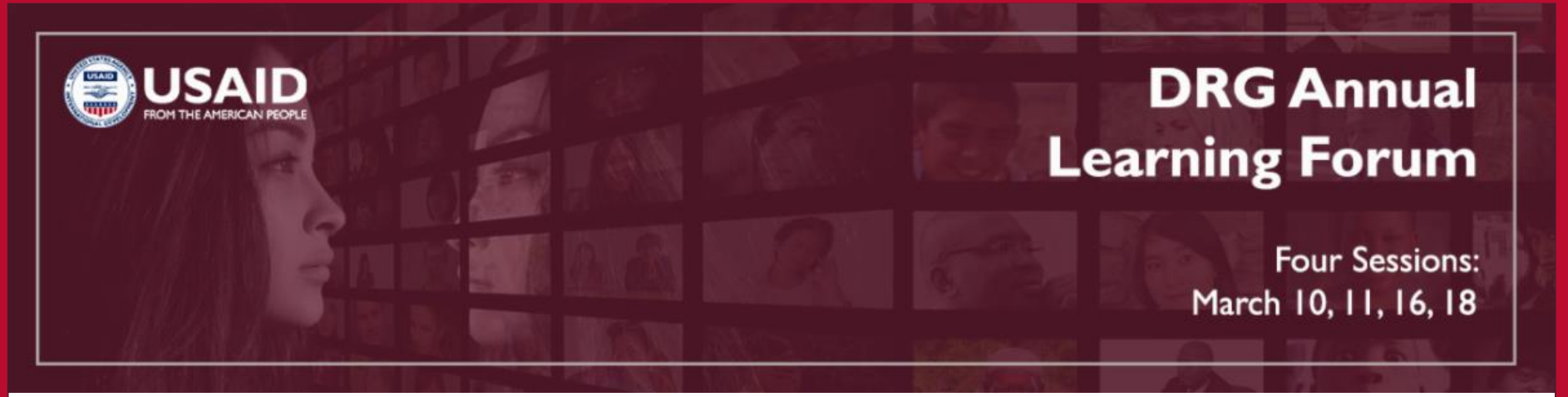


Process Track

Session IV: Lessons Learned from 27 DRG Impact Evaluations

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

- 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

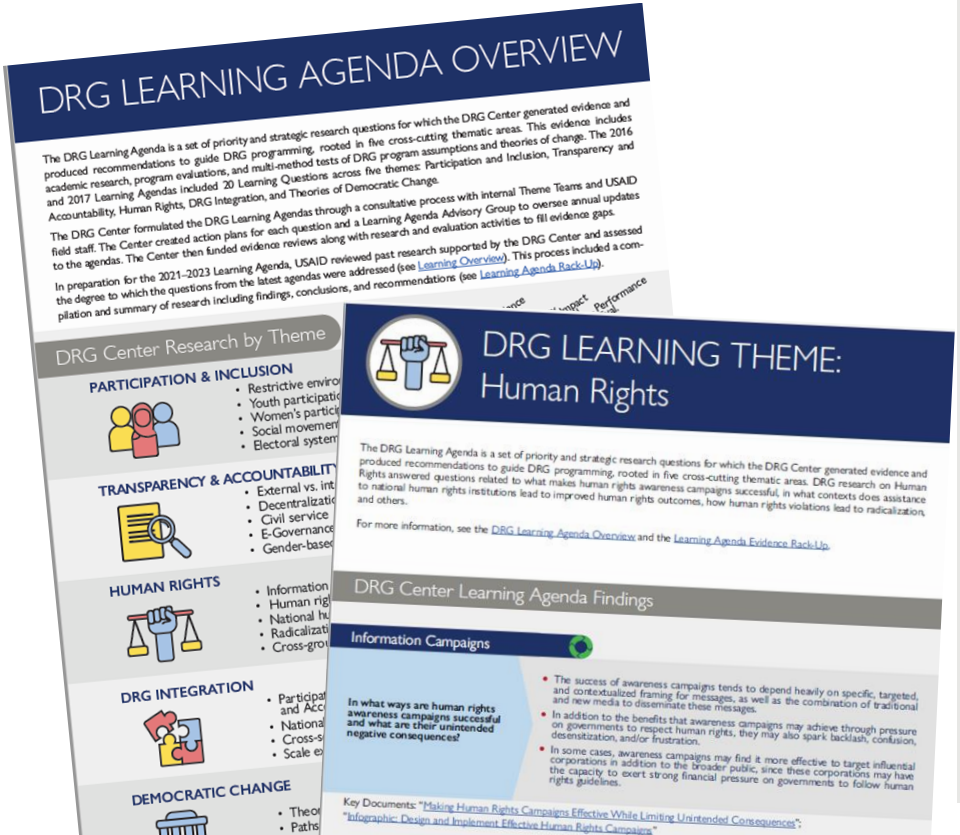
March 16, 9:00–10:30 AM Eastern

Session 4:

