

Evaluating the Impact of Gender Policies – Opportunities for RCTs

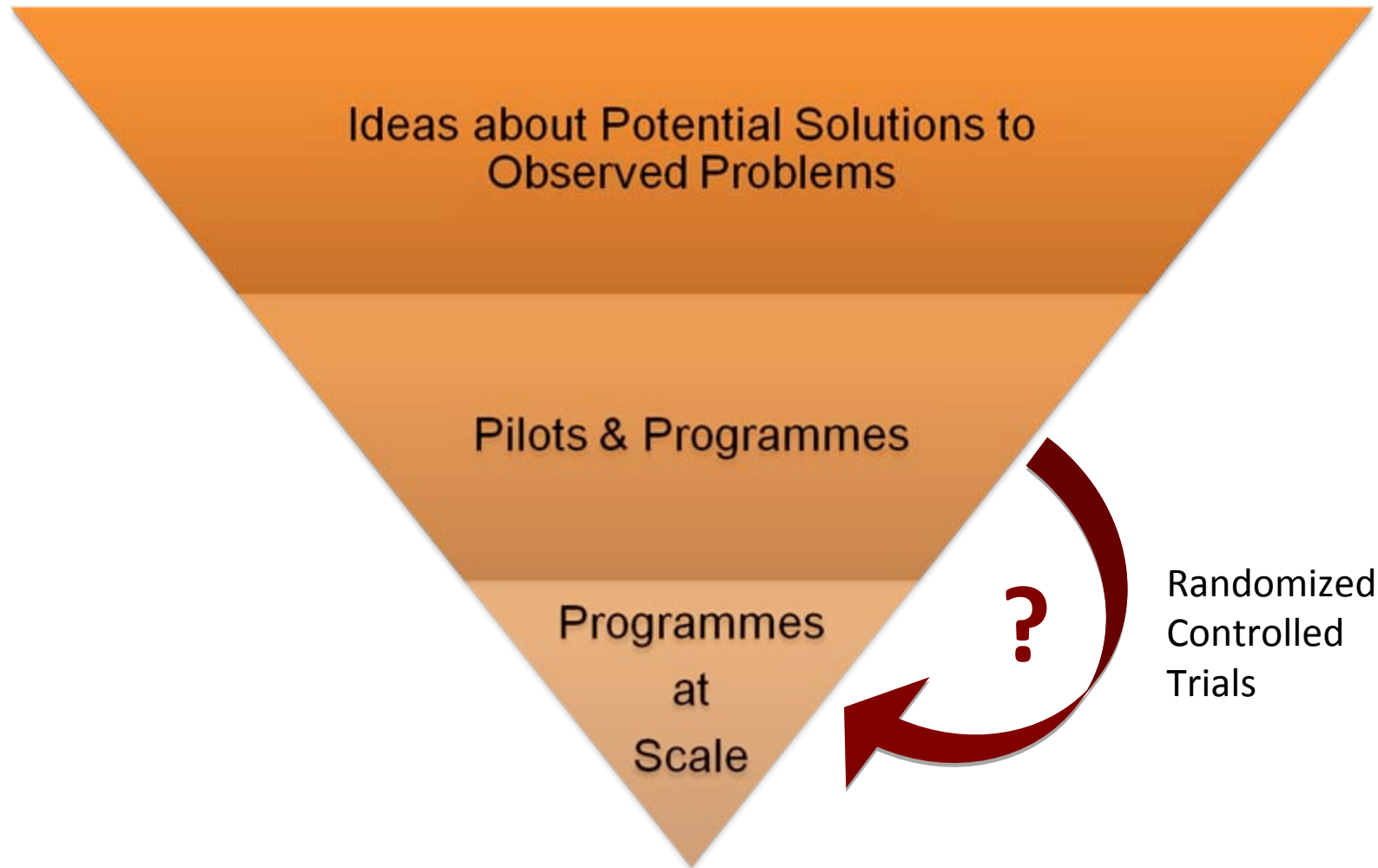
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Presentation Overview

- ❖ Impact Evaluation within an M&E system
- ❖ Blueprint for a simple RCT
- ❖ Three examples from South Asia
- ❖ What we can do with Rigorous Impact Evaluations

RCTs work alongside other M&E tools



The Specific Challenge for Impact Evaluation

- ❖ Impact evaluation seeks to find out if a programme or policy **caused** any change for the people it was intended to serve.
- ❖ To do this well, we need to **compare** what happened to people who received a programme with **what would have happened to the same people over the same time period** without the programme.
 - It is impossible to do! So we need an *estimate of what would have happened*.
- ❖ The most rigorous evidence gets the estimate closest to the truth.
 - “Random assignment” creates groups of people that are the same on average.
 - The flip of a coin rather than personal characteristics, individual opportunities, etc. determines who gets the programme.
 - Differences we observe later can be safely attributed to the program.
- ❖ Sometimes random assignment happens naturally and sometimes it has to be created.

