



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

DRG Annual Learning Forum

Four Sessions:
March 10, 11, 16, 18

Process Track

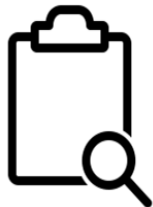
Session IV: Lessons Learned from 27 DRG Impact Evaluations

Thursday, March 18
10:00–11:30 AM Eastern



USAID
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- Please keep yourself on mute and off video.
- For questions to speakers and panelists, please use the Q&A feature.
- For other thoughts or comments, feel free to write in the chat.



Findings Track

Session 1:

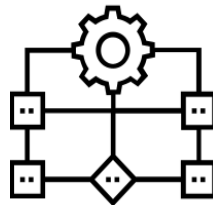
Advancing Civic Spaces and
Protecting Human Rights

March 10, 9:00–10:30 AM Eastern

Session 2:

Achieving Accountability: From
Social Movement to Decentralization

March 11, 9:00–10:30 AM Eastern



Process Track

Session 3:

Learning from Learning Agendas:
Improving the Art of Organizational
Learning

March 16, 9:00–10:30 AM Eastern

Session 4:

Lessons Learned from 27 DRG
Impact Evaluations

March 18, 10:00–11:30 AM Eastern

DRG LEARNING AGENDA OVERVIEW

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The DRG Learning Agenda is a set of priority and strategic research questions for which the DRG Center generated evidence and produced recommendations to guide DRG programming, rooted in five cross-cutting thematic areas. This evidence includes academic research, program evaluations, and multi-method tests of DRG program assumptions and theories of change. The 2016 and 2017 Learning Agendas included 20 Learning Questions across five themes: Participation and Inclusion, Transparency and Accountability, Human Rights, DRG Integration, and Theories of Democratic Change.

The DRG Center formulated the DRG Learning Agendas through a consultative process with internal Theme Teams and USAID field staff. The Center created action plans for each question and a Learning Agenda Advisory Group to oversee annual updates to the agendas. The Center then funded evidence reviews along with research and evaluation activities to fill evidence gaps.

In preparation for the 2021–2023 Learning Agenda, USAID reviewed past research supported by the DRG Center and assessed the degree to which the questions from the latest agendas were addressed (see [Learning Overview](#)). This process included a compilation and summary of research including findings, conclusions, and recommendations (see [Learning Agenda Rack-Up](#)).

DRG Center Research by Theme

PARTICIPATION & INCLUSION



- Restrictive environment
- Youth participation
- Women's participation
- Social movements
- Electoral systems

TRANSPARENCY & ACCOUNTABILITY



- External vs. internal
- Decentralization
- Civil service
- E-Governance
- Gender-based

HUMAN RIGHTS



- Information
- Human rights
- National human rights institutions
- Radicalization
- Cross-border

DRG INTEGRATION



- Participation and Accountability
- National human rights institutions
- Cross-border
- Scale effects

DEMOCRATIC CHANGE



- Theories of change
- Pathways



DRG LEARNING THEME: Human Rights

The DRG Learning Agenda is a set of priority and strategic research questions for which the DRG Center generated evidence and produced recommendations to guide DRG programming, rooted in five cross-cutting thematic areas. DRG research on Human Rights answered questions related to what makes human rights awareness campaigns successful, in what contexts does assistance to national human rights institutions lead to improved human rights outcomes, how human rights violations lead to radicalization, and others.

For more information, see the [DRG Learning Agenda Overview](#) and the [Learning Agenda Evidence Rack-Up](#).

DRG Center Learning Agenda Findings

Information Campaigns



In what ways are human rights awareness campaigns successful and what are their unintended negative consequences?

- The success of awareness campaigns tends to depend heavily on specific, targeted, and contextualized framing for messages, as well as the combination of traditional and new media to disseminate these messages.
- In addition to the benefits that awareness campaigns may achieve through pressure on governments to respect human rights, they may also spark backlash, confusion, demonization, and/or frustration.
- In some cases, awareness campaigns may find it more effective to target influential corporations in addition to the broader public, since these corporations may have the capacity to exert strong financial pressure on governments to follow human rights guidelines.