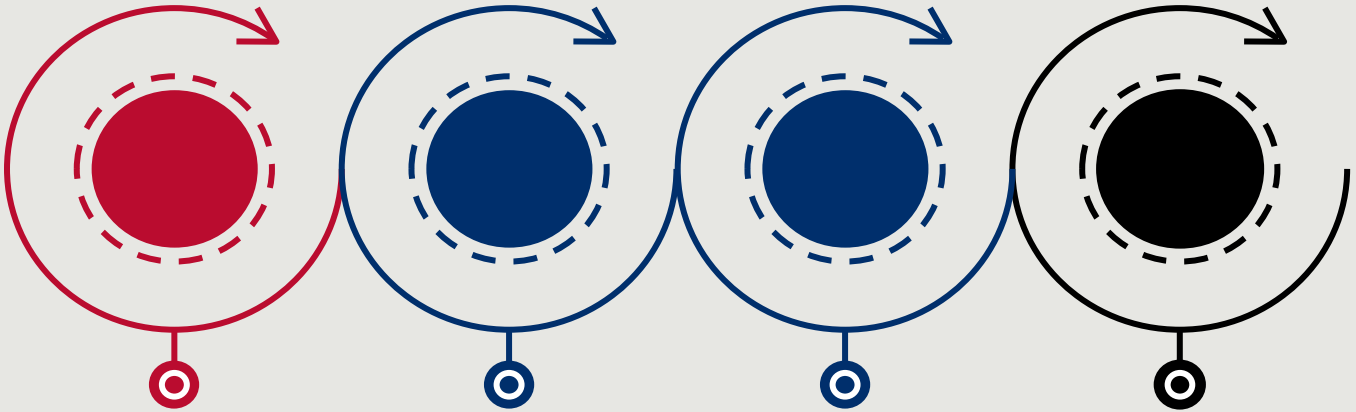
Lessons Learned from 27 DRG Impact Evaluations

March 18, 10:00–11:30 AM Eastern

DRG LEARNING AGENDA OVERVIEW



AGENDA



Welcome/ Background

Presentation

Perspectives & Reactions from the Panel

Q&A

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

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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