Blueprint for a Simple RCT

- ❖ Outline a Theory of Change or Logical Framework (Inputs → Outputs → Outcomes)
- ❖ Determine Sample Size & Select Sample
- ❖ Conduct “Baseline” Survey
- ❖ Randomly Assign Individuals to Groups (Treatment or Comparison)
- ❖ Implement Program
- ❖ Conduct “Endline” Survey
- ❖ Calculate Difference in Outcome Variable between Groups
- ❖ ...Use Results

Examples of Research and Areas of Opportunity

❖ Categorized by approach or tool:

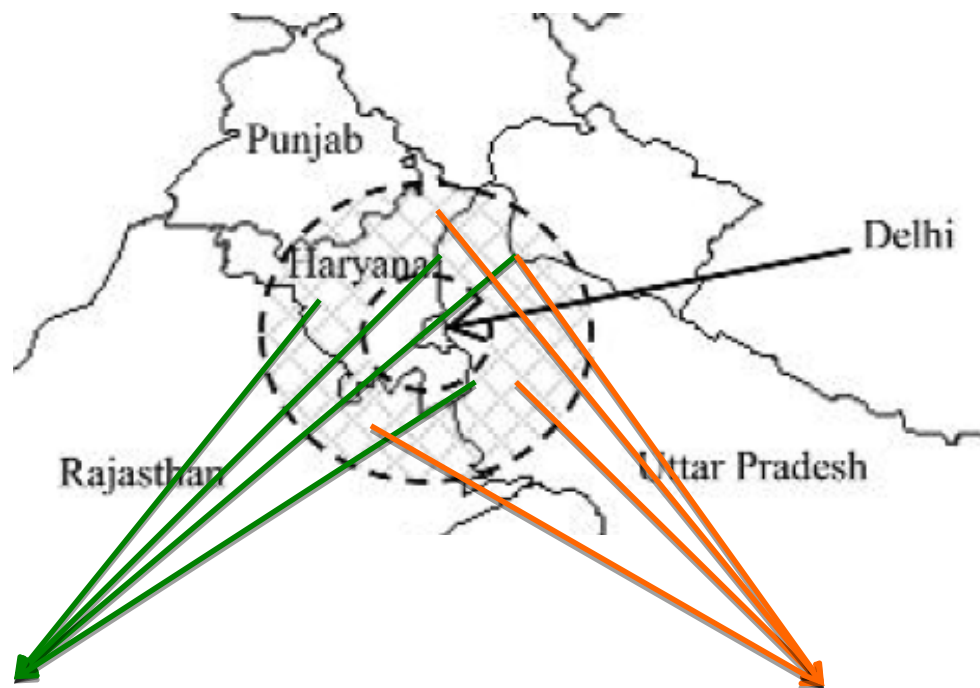
- Increasing economic or political opportunities
- Giving incentives or disincentives
- Improving and accessing the external environment
- Changing attitudes toward girls and women (and girls' and women's attitudes about themselves)

Example 1: Increasing Economic Opportunities

- ❖ J-PAL affiliate Jensen studied the impact of job opportunities for young women in northern India.
- ❖ **Partner:** Management Development Institute
- ❖ **Theory of change:** With more opportunities for women to earn income, young women will:
 - Invest more in job-relevant skills
 - Delay marriage and childbirth (due to change in opportunity costs)

Evaluation Design

Sample: 160 villages where BPO recruiters do not normally go because they are a little far from Delhi



T: Send BPO recruiters to the village

C: Do nothing new

Results

The recruiting services helped young women find jobs.

- Women aged 18 to 24 in treatment villages were 4.6 percentage points more likely to be employed in the BPO sector than their peers in the comparison villages
- 2.4 percentage points more likely to work at all for pay outside the home

Parents invested more in their daughters' education & nutrition/health.

- 5 percentage point increase in school enrollment for girls.
- It also increased girls' body mass index (BMI).

Young women's career aspirations changed.

- Women from treatment villages expressed a greater desire to work for pay throughout their lives, even long after marriage and childbirth.

Young women significantly delayed marriage and childbearing.