Key Documents: "Making Human Rights Campaigns Effective While Limiting Unintended Consequences"; "Infographic: Design and Implement Effective Human Rights Campaigns"

Cross-Cutting Questions

Sector-Specific Questions

2021–2023 DRG Learning Agenda

Operational Questions

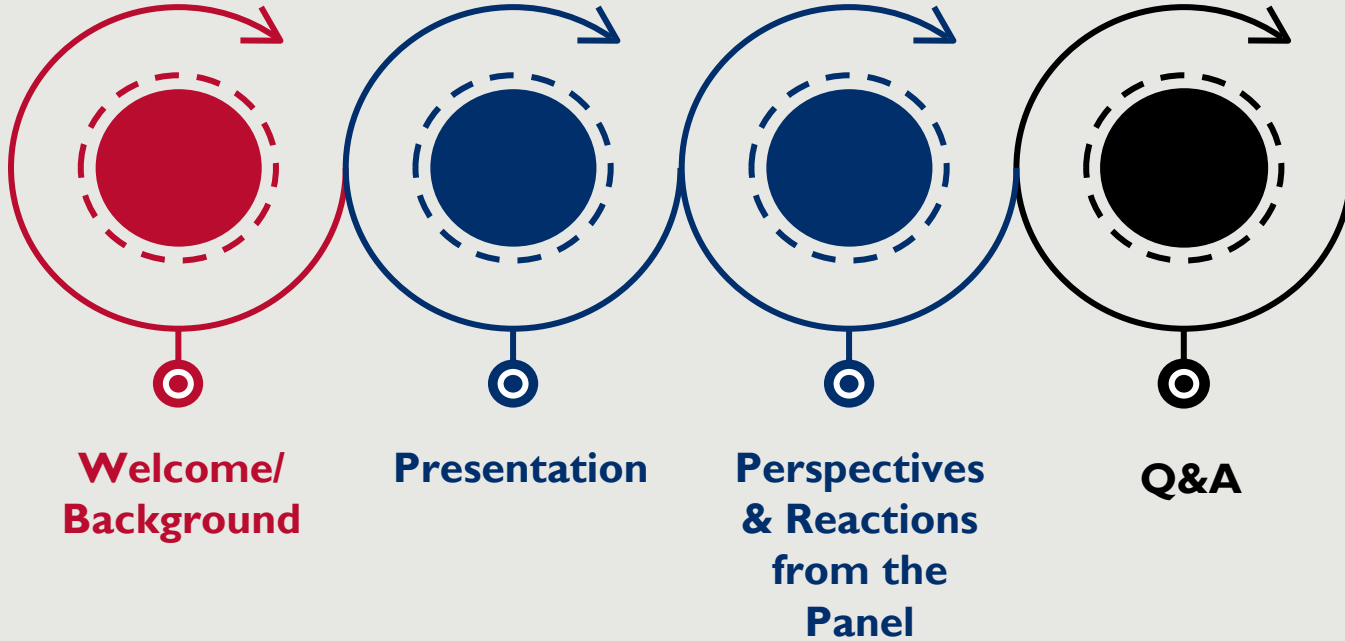
Identify

Ideate

Refine

Decide

AGENDA



Session IV: Lessons Learned from 27 DRG Impact Evaluations

Presentation: Mike Findley, UT Austin

Perspectives & Reactions Panel:

Emmanuel Mensah-Ackman,
USAID/Ghana



Jeff Telgarsky, NORC



Eva Matsiko, RTI



Cyrus Samii, NYU and EGAP



Closing: Brandy Witthoft, USAID/DRG



Mike Findley (with Aleta Starosta and
Daniel Sabet)

Overview of Retrospective Findings

BACKGROUND

2008 National Academies of Science Report

- Pilot program of IEs
- EDGE 2010–2014
- LER 2013–2021
- LER II (2018–present)

Overview

- 27 IEs
- Of 72 IEs across agency (2012–2019)
- NORC and SI learning partners (LPs)

Recent scaling back, and now retrospective



QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

Retrospective Questions

- **Description:** How many IEs initiated, completed? Cost, topics, and regions? Methodologies used? For those not completed, why?
- **Findings:** What has USAID learned from the findings?
- **Challenges and lessons learned:** Challenges in designing and carrying out IEs? Lessons learned?
- **Use:** How has USAID (or others) used the IEs? Why some more useful? How disseminated?
- **Recommendations:** DRG Center's approach moving forward?

QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

Retrospective Methods

- **Desk review:** All DRG reports, other donors
- **Case studies:** Variation on key dimensions
 - Countering Violent Extremism in Bangladesh
 - Constituency dialogues in Cambodia
 - Community, Family, Youth Resilience in Caribbean
 - Strengthening Accountability in Ghana
 - Governance, Accountability, Participation, Performance in Uganda
 - PROJUSTICE Pretrial Detention in Haiti
 - Local Governance/Accountability in Malawi
 - Media & Civil Society in Tanzania
- **Interviews and group discussions:** 64 individuals
- **Online survey:** 80 of 127 individuals from the 27 IEs participated; we invited those on IEs that did not move forward, but almost no response

STAKEHOLDERS

- USAID Mission Staff
- USAID DRG Staff
- Implementing Partners (IPs)
- LPs/Evaluators
- Academic Principal Investigators (PIs)
- Other
 - Survey firms
 - Government
 - NGOs