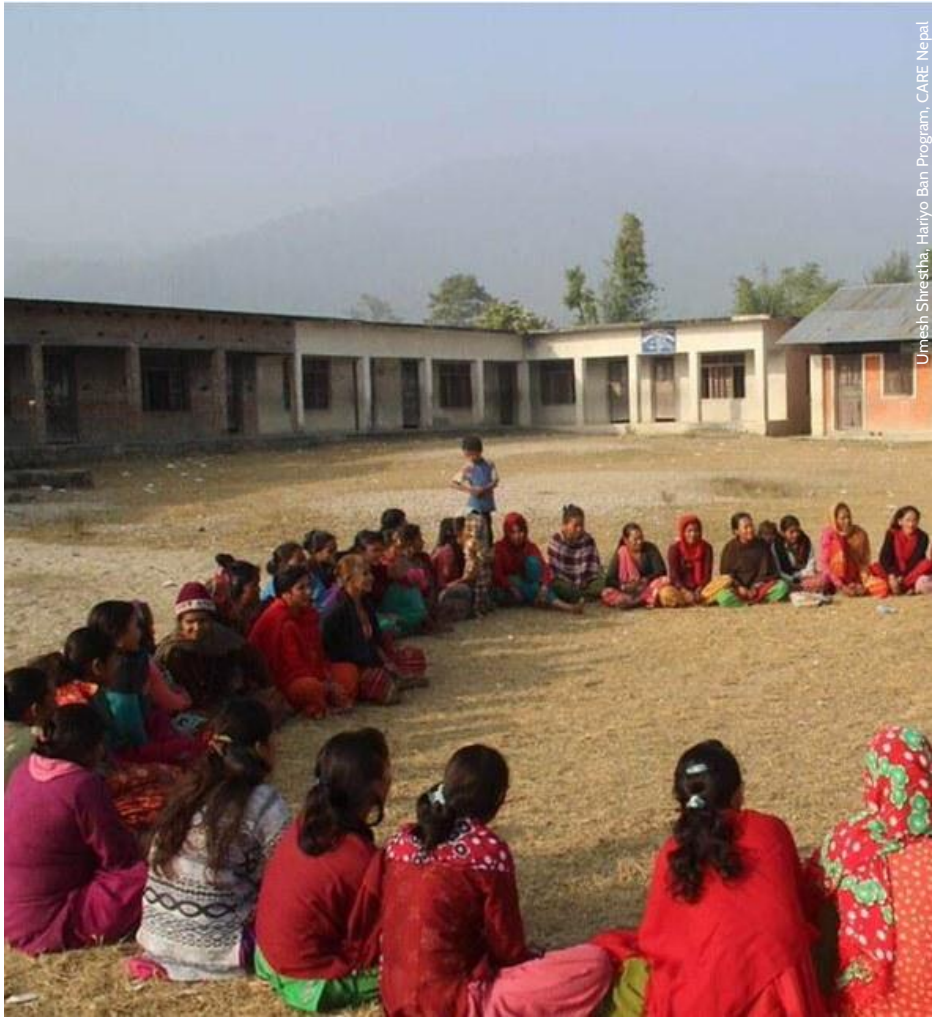
STAKEHOLDERS

- 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

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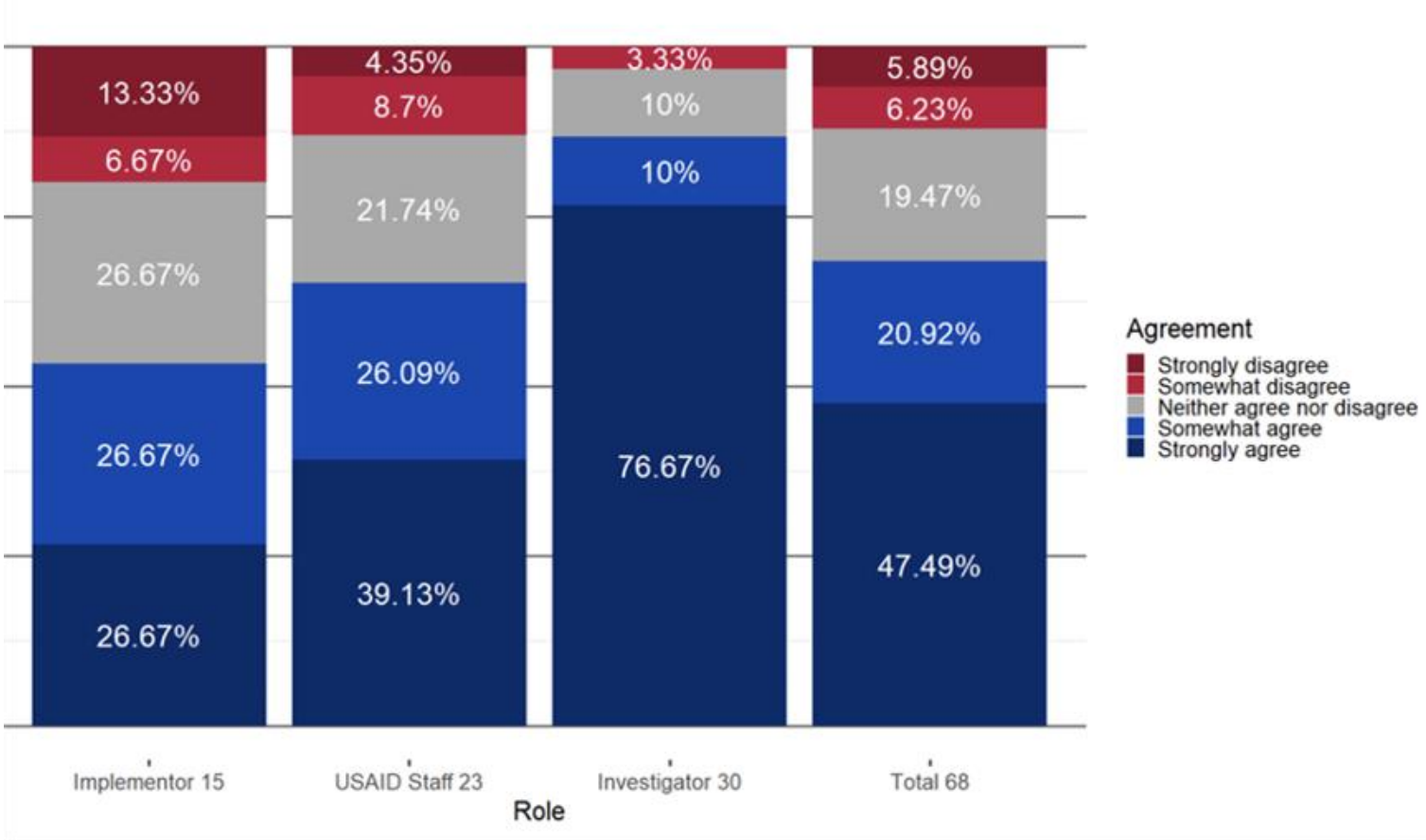
VALUE OF IEs VS. PEs



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

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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

Stephine Ogutu, Global Communities

QUESTION 4: USE

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UTILIZATION (OR LACK THEREOF)