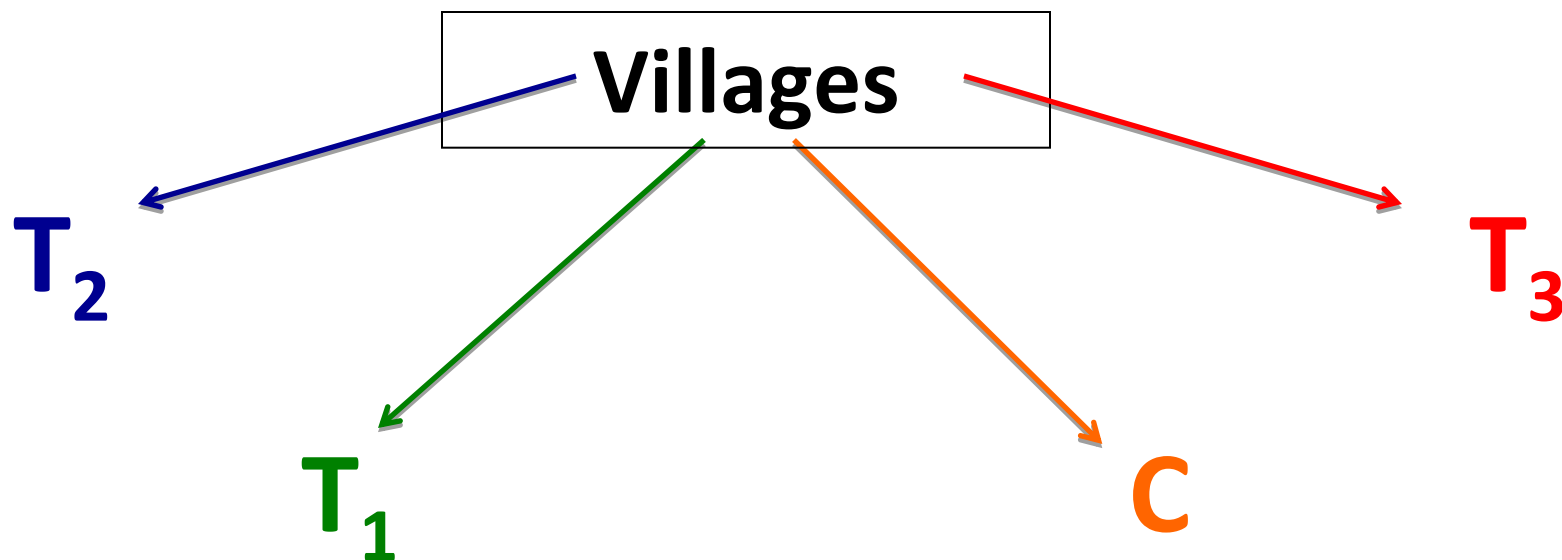
- 5 to 6 percentage points less likely to get married or to have given birth over the three-year period of the intervention.

Example 2: Giving Incentives or Disincentives

- ❖ In Bangladesh, affiliates Field & Glennerster are studying the impact of a program that gives incentives to delay marriage until the legal age.
- ❖ **Partner:** Save the Children
- ❖ **Theory of change:** compensating families for the extra dowry they would have to pay will allow them to delay their daughters' marriage.
- ❖ **Target Population:** 15-17 year olds

Evaluation Design

- ❖ **Sample:** 460 villages
- ❖ **Random Assignment:** 307 villages have been randomly selected to receive one of four intervention packages. The remaining 153 villages will serve as the comparison group.



Incentive Packages

❖ **Group 1 – Status Quo**

- *Basic*: literacy and numeracy training or study support along with social competency training on health, rights, and general negotiation and social skills.

❖ **Group 2**

- *Livelihoods*: basic + entrepreneurial and budgeting skills.

❖ **Group 3**

- *Full*: livelihoods + approximately 16 liters of cooking oil per year, on the condition that the girl remains unmarried until the legal age of 18.

❖ **Group 4**

- *Delayed marriage*: only the cooking oil.

❖ This study is ongoing.