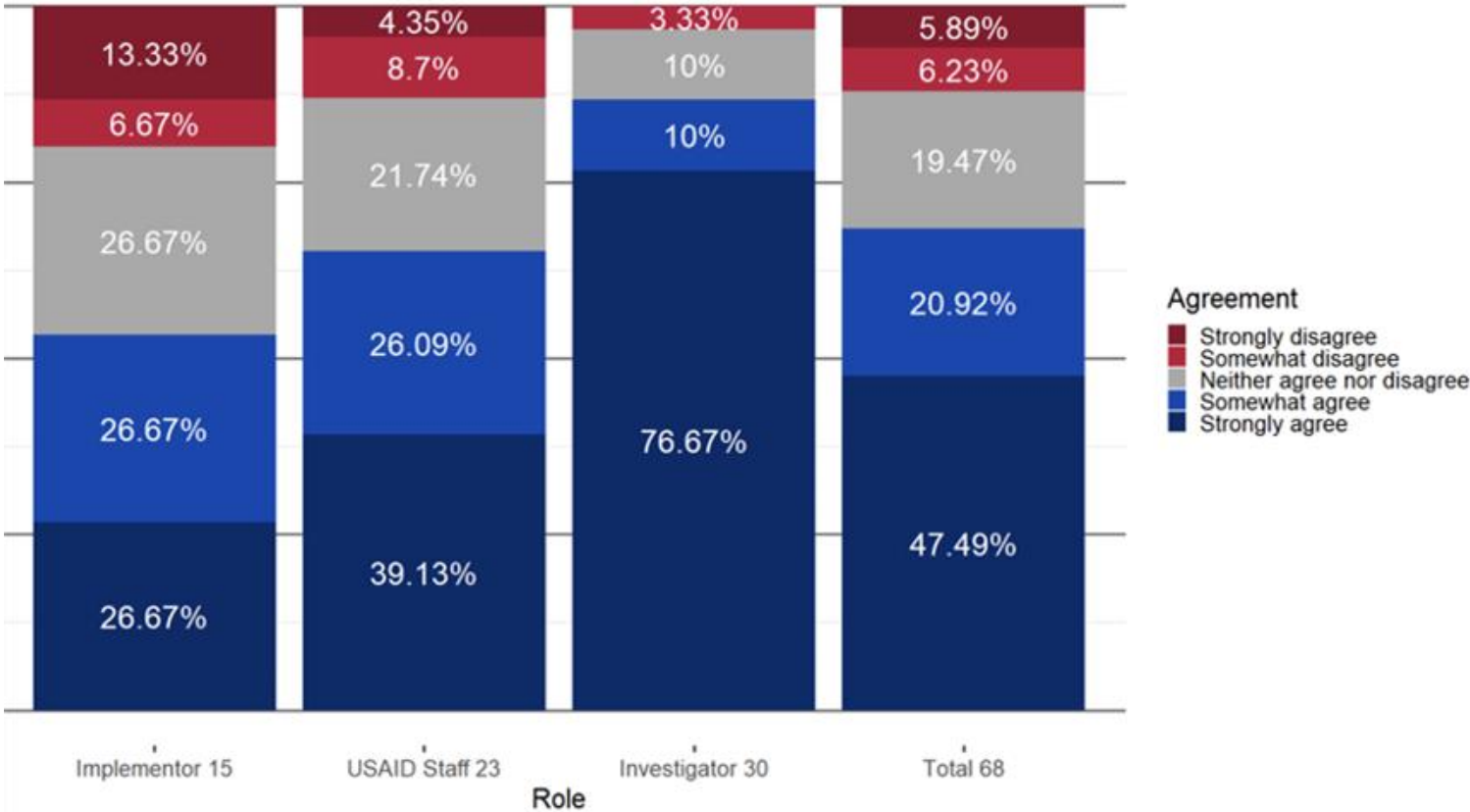
SCOPE OF THE STUDY

- This report was commissioned as a retrospective...
 - Not a meta-analysis.
 - Not an impact evaluation (of impact evaluations).
- Triangulation of evidence, with hopes of taking stock & suggesting next steps.



— QUESTION 2: FINDINGS

VALUE OF IEs VS. PEs



SOME FINDINGS WITH IMPACT

Impactful findings

- Haiti:
 - Pretrial detainees in prison provided w/ legal support were freed prior to those without.
- Caribbean:
 - Prior studies showed enormous effects of family counseling; the IE found little effect.
- Ghana:
 - Accountability programs were scaled in second phase.



— QUESTION 3: CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

CHALLENGES: THE PURPOSE OF THE IE

“USAID requires that impact evaluations be conducted, if feasible, of any new, untested approach that is anticipated to be expanded in scale or scope through U.S. Government foreign assistance or other funding sources (i.e., a pilot intervention).”

