

ANNUAL REPORT 2022



Development
Learning
Lab

CMI CHR.
MICHELSEN
INSTITUTE

NHH 

SNF 



UNIVERSITY OF BERGEN

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About Development Learning Lab

Development Learning Lab (DLL) is a research and learning centre working with development practitioners to improve outcomes of development programmes.

DLL partners with NGOs, multilateral organisations, and governments to provide evidence and do research at all stages of development projects and programmes.

Our contribution is to make research-based knowledge more accessible, fill knowledge gaps about what works and why, and provide a systematic approach to learning from research and experience – within and across organisations.

Development Learning Lab was established in 2021 as a collaboration between the Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI), the University of Bergen (UiB), the Norwegian School of Economics (NHH) and its Centre for Applied Research (SNF).

DLL originates from a long-standing collaboration between CMI and two Centres of Excellence at UiB and NHH: the Centre for Experimental Research on Fairness, Inequality and Rationality (FAIR) and the Centre for Intervention Science in Maternal and Child Health (CISMAC). At the UiB, DLL is part of the Global Challenges priority area.

DLL is physically located at CMI in Bergen.



More Learning
Better Outcomes

Management & Support

DLL Management Team



In 2022, the DLL management team consisted of (from left) Ingvild Fossgard Sandøy (UiB), Ottar Mæstad (CMI, from April) Kjetil Bjorvatn (NHH/SNF), Espen Villanger (CMI, until April) and Hilde Selbervik (CMI).

DLL Key Support Staff



Pernille Jørgensen
Senior Graphic
Designer, CMI



Åse Roti Dahl
Senior Communication
Adviser, CMI



Robert Sjursen
Senior IT adviser,
CMI



Pauline Lemaire
PhD Researcher
UIB/CMI

DLL Activities & Resources



THE CORE ELEMENTS OF DLL ARE:

Research

Impact evaluation of development interventions to understand what works, why, and for whom.

Knowledge Reviews

Reviews of existing research to make research findings accessible for practical use.

Learning Arenas

Physical and digital venues that bring together researchers, policymakers, and practitioners in thematic Learning Arenas to share knowledge and experience.

Highlights 2022

2022 was the first full year of operations for Development Learning Lab. Our priority has been to engage with aid organisations to explore opportunities for increased generation and use of research-based knowledge, and for creating venues for enhanced learning.

We have seen increased emphasis on the generation and the use of rigorous evidence in aid programmes by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Norad. The government has decided that impact evaluations and other real time evaluations can be supported on all budget lines of the aid budget. Norad has increased expectations both within its own organization and to partners to utilize existing knowledge and produce new knowledge where needed to increase aid impact.

This creates a unique opportunity for strengthening the knowledge base of Norwegian development aid. Development Learning Lab is well positioned to contribute to this agenda.

DLL's existence is currently based on small and time-bound seed funds. Going forward, an important priority will be to secure a larger and more robust funding base.

Highlights from 2022 are presented on the following pages.



Learning Arenas



Impact evaluation incubator

DLL organised the first impact evaluation incubator in Norway, in partnership with 3ie and Norad. Participants were representatives from eight NGOs supported by Norwegian development assistance. Many more organisations wanted to participate than those that could be accommodated.

Each organization brought a project that they would like to make subject to an impact evaluation. Over three days they worked together with researchers from DLL and 3ie to develop their impact evaluation proposals.

The incubator was a great success. The feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive. A large majority was very satisfied with the content and support they received.

After the incubator, DLL has followed up with several organisations to further develop their impact evaluations ideas.

The next incubator is scheduled for June 2023, this time with a focus on aid programmes aiming to increase food security. Our intention is to **continue to organise impact evaluation incubators** on an **annual basis**.



Participants at the impact evaluation incubator.

Learning arena on Jobs and Employment

Development Learning Lab initiated a seminar series on Jobs and Employment in collaboration with the Section on New Partnerships and Private Sector Development in Norad. Two seminars were held in 2022.

The seminar series is a part of the Jobs Network, hosted by CMI and partner institutions in Ethiopia, Nepal, and Tanzania.