Example 3: Improving & Accessing the External Environment

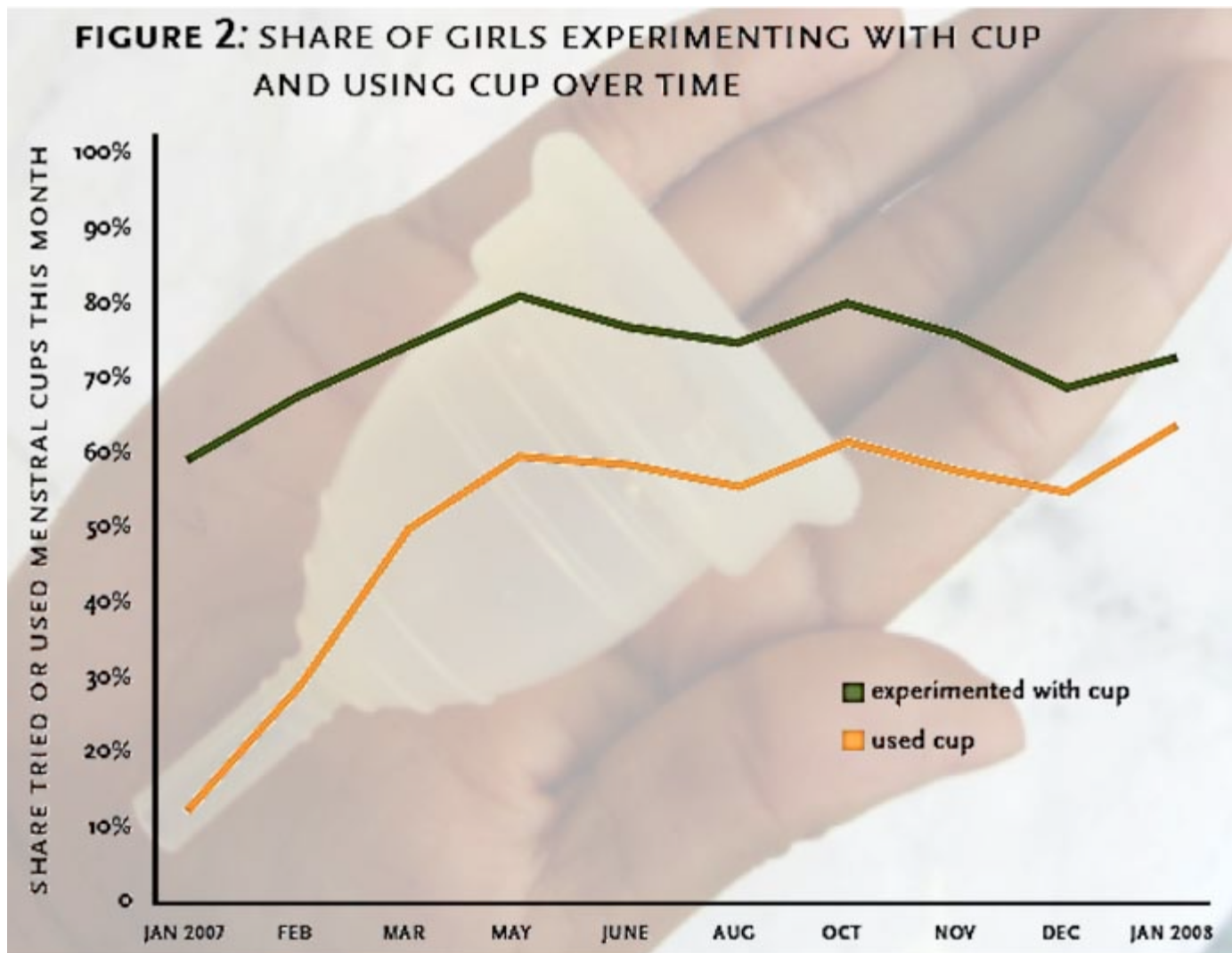
- ❖ Affiliates Oster & Thornton studied the impact of giving menstrual cups to adolescent girls in Nepal.
 - According to some estimates girls were missing 10% to 20% of schooldays because of menstruation.
- ❖ **Partner:** Institute for Social and Environmental Research - Nepal
- ❖ **Theory of change:** Lack of convenient hygiene products makes menstruation a barrier to education. Providing easily cleaned, reusable technology will allow girls to attend more and learn more.
- ❖ **Target Population:** 7th and 8th standard girls & their mothers

Evaluation Design

- ❖ **Sample:** 198 adolescent girls from 4 schools & their mothers
- ❖ **Random Assignment:** After a meeting and discussion, the organizers held a lottery and some of the girls were later given free menstrual cups.



Results : Usage



Results: Education & Time Use

School attendance data came from three sources

- Girls' reports in time-use diaries and calendars they kept for the study
- School attendance records
- Surprise visits to schools

Cup did not reduce amount of school missed due to menstruation!

- On days when they were not menstruating, girls attended school 85.7 percent of the time, compared to 83 percent of the time during their periods.
- Only about ½ day per year school missed due to menstruation.

Treatment group girls spent less time on laundry.

No effect on other daily activities, self-reported gynecological infections, or self-esteem indicators.

Illustrates Importance of Evaluating “Common Sense” Policies

- ❖ There was broad consensus on the idea that menstrual hygiene was a barrier to education.
- ❖ Impact evaluation uncovered a different reality.
- ❖ Missing school because of menstruation was itself a small problem.

Conclusion: Rigorous Impact Evaluation Benefits

- ❖ There are potentially so many ways to improve outcomes for girls and women...
- ❖ Rigorous evidence helps establish which are the most cost effective and should be prioritized.
- ❖ Can also uncover myths and help us avoid putting resources into solutions that sound very reasonable to all of us but do not work for girls or women.

Thank You!