The norm:

- IEs of convenience.
- But IEs run as large, summative endeavors.

Lesson:

- Possibility is not a principle.
- Need to define purpose and design.



LESSONS LEARNED: A CLASSIFICATION OF IEs

Formative IEs

- Innovating
- Pilot-Scale
- Complementary

Summative IEs

- Confirmatory
- Generalizing
- Optimizing

Key: Define the **purpose of the IE**.



CHALLENGES: ACADEMIC PIs

Academic PIs

- Advantages
 - Theory/evidence
 - Methodological expertise
 - Highly motivated
 - Less subjective to turnover
 - Often pro bono work
 - Bolster independence
- And yet....
 - Driving programming
 - Academic timelines
- Importance of evaluation purpose
 - Bangladesh vs. Caribbean



CHALLENGES: IPs

Implementing Partners

- Advantages
 - On the ground and know their contexts well
 - Sometimes they were responsible for developing the original programs
- Challenges
 - Weather, elections, data
 - Unfaithful implementation
- The “forced marriage” model



LESSONS LEARNED: ADDRESSING STAKEHOLDER CHALLENGES

- Importance of clear solicitations
- Intensive post-contracting IP stakeholder buy-in efforts
- The evaluation-implementation firewall
- IE Timing and readiness for testing
- Need for better communication & coordination
- The “dysfunctional family” in need of a family counselor



— QUESTION 4: USE

UTILIZATION (OR LACK THEREOF)

- Positive
 - IE-based “programmatic-based positive utilization” does not occur often.
 - Somewhat more “design-based positive utilization,” though perhaps not much.
- Negative
 - Low use in design.
 - Unclear: negative utilization in programmatic cases.

Utilization Typology

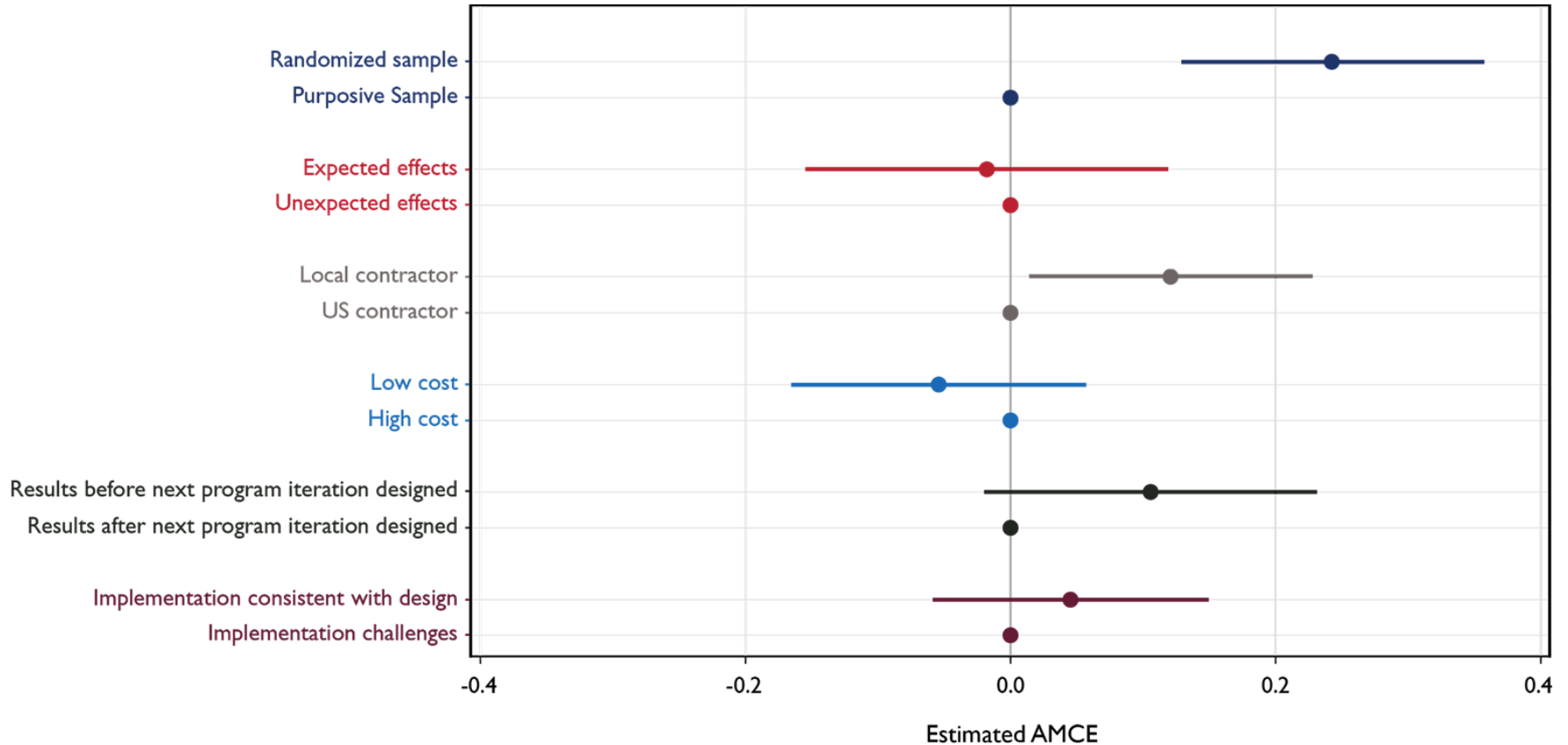
	Positive	Negative
Programmatic	Low	?
Design	Medium	Low