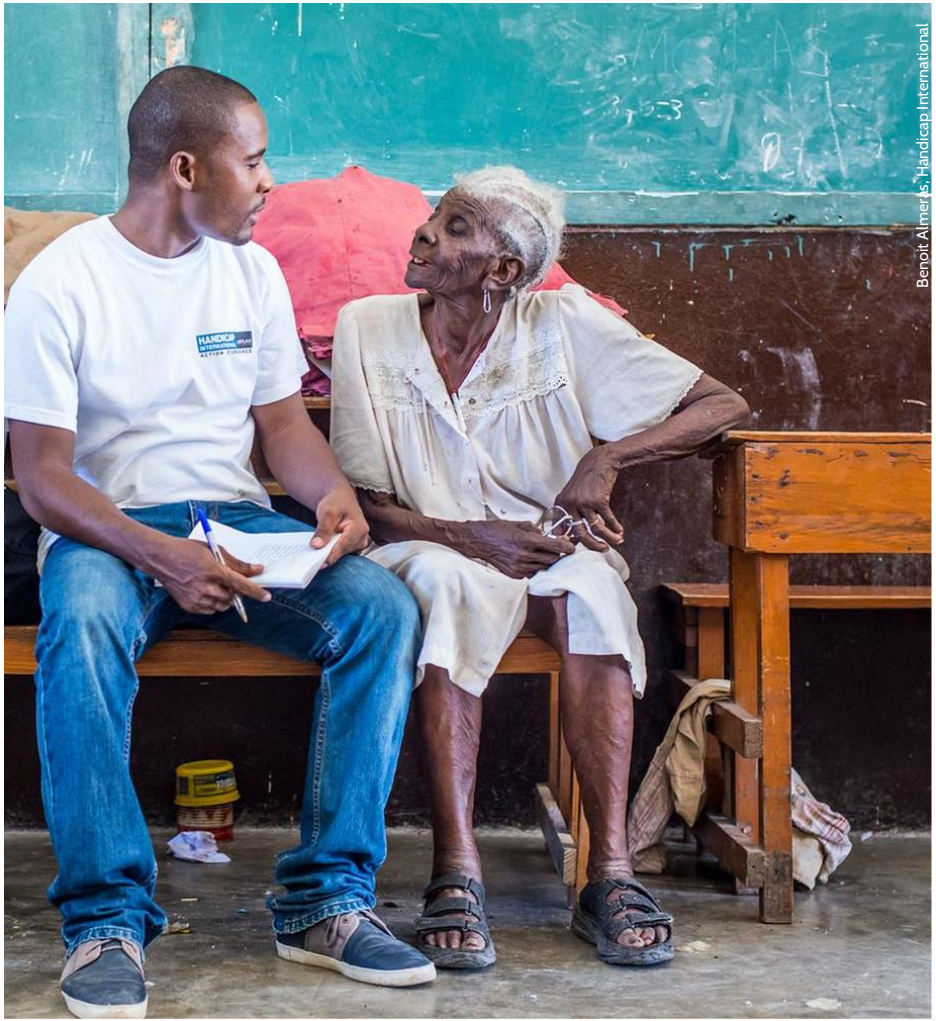
- Positive
  - IE-based "programmatic-based positive utilization" does not occur often.
  - Somewhat more "design-based positive utilization," though perhaps not much.
- Negative
  - Low use in design.
  - Unclear: negative utilization in programmatic cases.

Utilization Typology

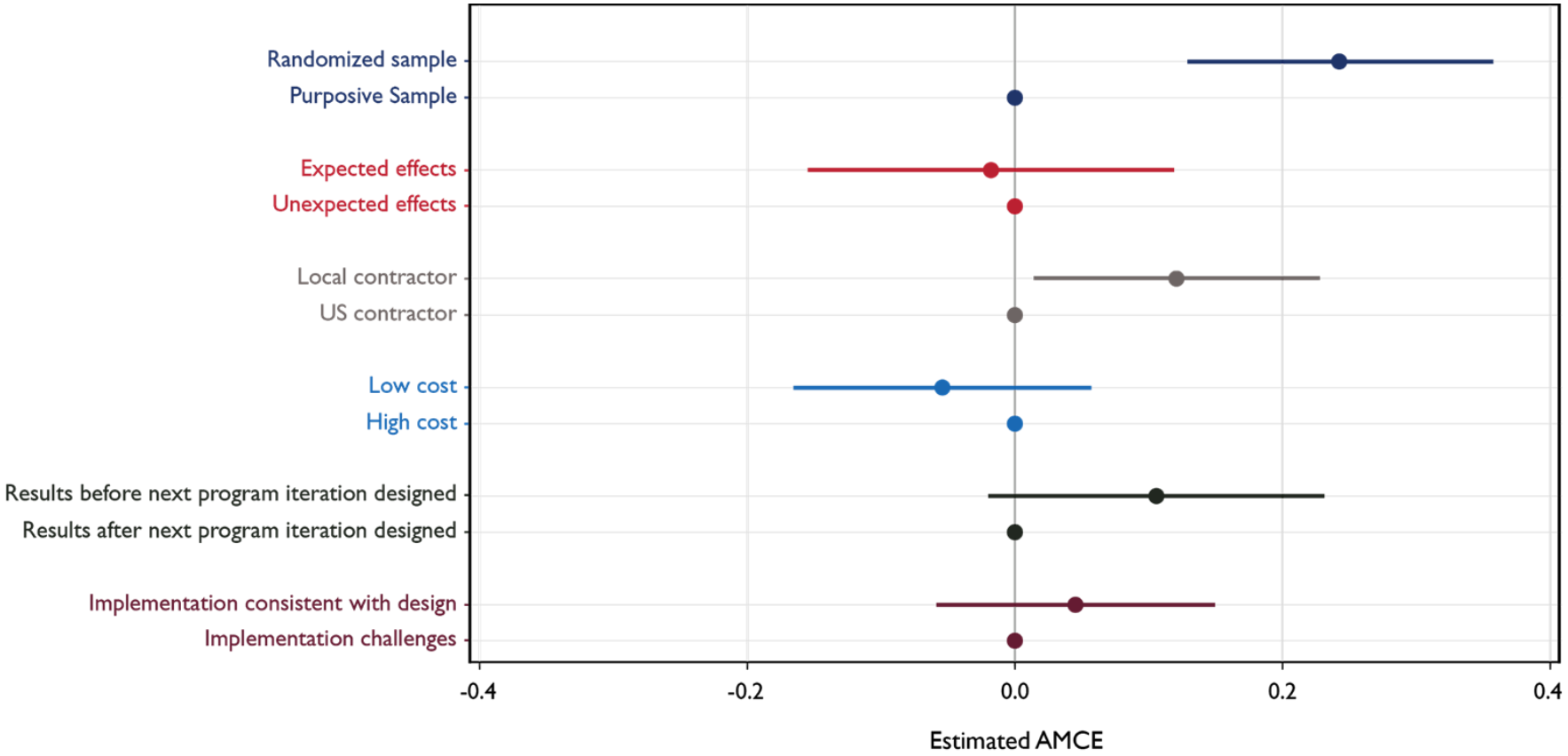
	Positive	Negative
Programmatic	Low	?
Design	Medium	Low

