



## M&E Thursday Talks on DME for Peace

### “Evidence for Peace: Enhancing the Evidence base on Peace- and State-building Challenges”

With

Dr. Annette Brown, Deputy Director  
of the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie)

#### **Part I: Overview**

On July 9, 2015, DME for Peace had the opportunity to host Dr. Annette Brown, Deputy Director of the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie), who gave a presentation on 3ie’s Evidence for Peace Initiative and how 3ie is collecting evidence on development approaches to peace- and state-building challenges.

The [International Initiative for Impact Evaluation \(3ie\)](#) has launched the Evidence for Peace Initiative (E4P) with the goal of enhancing the evidence base on development approaches to peace- and state-building challenges and linking this to policy design and management processes to achieve better outcomes. 3ie partnered with Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA) and the World Bank on the first phase of the initiative, through which 3ie recently launched a scoping paper that reviews the supply of and demand for rigorous evidence on peacebuilding evidence and an evidence gap map and report that present the available impact evaluations evidence in terms of interventions evaluated and outcomes measured.

#### **About the Speaker:**

Annette Brown is a Deputy Director of the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie) and heads the Washington office and all Washington office programs, which include evidence for peace, impact evaluation services, HIV and AIDS thematic windows, and others. Until May 2012, she also served as Chief Evaluation Officer, for which she directed 3ie’s evaluation office and oversaw grants management and quality assurance for all primary study research funded by 3ie. Prior to joining 3ie, Brown held executive and senior management positions at several development implementers, for which she also performed technical assistance and research in more than twenty countries across all regions. Earlier in her career, Brown was Assistant Professor of economics at Western Michigan University and held research positions at the World Bank and the Stockholm Institute for Transition Economics. She holds a Ph.D. in economics from the University of Michigan. Her current research projects are on the topics of peacebuilding, governance, HIV/AIDS prevention, and internal replication, and she serves on two boards of directors.

## Part II: Presenter's Remarks

Annette began with presenting the results from a stakeholders' survey about the effectiveness of peacebuilding interventions (Brown's presentation is available [here](#)). The survey showed that 78% of peacebuilding practitioners believe that interventions are "sometimes" to "often" or "usually" successful, while less than 30% believed that interventions "often" or "usually" work. This introduction showed the need for more evidence on the impact of peacebuilding interventions.

Considering the limited availability of funds in the peacebuilding field, the field needs to identify better ways of allocating those funds by assessing what types of interventions are meeting their overall objectives and directing the funds towards them. In order to do so, we need to measure not only the outputs of peacebuilding interventions, but also their impacts and we need to identify attribution.

Attribution is important because:

- ❖ Peacebuilding interventions operate mostly in complex contexts where it would be difficult to assign contribution
- ❖ Measuring impact rather than outputs makes assigning contribution difficult
- ❖ The non-linearity of the outcomes of interventions (fluctuating from bad to good, or vice versa) makes assigning contribution difficult
- ❖ Conducting cost-effectiveness analysis is challenging if the net impact of a given intervention is not measured
- ❖ There is a need for counterfactual analysis to ensure an intervention did not cause harm

3ie has written a scoping paper on peacebuilding interventions. The focus of this paper is to identify the evidence base for peacebuilding interventions; this evidence base can be drawn from impact evaluations, which focus on measuring impact with attribution. 3ie uses a tool called the Evidence Gap Map to gather this data. This tool helps identify existing clusters of evidence to conduct synthesis research and gives an overview of interventions across multiple contexts. The map also shows the existing gaps in evidence which allow us to prioritize where we want to invest in future impact evaluations. The map gives practitioners easy access to the studies that are being mapped, the methods used, and most importantly, the findings.

### **The Evidence Gap Map (EGM) Framework:**

The EGM is a matrix. The rows list different intervention types or categories where interventions are grouped according to their theories of change. The columns are different categories of output, outcome, impact measurements or indicators. Depending on what the topic of the map is, the categories are organized according to the causal chain keeping in mind that different interventions have different causal chains.