UTILIZATION EXAMPLES

- Programmatic:
 - Haiti: National policy changes (+)
- Design:
 - Caribbean: Better risk assessment tool (+)
- Other dimensions:
 - Existing vs. future programs
 - Influence on knowledge base
 - Perceptions of use



A CONJOINT EXPERIMENT



— QUESTION 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

OVERALL OPTIONS

1. Maintain SQ. Support missions when they want to, but otherwise no DRG support.
2. **Build from the previous IE program, but make adjustments.**
3. Shift to a grant-making approach where Pls and IPs find each other and then apply (ILAB/J-PAL models).



SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Define the **evaluation purpose**...
 - a. Preferably through an **evaluability assessment**.
2. Clarify stakeholder roles at the contract stage, and put **language in contracts**.
3. Conduct IEs as evaluation teams **that include the IP**.
4. USAID DRG and Missions should play a larger role in **harmonizing LPs/PIs and IPs**.
5. Undertake a larger number of IEs on more interventions, but...
 - a. Focus scope and short-circuit.



SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS (CONT.)

6. Incorporate dissemination and use **throughout the program life cycle.**
7. Increase **accessibility and actionability** of the findings report.
8. **Involve USAID staff** in crafting recommendations.
9. **Create a DRG repository** for reports, evidence reviews, data sets, policy briefs, etc.
10. **Include research participants and local communities** in dissemination.



— CONCLUSION

CONCLUSIONS

1. Prior IE program was a net positive, but cannot be considered an unmitigated success.
2. Key challenges & lessons:
 - a. IE purposes ill-defined.
 - b. Stakeholder challenges extreme.
 - c. Concrete strategies feasible to implement.
3. Utilization has been low:
 - a. Better-defined purpose and evaluation team would allow tailored dissemination/use.





Perspectives & Reactions from the Panel

— QUESTIONS/RESPONSES

- Please write your questions in the Q&A feature only.
- The Q&A function will be monitored and questions for the speakers will be drawn from there.
- Please feel free to use the upvote feature if you like a question.
- Time will not allow for all questions to be answered in the session.
- Feel free to use the chat for additional comments.

Please take a moment to fill out the survey to engage in the future learning agenda formulation process and give us feedback!