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

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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 PIs 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

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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.

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

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

ANNEX SLIDES

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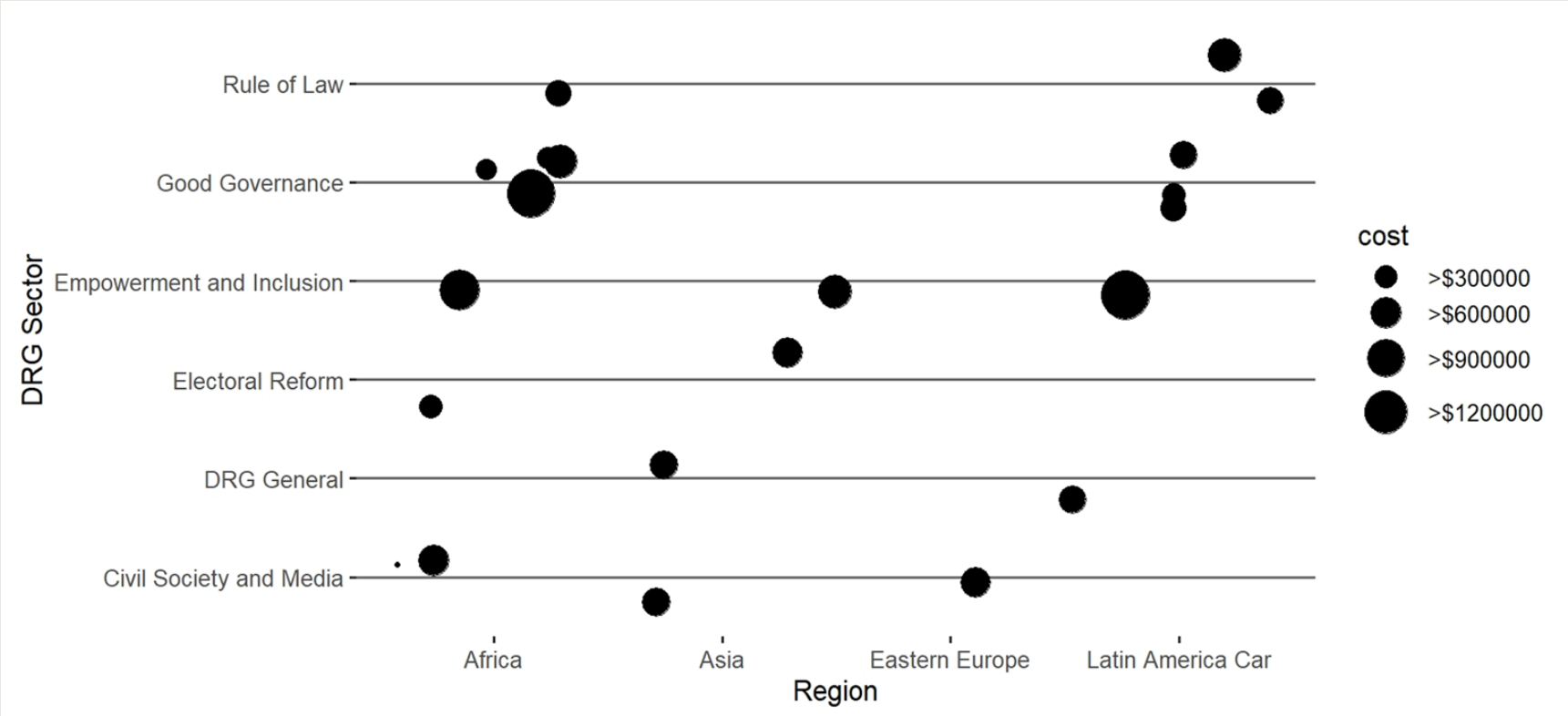
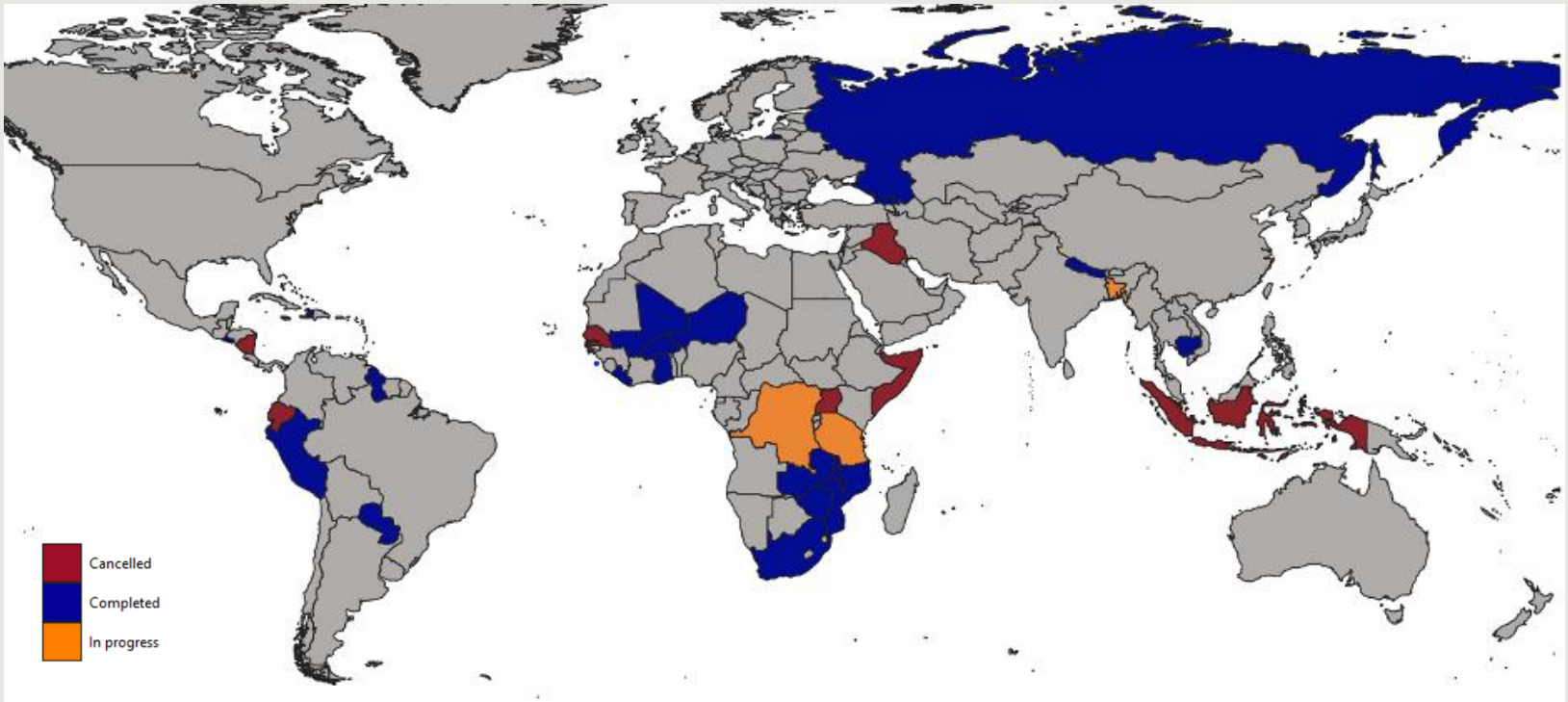
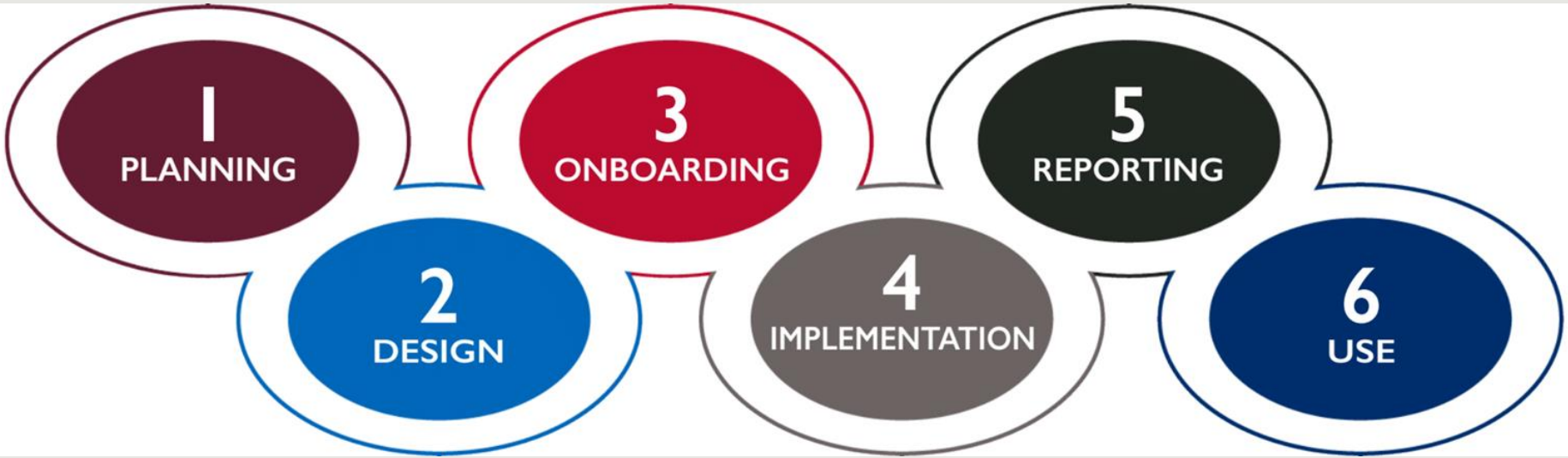
IE COSTS