The framework is populated by having an impact evaluation in a cell. That evaluation gives us an effect size on that intervention on that particular outcome. Ideally, there will be multiple studies in each cell and the same study can appear in multiple rows if it measures different interventions

or a program that combines different interventions. Also, a study can appear in different columns if it measures indicators in different outcome groupings. In the map, 3ie tries to crosshatch some cells (interventions) for which there are no theories of change, because we don't want the map to imply that there is an evidence gap in a place where we don't expect that intervention to have that outcome.

The map does not synthesize evidence. So, when there is a dark cell, that doesn't mean that there is a lot of evidence in favor of that intervention against that outcome, it only means that there is a lot of evidence regarding it. **Thus, the responsibility of the map user is to go look into those studies, assess the relevance of those studies to their (users) context, and then decide how to synthesize that evidence.**

### **The Process of Building EGM:**

- ❖ Build framework
- ❖ Develop search and screening protocol
- ❖ Conduct search
- ❖ Screen for inclusion
- ❖ Extract data and populate
- ❖ Consult and crosshatch
- ❖ Link to summaries
- ❖ Present online

### **Evidence for Peacebuilding Gap Map (E4P):**

Interventions are grouped according to the new deal indicators based on stakeholders' request as this gives the stakeholders the chance to use the map as reference to help strategize for future peacebuilding objectives.

Outcomes are grouped according to the level of aggregation at which the outcome is measured: individual level outcomes, societal level outcomes, and peacebuilding outcomes.

### **Functionality:**

If you hover over any cell in the map, you will get a comment box that lists each study in the cell, information about the author, title, country, and year of publication, which gives you an idea about the cluster of evidence in that cell. In the excel version of the map, you can go to separate work sheets for each intervention that lists hyperlinks to all of the studies under that intervention. The hyperlinks go to the impact evaluation repository on the 3ie website. This repository has records for each one of the studies and a link to the original source of the study. All studies in the repository include written summaries of methods and results, which also gives you an idea on what evidence is included in the study.

The map provided some surprising findings regarding the availability of evidence to certain interventions; for example, large number of trial studies looking into psychological outcomes

was found regarding psychosocial interventions in conflict affected areas of low or middle income countries.

The map provides evidence under different categories, including:

- ❖ **Evidence by intervention:** shows how much evidence there is for each of the intervention rows accumulating across the columns. The *darker bars* (in the figure) represent the number of impact evaluations available (*evidence*), while the *lighter bar represents the reoccurrence of evidence*. For example, under this particular category, the map shows that there's a lot of evidence for demand-side governance and civil society interventions (which includes quick impact grants), reconciliation and services to victims interventions (which includes psychological interventions), and community-driven development. It also shows that there is no evidence whatsoever for security sector reform interventions, civil police reform interventions, or natural resource management intervention.
- ❖ **Evidence by outcome:** shows that most impact evaluation studies measure individual-level outcomes, and very few measure peace outcomes. This category shows that only 20 out of the 78 impact evaluation studies try to measure outcomes that are indicators of peace or conflict.
- ❖ **Evidence by country:** shows that there is a lot of evidence regarding Liberia, Afghanistan (almost all of the studies are measuring some aspect of the national solidarity program), Burundi, Uganda and Rwanda, etc. This category shows that there is at least one study for each country.
- ❖ **Evidence by region:** shows that Sub-Saharan Africa has more than half the studies.
- ❖ **Evidence by method:** shows that most studies used some sort of RCT methodology.
- ❖ **Other Considerations:** there are three columns in the map that show if the study had an effect specific for youth, men or women, and/or whether it provides any cost-effectiveness considerations (very few studies actually provide any data on cost-effectiveness).

### Conclusions:

- ❖ Attribution is especially important for understanding intervention impacts in conflict-affected situations
- ❖ Impact evaluations are possible and a base of evidence is starting to form.
- ❖ However, still very few intervention categories with sufficient studies for comparison.
- ❖ Very few studies attempt to measure peace and violence impacts.