KEY TOPICS INCLUDE:

- What is the government and donor role in job creation?
- How can a country secure a balanced transition out of agriculture?
- How can access to jobs be secured for the poor and marginalized, and for women?
- How can the productivity of subsistence farmers be improved?
- What are the effects of different skill training programmes?



Task force on evidence-based aid

The ambition of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Norad to initiate more impact evaluations of aid programmes entails opportunities for aid organisations to learn more about what works and why, but it also involves new challenges.

DLL invited representatives from seven civil society organizations to join a task force to explore the opportunities and challenges related to the use of impact evaluations in humanitarian and development aid, and to propose measures that may help the organizations take full advantage of this initiative. Other organisations were also consulted during the process.

The report with recommendations from the task force was submitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Norad early 2023. Among the recommendations are:

- Establish a mechanism that organisations can draw upon for guidance and training on the use of impact evaluations.



- Facilitate coordination mechanisms across organisations for pooling of knowledge and sharing of experiences related to design, implementation and learning from impact evaluations.
- Facilitate partnerships with research institutions.
- Create thematic knowledge hubs related to Norad's portfolios. Invest in knowledge reviews in each of the thematic portfolios and make the evidence available to all organisations.

DLL can potentially take a leading role in addressing all these requests.

Task force members (from left): Guro Nesbakken, Nikolai Holm, Ole Morten Stavland, Gregory Gleed, Ottar Mæstad (secretary), Øivind Hetland, Øivind Fjeld-Solberg, Adalei Broers.

Mapping the demand for thematic learning networks

A key idea behind the DLL concept is that learning can be significantly enhanced by bringing together practitioners, policymakers, and researchers in a trusting atmosphere to share knowledge and experience. Development Learning Lab has the ambition to facilitate such learning networks across aid organisations in thematic areas of high relevance to practitioners.

To map the demand for and the preferred content of such learning networks, DLL developed a survey which was presented early 2023 to close to 500 thematic specialists (programme staff and MEL staff) in Norwegian aid organisations. The response rate was 49 percent, and the responses show that:

- There is an overwhelming interest in participating in thematic learning networks. 86% of respondents say they will definitively or most likely participate.
- The topics in highest demand are:
 - Learning about research about the effectiveness of interventions.
 - Learning from the experience of peers from other organisations about the reasons for successes and failures of aid projects.

The responses confirm that the DLL concept has a significant added value for aid practitioners.

Ongoing Research

Interventions against female genital mutilation and child marriage in Ethiopia



Implementing partners

Norwegian Church Aid and Save the Children, Norway

Study participants

3,100 parents, 12,000 children

Type of study

Controlled before after study +
Randomized controlled trial

Timeline

2020-2025

DLL fellows involved

Espen Villanger, Charlotte Ringdal,
Monica Beeder

The project assesses the impacts of an intervention to reduce female genital mutilation and child marriage. The intervention aims to change norms, attitudes and behaviour through a range of activities including awareness raising, community mobilization, training, capacity building of institutions, and support at the policy/government level.

The policy question is whether such a comprehensive approach to reducing FGM and child marriage affects parents' intentions to cut their daughters/marry them early, and whether it affects FGM and child marriage incidence.

We measure effects on norms, attitudes, and beliefs about others' attitudes and intentions to cut and marry their daughters. We also measure the effects on the incidence of FGM as well as on the age at marriage. We follow the implementation process and provide regular feedbacks to implementers with qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis during the implementation phase.

Kizazi Kijacho (“The Next Generation”)



IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation (EGPAF), D-Tree International, EDI Global

STUDY PARTICIPANTS

5,700 households

TYPE OF STUDY

Randomized controlled trial
Nationally Representative
Longitudinal Cohort Study

TIMELINE

2021-2026

DLL FELLOWS INVOLVED

Ingvild Almås, Bet Caeyers

This program aims to make a major scientific contribution by establishing and analyzing a large and rich nationally representative longitudinal cohort dataset using state-of-the-art methods to measure child development and its multi-dimensional inputs from in-utero until age 3. The program also carries out a large-scale randomized controlled trial (RCT) in the Dodoma region to test the relative cost-effectiveness of a parenting program, an Unconditional Cash Transfer program and a program combining these two.