DRG Sector
Rule of Law
Good Governance
Empowerment and Inclusion
Electoral Reform
DRG General
Civil Society and Media
Africa
Asia
Eastern Europe
Latin America Car
Region
cost
>$300000
>$600000
>$900000
>$1200000

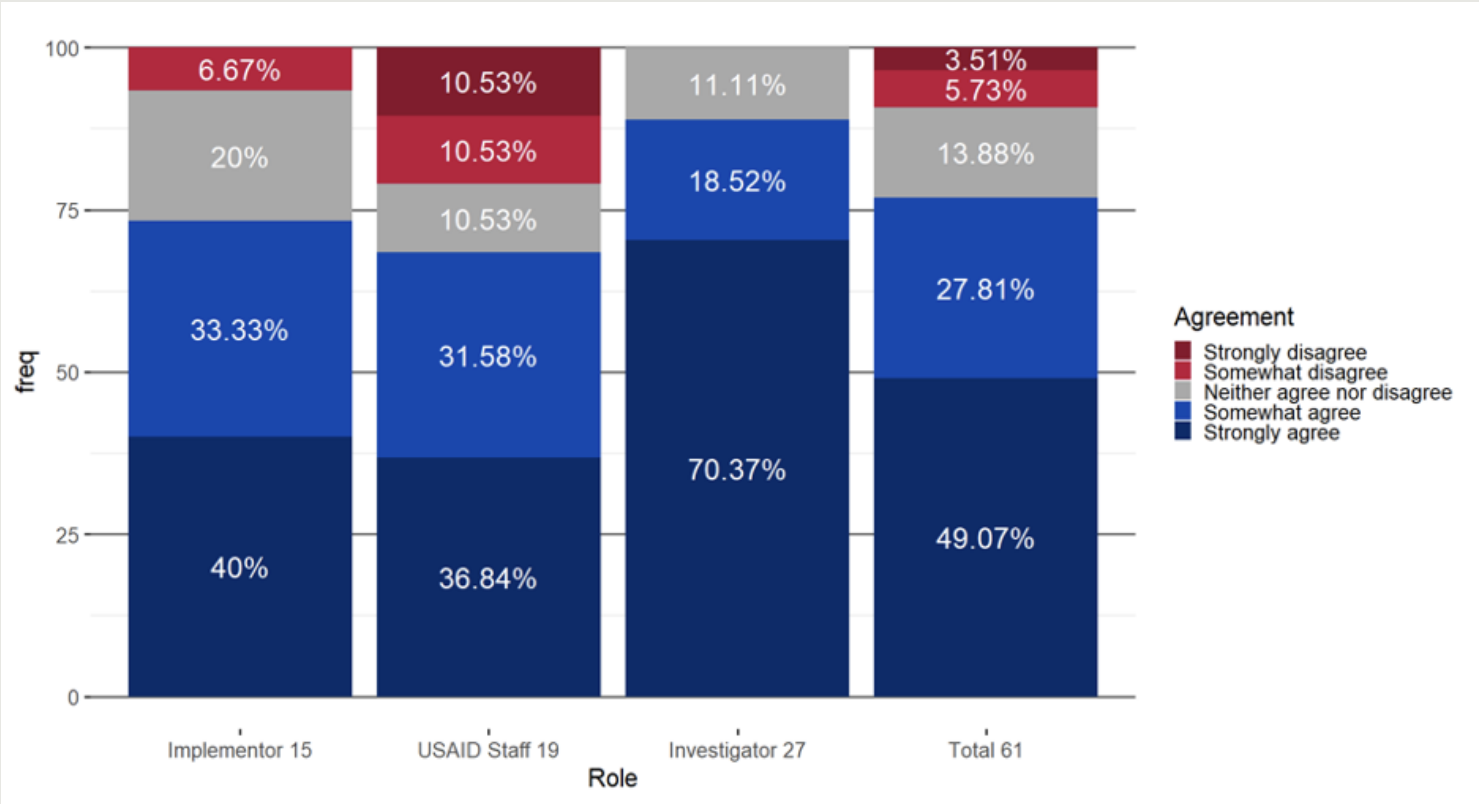
GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF PROJECTS