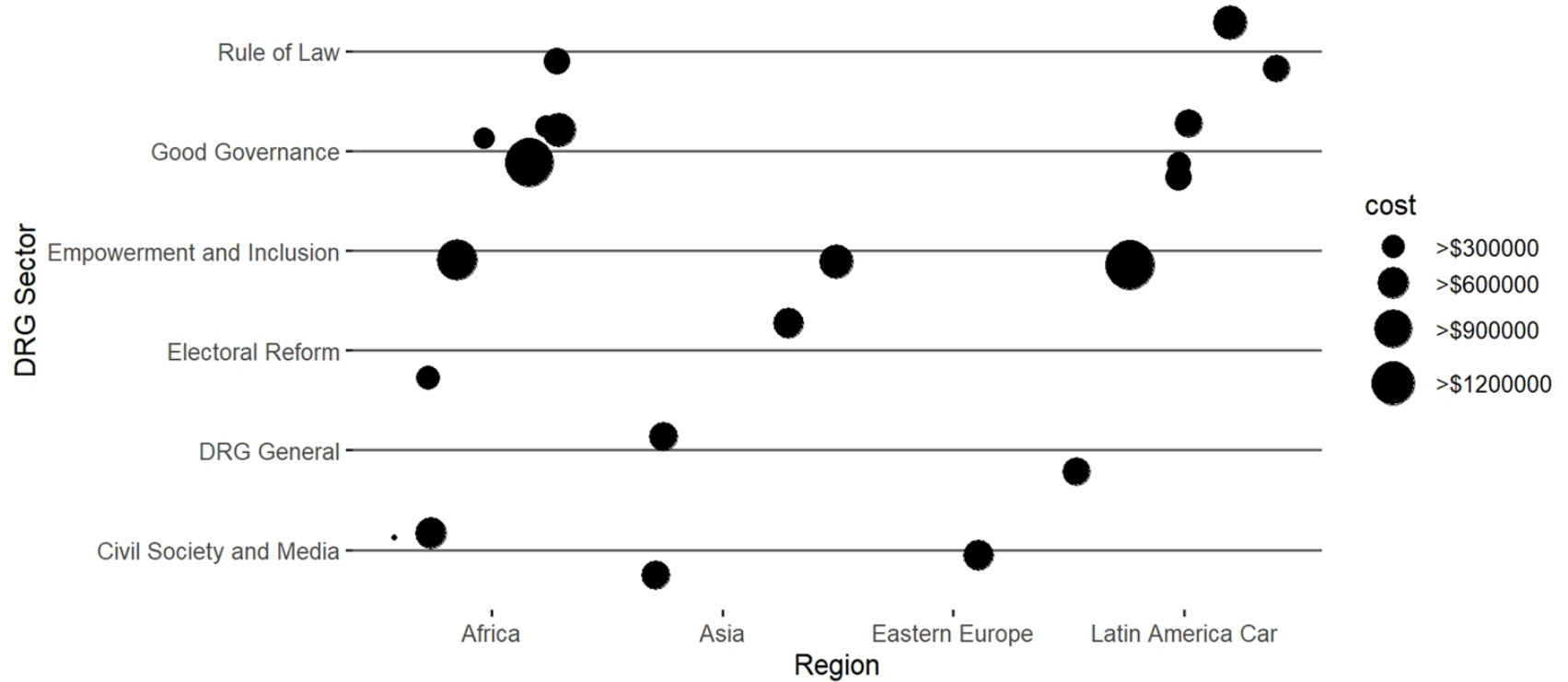


*If you have any questions, please contact Matt Baker
mabaker@usaid.gov*

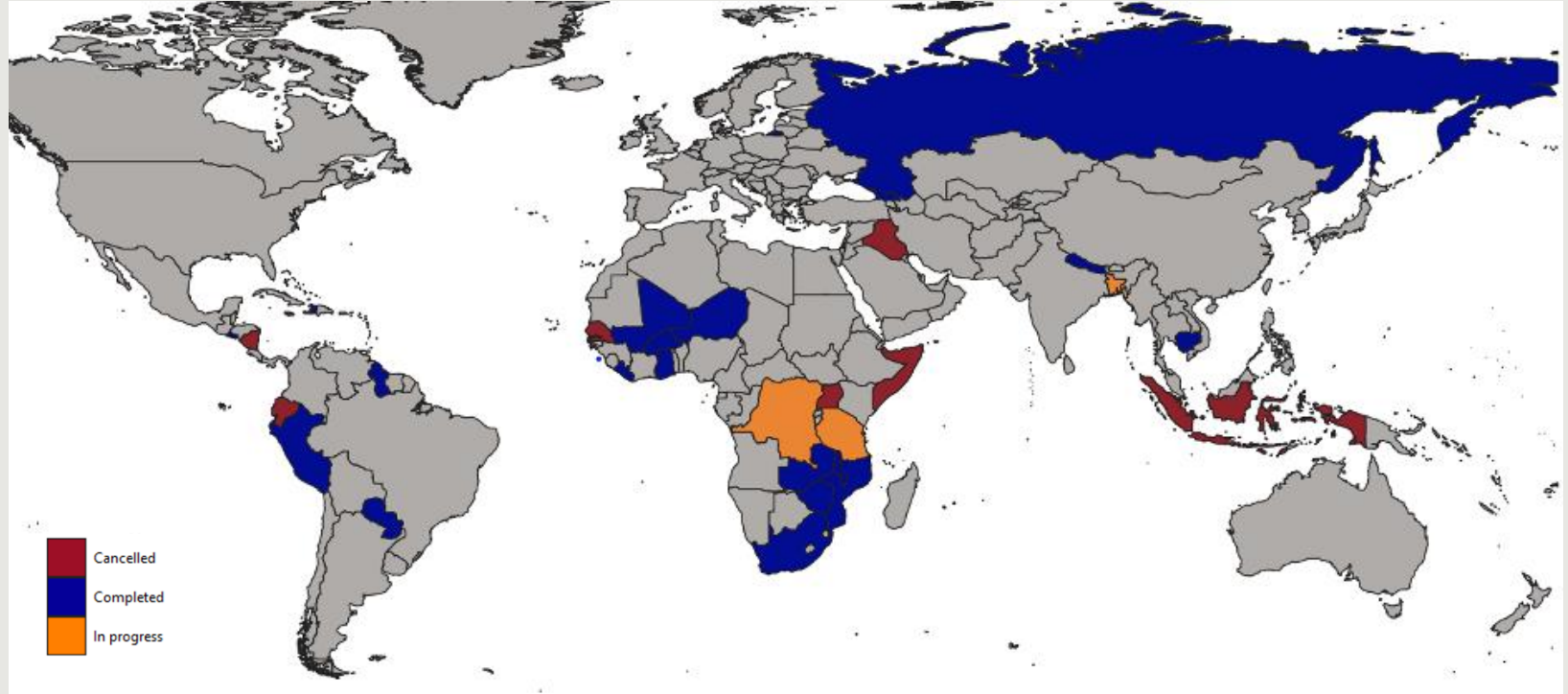
— ANNEX SLIDES



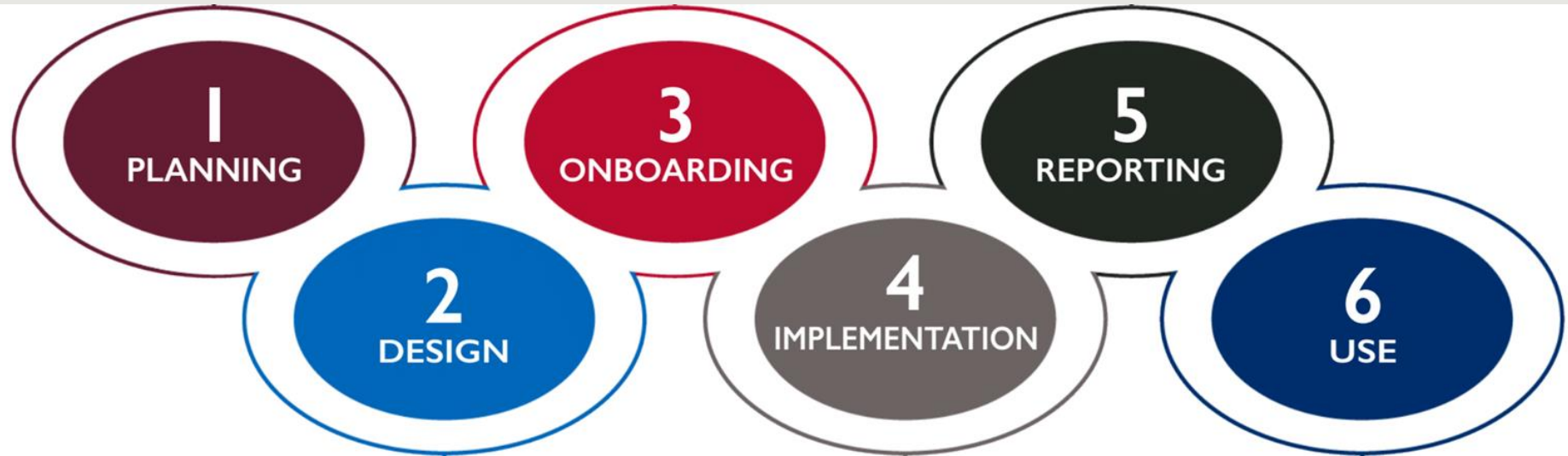
IE COSTS



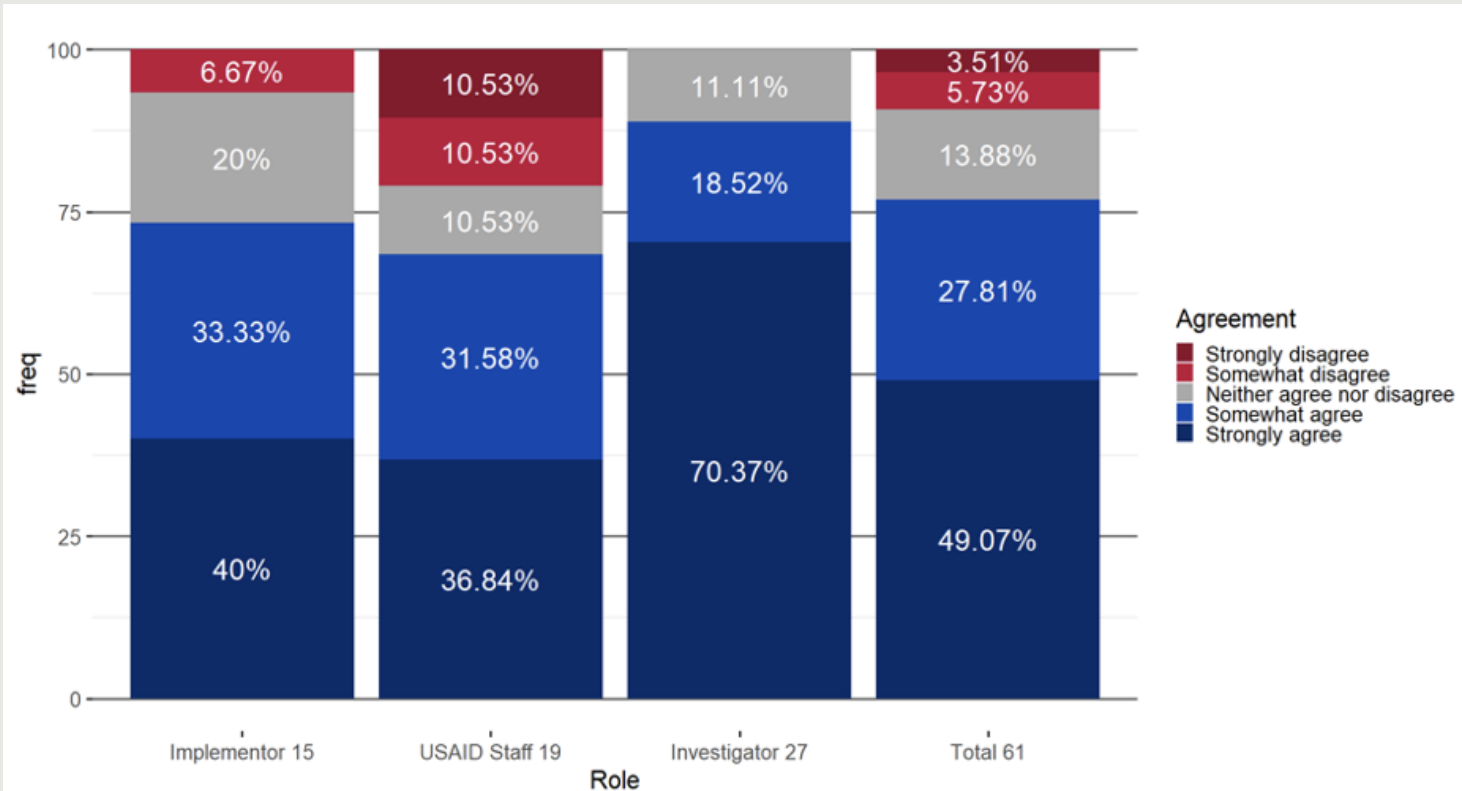
GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF PROJECTS



DRG IE STAGES



WOULD YOU ENCOURAGE OTHERS?