The main policy objective is to yield actionable evidence for policy makers, donors and practitioners about the design of cost-effective, scalable, sustainable, integrated Early Childhood Development (ECD) programs, from the prenatal period until the child's 3rd year of life – the “first 1,000 days”.

The experimental and longitudinal data that we will collect will be used to assess the relative impact of different ECD intervention packages, to track progress in ECD over time and to construct a comprehensive empirical model suitable for ECD policy analysis of the determinants of parental behaviour and child development.

Effects of multi-sectoral rehabilitation and reconstruction on living conditions



IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

Welthungerhilfe, Oxfam, Medica Liberia

STUDY PARTICIPANTS

121 communities,
8,000 respondents

TYPE OF STUDY

Randomized controlled trial

TIMELINE

2018-2022

DLL FELLOWS INVOLVED

Carlo Koos

We evaluate the impact of three program interventions on people's living conditions in three provinces in south-east Liberia: i) the agricultural program includes input distribution, seeds, and planting methods and aims to increase household incomes and food security, ii) the water, sanitation and hygiene program includes the installation of hand pumps, latrines, and hygiene education and aims to increase health outcomes, and iii) the women's empowerment intervention includes women's rights awareness campaigns and the establishment of support networks with the aim to strengthen women's rights and decrease violence against women.

The policy question is whether interventions in agriculture, WASH, and women's empowerment improve living conditions in post-conflict contexts. If so, through which mechanisms?

We measure income, food security, food diversity, water-borne diseases, violence against women and gender attitudes.

Can zinc increase survival of young infants receiving antibiotic treatment?



IN-COUNTRY RESEARCH PARTNERS

Translational Health Science and Technology Institute (India) and Tribhuvan University (Nepal)

STUDY PARTICIPANTS

3,000 infants in seven hospitals

TYPE OF STUDY

Randomized controlled trial

TIMELINE

2017-2022

DLL FELLOWS INVOLVED

Halvor Sommerfelt, Tor Strand

Despite the existence of effective antibiotics, serious infections are among the most common causes of death among babies in the first two months of life. Previous research has found that daily zinc intake can increase the success of antibiotic treatment among infants.

The policy question is whether daily zinc should be added to the treatment of young infants with clinical severe infection in order to increase survival.

We estimate the risk of dying among babies younger than two months who received daily zinc in addition to antibiotics for severe infection compared to babies who received antibiotics.

Water and social cohesion in refugee settings



IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

UNICEF, UNHCR, KfW

STUDY PARTICIPANTS

6,000 respondents in
6 refugee camps

TYPE OF STUDY

Randomized controlled trial

TIMELINE

2022-2026

DLL FELLOWS INVOLVED

Carlo Koos

Water and sanitation (WASH) are often scarce in refugee settings. WASH projects are implemented across the globe in an attempt to alleviate water-borne diseases, improve health and livelihoods as well as foster sustainable development. WASH projects therefore have marked impacts on local communities' social fabrics and are a plausible driver of social cohesion and peace. Whether and, if so, by what mechanism this link comes about, however, has received all-too little scrutiny in the academic and policy literature.

The policy question is whether water and sanitation interventions can reduce scarcity-related resource competition and contribute to social cohesion within and between refugee and host populations.

This evaluation relies on the design of a six-year cumulative study on the effects of WASH on social cohesion. A key innovation of the project is to bridge quantitative difference-in-differences models with fine-grained qualitative evidence in a Bayesian framework. We measure social trust and prosocial behaviour.

Investing in safe deliveries



IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

World Vision Zambia

STUDY PARTICIPANTS

480 savings groups

TYPE OF STUDY

Randomized controlled trial

TIMELINE

2022-2024

DLL FELLOWS INVOLVED

Peter Hangoma

Though high-quality health facility delivery can be lifesaving, many women in LMICs fail to access it because of financial barriers.

The project investigates whether community owned informal savings groups can be induced to give maternity grants to women to help them deliver in high-quality health facilities.