DRG IE STAGES



WOULD YOU ENCOURAGE OTHERS?



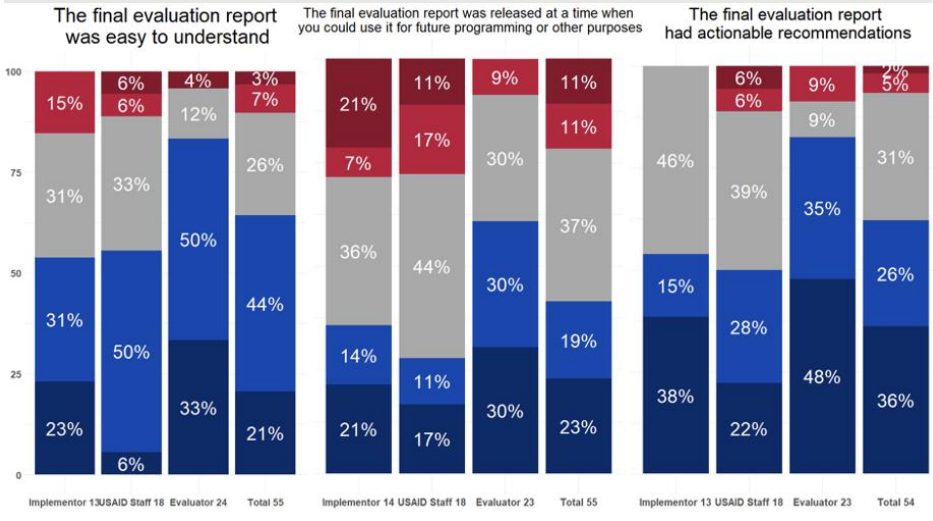
SOME INDETERMINATE FINDINGS & WHAT TO THINK

Indeterminate findings

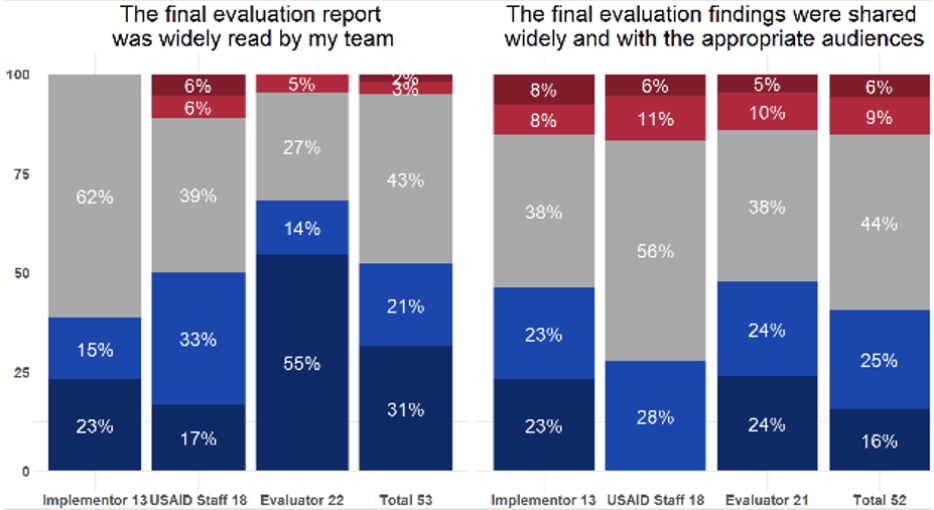
- What to make of null/mixed results?
  - Tanzania, Mali
- Weak theory of change
  - Ghana, Mali
- Evaluation design constrained the program
  - South Africa, Caribbean, Georgia, Paraguay
- Subgroup effects most important, but not sufficiently powered
  - South Africa, Peru, Zimbabwe

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.