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**Credible Evidence and Real-World Evaluation: *Learnings from Evaluation of an Economic Development Project in Burundi***

**Presenting Author**

Dr. Sumera Jabeen

**Affiliation**

World Vision Australia

**Country of residence**

Australia

**Objectives/aims**

While demand for credible evidence on the effectiveness of interventions in international development is increasing, the task is not simple for the evaluators. In the real world of program evaluation, people tasked to evaluate a project at the end might not be the ones involved in conducting the baseline or setting up the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. This necessitates looking closely into available data and coming up with an evaluation design useful in drawing credible conclusions and providing useful recommendations. Using an evaluation of a food security and economic development project in Burundi, the author will share: a) findings on the effectiveness of the project especially from a theory of change perspective; and b) learning on making best use of available data.

**Methods**

Utilising the baseline data collected from the program and comparison communities, the evaluation created a post facto quasi experimental design. A sequential mixed methods approach was used to collect data where HH survey and anthropometric measures of children under five were conducted first and then focus group discussions and key informant interviews were undertaken to deepen understanding and triangulate findings. Where possible, proxy indicators were used to fill in for the missing outcome indicator data. Considering the similarities of the treatment and comparison groups on the indicators at the baseline, differences in difference (DID) analyses of key variables was conducted to draw conclusions.

**Main findings**

Statistically significant differences were found between program and comparison households on almost all of the key outcome indicators and the success can be attributed to the program:

* Uptake of agricultural techniques to increase production
* Yields of high iron beans and ordinary beans
* Access to financial services including savings and credit
* Economic Capacities measured through Households Assets Index Scores
* Male and female headed households benefitted equally

Stunting rate decreased by 6% in project households whilst it increased by 5% in the comparison site indicating the project could mitigate the impact of food security crises in the country.

Scrutiny of available data can help come up with evaluation designs that can help build credible evidence