



IPDET

INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM FOR
DEVELOPMENT EVALUATION TRAINING

Fundamentals of Rigorous Impact Evaluation

Everything you wanted to know but were afraid to ask

Dates: May 31 – June 4

Monday - Thursday: 2:00 – 4:30pm CEST

Friday: 2:00 - 5:00pm CEST

Instructor: Claudia Maldonado



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Contents

Are experimental methods the gold standard of evaluation? Are other methods valid and useful to answer questions about impact. If you are interested in impact evaluation, but too afraid (of math and statistical formulae) to ask, this is the workshop for you.

Does your program work? How can you be sure? This workshop is a user-friendly introduction to rigorous quantitative impact evaluation methods (experimental & quasi-experimental), their scope and limitations. It provides a guided tour of complex methodologies for those who do not have -nor want to acquire- advanced training in statistics, but need to grasp fundamentals of impact evaluation methodology: emerging evaluators, commissioners, policy-makers and development activists.

Experimental impact evaluation (using **randomized controlled trials**, aka RCTs) is often depicted as the gold standard of evaluation because it specifically addresses questions of **causal inference**. The main strength of this methodological strategy is to prevent the **fallacy of attribution** for being able to isolate the **independent causal effect** of a given program on the **treated population** (beneficiaries).

Through experimental control, this strategy creates a **counterfactual** that provides robust and valid **evidence of average treatment effects** (ATE)? What does that mean and why should we care?

This workshop will help you grasp these concepts, learn how they are operationalized in specific statistical methodological strategies and understand their pros and cons.

Learning Objectives

Our common goal in this week-long journey is to:

1. Identify the need and the usefulness of rigorous quantitative impact evaluation and master the difference between impact evaluation and other types of evaluation.
2. Understand the difference between experimental and quasi-experimental methods, and why they matter.
3. Identify main requirements to perform and/or commission an impact evaluation.
4. Understand and assess the quality and usefulness of quantitative impact evaluation reports.
5. Realize why people using these methods to learn “what works” in the development field do win Nobel Prizes, yet still critically assess their usefulness.
6. Understand the must-know technical terminology required to pursue more advanced training in impact evaluation.



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Our schedule

Monday - Thursday: 14:00 – 16: 30 CEST (Central European Summer Time)

Friday: 14:00 - 17:00 CEST

All supplementary materials will be available at the course platform or directly provided by the instructor.

Pre-workshop task

If you had not enrolled in this workshop, what would you have been doing this week?

Please write a **1-2 paragraphs** stating everything that you would have been doing this week with some detail (from daily routine to planned activities).

Monday

- *What defines impact evaluation? Definition of impact*
- *The fallacy of attribution*
- *Randomized controlled trials and counterfactuals*

Outside class:

- *The Masters of Ceteris Paribus*
- *Esther Duflo's TED Talk*

Tuesday

- *Internal and external validity*
- *Is an RCT out of the question? Implementation, ethics, politics and logistics*
- *Plan B: propensity score matching*

Outside class:

- *Spotlight: the Nairobi scandal*

Wednesday

- Difference in difference
- Regression discontinuity

Outside class:

- Real life examples
- Ricardo Hausman, "The problem with evidence based policy", Project Syndicate

Thursday

- Criticisms to "black box" impact evaluation
- What if there's no impact?
- What do we do with the findings?

Outside class:

- Read case scenario material (provided by the instructor)

Friday

- Findings are not born equal: reliability, usefulness and applicability
- The moment of truth: evidence and decision-making

Resource Literature

Gertler et al, Impact evaluation in practice <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/25030>