

ETF THEMATIC STUDY ALMP EFFECTIVENESS IN FRAGILE AND POST-CONFLICT CONTEXTS

KEY FINDINGS

EAMONN DAVERN
BRUSSELS JUNE 26TH 2024



Objectives of Report

- Aim to provide an overview of ALMP (impact) evaluations .
- Focus on ETF partnership countries and other countries with fragile socio-economic contexts.
- Focus of study
 - Evaluation objectives (key performance impact questions, information on measures or services evaluated, target groups).
 - Applied research design (experimental and quasi-experimental design) and data collection tools.
 - Usage of evaluation results obtained within the policy cycle.
 - Issues that limit the quality and sustainability of (impact) evaluations and challenges.

Definition of Fragile Contexts for the purposes of the Report

- Areas with sudden or slow onset emergencies , conflicts, violent situations, forced displacement, disasters (manmade and natural) , public health emergencies (eg pandemics), and protracted and recurrent crises or any combination of these – definition builds upon OECD fragility context/dimensions identified in 2022 States of Fragility report.
 - Economic
 - Environmental
 - Political
 - Security
 - Society
 - Human

Evaluation Objectives and Organization

- ALMP impact evaluations are aimed at assessing the effectiveness, efficiency, and impact of programmes.
- Evaluations aim to improve design and implementation of programmes and justify use of public resources. In fragile context impact evaluation should investigate both what works, and for whom and why?
- Where possible monitoring and evaluation should enable design , targeting , and implementation on the basis of evidence .
- Complex evaluation may be necessary to mirror complex realities and enhance understanding of institutional, structural, and person-related barriers .
- Evaluation can require high levels of expertise

Institutional Factors

- In a few countries institutions have developed capacity to commission evaluation studies or to implement improved monitoring.
- In most fragile country contexts international organizations have been commissioned to organize evaluation or have proceeded to evaluate programmes which they have funded.
- In some other fragile country contexts international organizations provide methodological support (training, advice) to public institutions managing the evaluations.
- Outsourcing evaluations requires knowledge of applied methodologies amongst contracting partners.
- Government agencies may lack in-house expertise.
- International organizations may have their own methodological preferences .
- In practice good and transparent relationships are required on the part of all stakeholders involved in the evaluation process.
- Making evaluation results publicly available enhances transparency and may incentivise organizations to focus on good implementation.
- Making use of non-published evaluation results can also be very important .

Methodology, applied research design and data collection tools

- Chosen methodology depends upon; available resources, the implementation framework, the size of a programme, and evaluation objectives.
- Counterfactual evaluation studies are rare in fragile socio-economic environments, where utilized experimental and quasi-experimental approaches are most commonly used.
- Resources will determine which methods can be chosen and how well the method can be implemented .
- Counterfactual evaluations require large sample sizes and tend to be used in larger studies funded by international organizations, institutions without international support tend to opt for less complex approaches.
- Capacity building is the key , so trust between international experts, policy makers, and implementers is beneficial for all involved parties.

Methodology, applied research design and data collection contd

- Defining indicators and key outcome indicators and relevant variables requires good data sources , eg household surveys, mature monitoring systems, administrative data , and skilled staff to conduct surveys.
- Conducting qualitative research (interviews with beneficiaries and stakeholders , focus group discussions, field visits) can provide very important insights on the target group, as well as on programme implementation mechanisms.
- Qualitative methods can be applied in the context of counterfactual evaluations or as studies.
- It is desirable to analyse short-, medium-, and longer-term impact.
- Improved ALMP monitoring especially through tracking beneficiaries after participation and surveys of target groups perceptions can be very useful.

Use of evaluations

- Frequent ways of reporting evaluations are stakeholder workshops and written reports.
- Evaluation culture and attitudes to transparency vary between countries influencing policies on publication.
- Unpublished material can still be used by policy makers and implementers.
- Preliminary findings are usually communicated to tri-partite constituents , partners, and stakeholders during workshops at the end of the field mission.
- Difficult to establish extent to which evaluation reports are used in policy design and implementation.

Issues, limitations, and challenges

- Impact evaluations are complex tasks , needing high quality data and information.
- Outcomes and variables can be difficult to measure . Design of surveys and interview questionnaires can be problematic , the use of unrestricted narratives can be used alongside other qualitative research methods.
- Interviewers and research teams can be recruited locally by international organizations this can be challenging in very fragile contexts.
- Attrition rates can be high , this can be addressed through in person follow up and community involvement in collecting data including incentives to participate in being tracked.
- Carrying out surveys in fragile contexts can be difficult, dangerous , or impossible.
- Programme implementation problems may delay counter-factual impact evaluation, and bias results. Problems should be named as a reason why a programme was less successful than desired.
- When designing and implementing evaluations ;self selection into programmes, the quality of outreach activities, implementation conditions (eg safety aspects, transportation) should be taken into account.
- Deadweight and substitution effects must be identified.

Key Results

- Training is the most common active labour market measure.
- On the job training is most effective when focused on specific target groups , eg youth, women.
- A key element for supporting refugees and returnees is the development of a proper system for assessing skills, to enable amore effective intervention.
- Employment incentives can effectively reduce poverty in developing countries and may also improve economic efficiency.
- Internship programmes were effective for women and young people under 24 years old.
- Sheltered and supported employment and rehabilitation is the least common active measure and more efforts are required to test and learn from evaluations.
- Public Work can be effective for low skilled , older workers, and certain ethnic minorities , especially when combined with training and job search assistance .
- Start – up incentives are one of the commonest interventions in fragile environments , supporting a wide range of target groups.
- Self-employment is an effective measure , especially for returnees.
- Cash transfers for entrepreneurship and self-employment works best when combined with training, mentoring, coaching and other support services.

Key Recommendations

- It is important to build PES and related ministries capacity to organize impact evaluation, output evaluation the overall implementation process, etc. PES/Ministries need to be able to clearly describe output indicators and must have knowledge to choose methodologies , using the results for improving design and delivery of ALMPs.
- If there is little specialist institutional resource outsourcing to research institutes and consultancies can increase capacity
- Using and improving the quality of administrative data can improve monitoring .
- Administrative data should be used for net impact evaluations.
- Additional surveys and interviews should be carried out as needed.
- It is essential to build trust amongst stakeholders.
- Tracking beneficiaries is crucial, there should be a focus to minimize attrition rates.
- Combining different evaluation methods can improve results.
- Stakeholder interviews and focus group discussions should be used to analyse implementation conditions.
- Beneficiary countries should make use of training courses including those organised by international organizations

- Thankyou for your attention

- Questions ?