rigour, in education research. However, there have been recent criticisms that this approach has missed an important aspect of understanding service delivery by the state- how and why such policies are implemented (or not). Pritchett et al argue that “the overwhelming majority of scholarly and policy attention in development is given to the modernisation of the economy, polity and society, and to the ex ante design and ex post evaluation of policies, yet our collective understanding of the administrative dynamics shaping the capability for (and quality of) implementation of these policies is conspicuously thin.”¹¹

Teachers are one of the costliest inputs into most education systems, with salaries dominating recurrent expenditure in most developing countries (96% of government education recurrent spending in Ghana was allocated to salaries in 2011).¹² This cost burden reflects the centrality of teachers to the learning process. Though researchers have struggled to identify a link between teacher quality characteristics and learning outcomes, innovations in value added measures and analysis of panel data sets with teacher fixed

¹⁰ See for example the Poverty Action Lab with over 90 studies across more than 20 countries <http://www.povertyactionlab.org/education>

¹¹ Pritchett, Lant, Woolcock, Michael & Andrews, Matt “Looking Like a State: Techniques of Persistent Failure in State Capability for Implementation” *The Journal of Development Studies*, 49:1, 1-18, 2013, p.3

¹² Ministry of Education “Education Sector Performance Report 2012” Government of Ghana 2012

effects have led to evidence of wide variations in teacher effectiveness within schools and significant impacts on student learning outcomes.^{13,14} Increasing effectiveness of the teaching cadre in developing countries can therefore reap significant dividends. The review should consider reforms to raise effectiveness in the following three areas:

- i. Recruitment and initial training: salaries, admission criteria, accreditation, teacher standards.
- ii. Teacher development: in-service training, teacher evaluation, management.
- iii. Incentives: financial incentives, professional development opportunities, accountability.

We would like to know

- a. How the reforms impact on teacher performance in the classroom and ultimately student achievement.
- b. How the reforms were implemented at scale, particularly in overcoming any political constraints.
- c. If any of the three intervention areas are of greater importance in raising teacher effectiveness and implications for sequencing of reforms.

DFID is scoping out a programme of research to improve the evidence base concerning how education systems function, what the entry points for reform are and how we measure and understand change across an education system. This will include a joint call with the ESRC looking at two key sub-systems, one of which will be teacher effectiveness. The findings from this review and any gaps identified will be used in scoping our future research agenda.

¹³ Hanushek, Eric & Rivkin, Steven "Generalizations about using value-added measures of teacher quality" *American Economic Review*, 100:2, 267-271, 2010

¹⁴ Rockoff, Jonah "The Impact of Individual Teachers on Student Achievement: Evidence from Panel Data" *American Economic Review*, 94:2, 247-52, 2004

Question 7: What is the evidence on what makes an effective urban planning framework in low-income or informal settlements?

Population: Communities residing in informal spaces especially slums (as measured by UN-Habitat's categorisation of slums) and other urban informal settlements in low-income and middle-income countries.

Intervention: Formal city, sub-city/zonal, and neighbourhood planning frameworks in low- and middle-income countries such as Bangladesh, India, Vietnam, Ethiopia, etc.; city development plans (CDPs) or city development strategy (CDS) in Philippines, Vietnam, Ghana, South Africa, Burkina Faso, Mozambique, etc.; micro-plans development for slum improvements in low- and middle-income countries in India, Bangladesh, Brazil, etc. using traditional grant-based programs as well as innovative approaches through CLIFF, SUF, etc.

Comparison (optional): In particular, we are interested in inclusive planning approaches (bottom-up) and whether they are more likely to lead to better results than non-inclusive approaches (top-down).

Outcome: Improved access to basic services, (water, sanitation, energy)

Rationale

The world is rapidly urbanising. Middle and low-income countries with substantial poverty levels - both in terms of proportion and absolute numbers - are struggling to respond to the challenge of urbanisation. Urbanisation brings significant challenges of providing housing and providing of basic infrastructure services, primarily in the informal and low-income settlements. It is estimated that one-third of the world's urban population live in slum-like condition with little access to clean water, sanitation or energy infrastructure. The problems are further exacerbated by inequitable distribution of benefits (services and wealth) in urban areas.

It is widely understood that formal inclusive urban planning approaches ensure improved and equitable access to services in informal urban settlements compared to interventions that are not planned in an inclusive manner. However, clear evidence demonstrating this is not readily available. A systematic review of existing literature will help provide answer to this question which would also be useful for country offices preparing new 'urban' programs. The systematic review would need to look at and beyond 'donor' funded projects and would also need to include learning from non-ODA projects (such as those supported by International NGOs, Foundations, etc.).

Question 8: What policies and other interventions have been strongly associated with the translation of growth into reductions in income poverty?

Population: Middle-income and low-income countries

Intervention: Policy prescriptions, including taxation, public spending and employment and more local, targeted interventions across LICs and MICS that lead to reductions in income poverty

Comparison (optional):

Outcome: Reduction in income poverty

Rationale

The link between growth and poverty reduction over time is heavily researched and yet highly contested. The debate centres on how far the poverty reducing power of growth can be maximised and what policies and broader environmental and institutional conditions matter most for this.

A systematic review should draw out which interventions and policies are strongly associated maximising the poverty reducing power of growth, over time and across contexts.

This work is of importance in better understanding what mix of country level policies in different contexts are most effective for channelling growth into poverty reduction. It will help programme managers in developing supportive programmes to DFID priority countries in supporting growth and poverty reduction programmes, through targeted work and budget support and also work with the private sector.

Question 9: What are the effects of extension of the rural road network on poverty and resilience for the rural areas served?

This could be through greater agricultural productivity, non-agriculture productivity, better prices, access to healthcare and education etc...

Population: Local rural communities in low-income countries

Intervention: Improving rural access by extending the rural road network – either by building new roads or by improving existing roads in poor condition.

Comparison (optional): Would be good to know how a roads intervention compares with other rural intervention in the absence of a road intervention.

Outcome: Improved rural livelihoods

Rationale

Although there appears to be a relatively strong body of evidence that improving basic access delivers strong development impacts in low income countries, roads on their own are not enough. And improving access brings with it a new set of risks. Access only helps people if there is something good to connect to and competitive transport services that make that connection efficient and cost effective. This review should set out what the preconditions need to be in order to maximise the impact of a rural road intervention.

Furthermore the methodology for collecting the evidence that does exist does not always stand up to close scrutiny or is sufficiently different in each case making it difficult to compare sets of data. By performing a systematic review of available evidence we would hope to ascertain which data/evidence is reliable and can be used to build a strong business case for a rural road intervention.

In low income countries where economic growth is not translating into poverty reduction the focus often turns to rural communities. Most people living in poverty live in these communities. The question is then which type of intervention is most likely to impact positively on these populations. By looking at comparisons with alternative interventions we would hope that this systematic review will provide some guidance to programme designers on this point.

Question 10: Working with non-state providers in post-conflict and fragile states in primary healthcare service delivery: a systematic review

The protocol for this Systematic Review can be found here:

http://r4d.dfid.gov.uk/PDF/Outputs/SystematicReviews/FINAL-Q41-Working-with-non-state-providers-fragile-states-Protocol-DFID-ICDDRB.doc_P1.pdf

We are seeking proposals to conduct a systematic review based on this protocol.

For this Systematic Review we believe it to be critical that the study controls for funding source. We want to know the role private providers play in relation to the health system. We also need to know how well these providers work in the context of the national health system or in relation to a broader health authority.