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# USAID's Strategic Impact Evaluations: "LAC Reads" and E3/ED's "Reading and Access"



Presentation at USAID's Global Education  
Summit  
Washington, D.C.  
November 2, 2015

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## LAC Reads Evaluation Mandate

- **Rigorously evaluate interventions aimed at improving early grade reading to inform the evidence base in the region, and globally**
- **Rigorously evaluate interventions aimed at improving access to education in conflict settings to inform the evidence base**
- **Methods:**
  - Randomized control trials (RCTs) or quasi-experimental designs (QEDs)
  - Cost-effectiveness estimates for those interventions with demonstrated impact
- **Capacity building of local research partners and other stakeholders**



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## Strategic identification of evaluation opportunities

- **USAID's LAC team has identified key learning opportunities in collaboration with USAID/Missions**
- **Learning from program adaptations directed at key underserved groups (such as indigenous populations, at risk youth, and out of school youth)**
- **Programs with pedagogical and community outreach components: fostering a culture of reading and increasing time on task**
- **Programs designed around existing national testing initiatives, with appropriate supports to teachers in using test results**



## LAC Reads Evaluation (2012-2017)

- **4 RCT evaluations designed and in various stages of implementation in four countries**
  - Leer Juntos, Aprender Juntos (Peru, Guatemala: year 3)
  - Amazonia Lee (Peru: year 2)
  - Data-Driven Instruction: Formative and End of Grade Assessments (Honduras: year 2)
  - Espacios para Crecer (Nicaragua: year 2)
- **1 impact evaluation in the design stage**
  - Youth workforce development in conflict areas (El Salvador)



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# LAC Reads Impact Evaluation Learning Agenda

- **Leer Juntos, Aprender Juntos (Peru-Quechua speaking departments, Guatemala (K'iche speaking department))**
  - What is the impact of the **teacher training and support (five skills)** component of Leer Juntos/Aprender Juntos on early grade reading and other outcomes?
  - What is the impact of the **community action** component of Leer Juntos/Aprender Juntos on early grade reading and other outcomes?



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# LAC Reads Impact Evaluation Learning Agenda (cont'd.)

- **Data-Driven Instruction: Formative and End of Grade Assessments (Honduras)**
  - **Impact:**
    - What impact does **providing feedback on end of grade test results and pedagogical support for teachers** have on student learning?
    - What added impact does **providing formative assessment materials and pedagogical support for teachers** have on student learning?



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## LAC Reads Impact Evaluation Learning Agenda (cont'd.)

- **Spaces to Grow/Espacios para Crecer (Nicaragua, Atlantic Coast)**
  - **Impact:**
    - What impact does the **Espacios para Crecer (child development and academic leveling with a focus on reading)**, intervention have on early grade reading, education, and security related outcomes for at risk students and children out of school?



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## **Data Collection Approaches to Address Research Questions**

- **Student assessments in Spanish, Quecha, K'iche, Kriol, Miskito (emerging literacy, EGRA)**
- **Classroom observations (teaching practices, language use, gender focus)**
- **Teacher surveys**
- **Household surveys**
- **Community level**
- **Qualitative and quantitative approaches**



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## Balancing Internal and External Validity

- **Leer Juntos, Aprender Juntos: Findings relevant for other countries where many children arrive at school without being fluent in official language; children are followed from 1st to 3rd and 4th grade (extremely small schools excluded)**
- **Formative and Summative Assessment (Honduras): An opportunity to rigorously test formative and summative assessment supports in selected municipalities, many with security concerns, lower performing schools, urban and rural. Children are followed from 1st to 3rd grade**



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## Balancing Internal and External Validity (cont'd.)

- **Espacios para Crecer (Nicaragua):** The first rigorous evaluation of a program being implemented in multiple countries in the region. Nicaragua context: multilingual communities on the Atlantic Coast, many with security concerns; at risk students eligible to participate in EpCs; 1st -3rd graders, and dropouts (8-14 years old)



# Implications for Program Implementation

- **Requires active engagement of implementing partner (often at the busiest time when preparing for program implementation):**
  - **Sharing the program’s underlying theory of change with evaluators**
  - **Recruitment (and over-recruitment of eligible participants)**
  - **Input into data collection instruments and analytic products**
  - **Sometimes changes to program implementation timeline**
- **Tension between recruitment of a counterfactual and achieving programmatic targets**
- **Resource implications for implementing partners**



## Elements for Success

- **Strong leadership at USAID LAC/RSD and USAID Mission commitment to evaluation has been critical in helping us to manage “bumps in the road”**
- **Flexibility in interpretation of implementing partners’ contractual requirements related to numbers of beneficiaries served is key**
- **Flexibility in evaluation contracts and implementing partners’ agreements to cover the costs associated with cooperating with evaluation needs is critical**
- **Implementing partners’ openness and willingness to support evaluation mandate critical**
- **Constant communication with all stakeholders around key moments of the evaluation is essential**



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## For More Information

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