We measure effects on facility delivery and amount of maternity grant given to pregnant women, in addition to pregnancy related savings, expenditure on maternal health, perceived quality of facility delivery, and healthcare utilization as secondary outcomes.

Information campaigns for improved state-society and intergroup relations in fragile states



IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

KfW

STUDY PARTICIPANTS

10,000 respondents

TYPE OF STUDY

Randomized controlled trial

TIMELINE

2021-2023

DLL FELLOWS INVOLVED

Carlo Koos, Paul Hofman

Beneficiaries of foreign aid interventions often lack basic information on development projects in their communities. Lack of credible information can increase the risk that misinformation and rumours nurture perceptions of unfair and clientelist aid distribution. This, in turn, can have adverse consequences on inter-group and state-society relations.

This project investigates if targeted aid information campaigns can improve state-society relations and intergroup relations.

Our analyses rely on a randomized controlled trial among 10,000 respondents in 200 villages of Mali and Niger. Members of the treatment group will receive customized information on ongoing aid projects in their community (e.g., type, volume, and formal rules of project selection). In the mid-line, we repeat this information. In addition, half of the treatment group will have the opportunity to provide anonymous feedback on the project to the government and responsible aid agency. In the end line, we estimate the effects of these interventions on people's local political engagement and social trust towards outgroups.

We measure state-society relations, intergroup relations, political efficacy, and distributional fairness.

Incentives for tax compliance



IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

Tanzania Revenue Authority

STUDY PARTICIPANTS

4,900 businesses

TYPE OF STUDY

Synthetic control

TIMELINE

2019-2024

DLL FELLOWS INVOLVED

Odd-Helge Fjeldstad, Ingrid Hoem
Sjursen, Vincent Somville

The project studies whether incentives can be used to improve collection of value added taxes (VAT). VAT receipts are used as tickets in a lottery with monetary prizes. The idea is to motivate customers to ask for receipts and that this will lead to more receipts being issued. Increasing the issuance of VAT receipts will make more information about transactions available to the tax authority. This makes it easier for them to estimate and enforce taxes and may therefore increase VAT revenues collected.

The policy question is whether positive incentives for customers in the form of a lottery can improve VAT revenue collection and affect business development.

We measure effects of the VAT receipt lottery on issuance of receipts, VAT revenues collected and business development using administrative and survey data.

Knowledge Reviews



Three knowledge reviews are ongoing and will be finalized in the near future.

- Effective interventions for climate adaptation
- Effective interventions to address youth unemployment.
- Effective interventions to reduce harmful sexual/reproductive practices.

Collaboration & Organisation

Collaboration with 3ie

A formal collaboration agreement with the international Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie) was signed.

Potential areas for collaboration include:

- Knowledge reviews / synthesis work.
- Impact evaluations.
- Cooperation on jointly delivered webinars, papers, blogs, and training and learning events.

DLL benefited greatly from the collaboration with 3ie in the planning and implementation of our first impact evaluation incubator.

Promoting structures for enhanced learning

DLL has proposed to establish a **National Competence Centre for Learning and Results** in Norwegian development cooperation. DLL would be well positioned to serve such a role – as a mediator between research, policy, practice.

DLL has developed a concept for how research institutions can contribute to **enhanced learning from the operations of multilateral organizations** on the ground. The concept was submitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

DLL fellows have contributed actively to events that put generation of rigorous evidence about the impact of aid programmes on the agenda. One such event was a seminar about the use of **randomised evaluations in development cooperation**. The seminar was hosted by Norad and included participants from research institutions and civil society organisations.



DLL Website launched

The first DLL's website was officially launched early 2022. We aim to develop the site over time into a user-friendly platform with relevant resources for policymakers and practitioners. Visit us at **www.devlearnlab.no**



New Director of DLL

Ottar Mæstad took up the position as Director of Development Learning Lab from April 2022.

Mæstad has been the Director of Chr. Michelsen Institute for the past 12 years and has been closely involved in the conceptualization of DLL from its beginning. Mæstad replaced Espen Villanger.

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