SOME INDETERMINATE FINDINGS & WHAT TO THINK

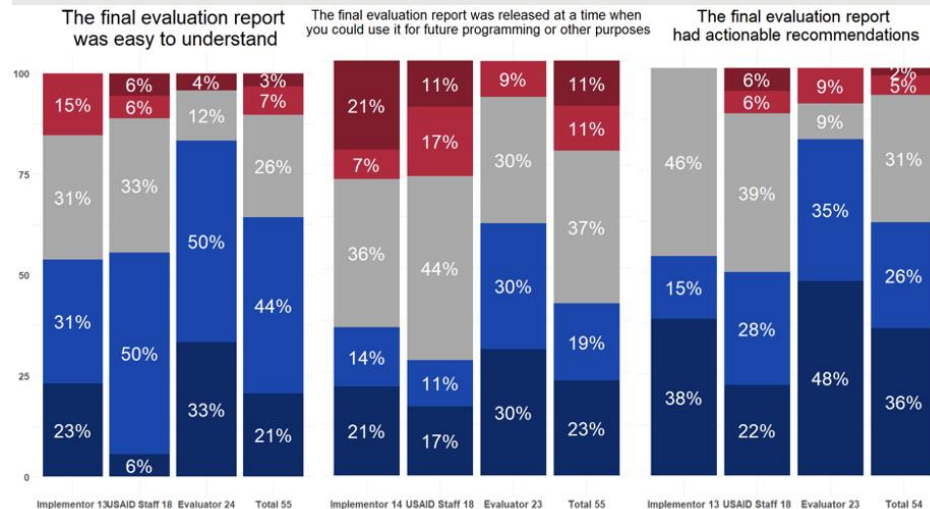
Indeterminate findings

- What to make of null/mixed results?
 - Tanzania, Mali
- Weak theory of change
 - Ghana, Mali
- Evaluation design constrained the program
 - South Africa, Caribbean, Georgia, Paraguay
- Subgroup effects most important, but not sufficiently powered
 - South Africa, Peru, Zimbabwe



THE ROLE OF THE EVALUATION REPORT

- Mixed views on whether report:
 - Was easy to understand.
 - Was released at a good time.
 - Had actionable recommendations.



DISSEMINATION

- To be expected:
 - IPs least engaged in dissemination.
 - Academic PIs most.
- Interestingly:
 - Only 28% of USAID staff report agreement with the statement that the report was shared widely—not strong agreement.

