

A conversation with Dr. Karen Levy and Guillaume Kroll, August 2, 2016

Participants

- Dr. Karen Levy – Director, Global Innovation, Evidence Action
- Guillaume Kroll – Project Manager, Beta, Evidence Action
- Elie Hassenfeld – Co-Founder and Co-Executive Director, GiveWell
- Sophie Monahan – Research Analyst, GiveWell

Note: These notes were compiled by GiveWell and give an overview of the major points made by Dr. Levy and Mr. Kroll.

Summary

GiveWell spoke with Dr. Karen Levy and Guillaume Kroll for a grant update on Evidence Action Beta's No Lean Season project. Conversation topics included potential country projects, disbursement timing, monitoring and evaluation, and funding.

Potential country projects

Indonesia

Mushfiq Mobarak has completed two research studies related to No Lean Season in Indonesia:

1. An exploratory study, similar to those done in Zambia and Malawi.
2. A small-scale pilot in West Timor conducted by the Southeast Asian office of the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL). This study was similar to a previous trial in Bangladesh, but was not a randomized evaluation.

The studies' initial results are promising. Indonesia appears to have similar underlying conditions to Bangladesh, including: lean season migration; availability of jobs in urban areas; and migration from rural to urban areas and between islands.

India

No Lean Season is also considering expanding into India but has not yet conducted research there. Its first activity in India would likely be a small-scale project, such as a pilot in one village. The underlying conditions in Indian states bordering the Rangpur region of Bangladesh are similar to those that exist in Rangpur.

Ghana

No Lean Season is considering expanding into Ghana but does not yet have concrete plans to initiate a project there. In general, it does not intend to expand into new countries until it has sufficient capacity to do so.

Monitoring and evaluation

Upcoming randomized controlled trial

No Lean Season expects to run a randomized controlled trial on its program during the 2017 lean season. The two primary questions it hopes to answer are:

1. **When the program is implemented at scale, do disbursements induce migration?** Preliminary results should be available by the end of the first quarter of 2018, as this data will be collected during the 2017 migration season.
2. **When the program is implemented at scale, do disbursements lead to increased consumption?** Preliminary results should be available by the time that 2018 subsidies are being disbursed.

Monitoring of RDRS Bangladesh

No Lean Season is currently monitoring the quality of RDRS Bangladesh's (RDRS') work through in-depth, qualitative assessments of field activities, work products, and financial reports. Evidence Action has a full-time employee seconded to RDRS and based in its Rangpur office. During this period of co-creation and program design, No Lean Season believes that the program is currently small enough that it is able to maintain an accurate view of RDRS' work without large-scale, external monitoring. As the program scales, it will likely seek to establish a process monitoring and coverage validation system similar to what Evidence Action has put in place in Kenya.

Funding

The budget for the second year of No Lean Season's Bangladesh project is \$2.04 million. No Lean Season would like to have a clear idea of funders' intentions by October-December 2016, and firm commitments by the first months of 2017 are important. While RDRS can initiate projects quickly, it is important to account for the additional complexity of the project's second year, which involves both expanding delivery and setting up the RCT.

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