### Evidence gap map co-authors:

- ❖ Drew B. Cameron
- ❖ Anjini Mishra
- ❖ Mario Picon
- ❖ Hisham Esper
- ❖ Flor Calvo

❖ Katia Peterson

### Scoping paper co-authors:

- ❖ Faith McCollister
- ❖ Drew B. Cameron
- ❖ Jennifer Ludwig

## Part III: Question & Answer

**Melanie Kawano-Chiu (moderator):** *Why do you think there's more evidence regarding certain intervention categories?*

**Annette:** This is largely explained by the field from which those interventions are coming. Psychosocial intervention or interventions against HIV for example come from fields of psychology and epidemiology where experimental studies are usually conducted and evaluated and practitioners are used to the methodology. Thus, those practitioners bring this same methodology (mostly RCTs) into the new settings (intervention settings) and that's why we have more evidence. As for interventions in the community driven development category, though they are complex interventions that are challenging to evaluate, the large funds that go into them made their evaluation a necessity to assess whether those expensive interventions are making any change and should be continued or not.

**Katy:** *I am surprised that demining SS6 and SSR interventions have no evidence in the map, though I know of a few studies that assess the impact of such interventions. Could you explain the criteria of the impact evaluations the gap map uses?*

**Annette:** the map uses studies that are considered impact evaluations according to 3ie's definition of the term. We are looking for studies that measure net impact using some kind of counterfactual method. RCT is the best known method that counts as an impact evaluation. We also include experimental evaluation and quasi-experimental. We want to understand what happens to the beneficiaries under a certain program against what would've happened to them without the program. The map gives only one kind of evidence, there is a lot of other types of evidence available out there.

**Bruce Haener:** *Why do you think contribution analysis cannot effectively examine negative outcomes? This is contrary to my experience.*

**Annette:** When an intervention is operating somewhere and the situation there gets worse two years into the life of the program, most practitioners won't believe that their intervention has increased the negativity in the context. Most would believe that if anything the intervention must have decreased the negative effects, but they wouldn't have a proof of that. On the other hand, if the situation was getting worse and practitioners did indeed believe that their intervention contributed to that, what proof do they have that the program is not working? When practitioners

use a counterfactual method they will have the data they need to clearly determine whether their intervention contributed, or didn't contribute, to the negative effects in any given context.

**Bruce Haener:** *Isn't difficult to set up a counterfactual for an unintended negative outcome?*

**Annette:** When you are thinking about the effects that you want your intervention to have, you would be able to predict or think about some of the negative effects that might occur as well, and a counterfactual helps you identify those negative effects.

**Melanie Kawano-Chiu:** *Don't impact evaluations, like most evaluations, end up being rigid? Do they offer any flexibility?*

**Annette:** Yes, they actually do offer flexibility. If you don't have a baseline and you have a counterfactual, you can measure your end line to the counterfactual. If for any reason the baseline is not valid anymore (wrong questions have been asked in it), you can also measure your end line against the counterfactual. However, doing an impact evaluation does not rule out the option of collecting other kinds of data at other points in time, or that you should include data it in the discussion about the causal chain. You only need to be careful about what data and which comparisons you are referring to when you are making causal inferences.

**Ricardo:** *In the second edition of their book Real World Evaluation, Jimmy Rugh and Michael Bamberger estimate that experimental methods RCTs are applicable in 5% of development interventions and quasi-experimental are appropriate in 10-25% of interventions. Your study suggests that these figures are wrong, can you comment?*

**Annette:** I am not familiar with what applicable and appropriate mean in the particular context of the book. What I would say is that impact evaluations are not the answer to all impact or research questions. They are the answer to some, like when we need to have a proof of concept, or to test an innovative idea. In certain intervention types, like SSR, impact evaluations can assess certain aspects of the intervention to provide specific information only.

Please continue the discussion on the Thursday Talk page  
[www.dmeforpeace.org/discuss/forums/thursday-talks](http://www.dmeforpeace.org/discuss/forums/thursday-talks)



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