



Ex-post FAQ and Common Critiques

*Prepared in response to many World Vision staff questions raised at in-house dissemination events
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Over the last five years World Vision US has pursued deeper understanding about what happens after our interventions end. While the organization has made plans for sustainability in program documents and processes for many years, we have rarely taken the opportunity to go back and see whether *sustained* child well-being has been achieved, and whether our plans for sustainability have proved effective.

Beginning in 2014, three ex-post evaluations were conducted between 3 and 5.5 years after program closure in former child-sponsorship funded programs in Uganda, Kenya, and Sri Lanka. These comprehensive evaluations looked at both the long-term child-wellbeing outcomes for individuals who participated in sponsorship as children, and the status of infrastructure investments and community groups intended to contribute to child well-being (CWB) after World Vision had left. A similar study was conducted in 2018 in one site in Uganda.

In 2017, six smaller studies were carried out in former child-sponsorship funded programs. In 2018, another study was conducted in one site in Uganda.

Between 2017-2019, a few other ex-post evaluations funded through USAID or foundations like Gates surfaced. These reports, and findings were largely known within the organization until the discussions on ex-posts and sustainability started.

I. Are these studies representatives of our current work? And how much can be taken away from the findings, given the small sample of programs studied? *Our multi-sectoral, long-term funded programming approach has changed quite a bit over the years. It would be more interesting to see how sustainable the interventions are in our current programs down the road.*

By their nature, if programming approaches are constantly evolving, ex-posts will ALWAYS be among 'older' ways of working. That hasn't stopped other major players from doing them, including our funders and our competitors. And, while World Vision's approaches in current programs may be somewhat different, we would need to wait 10-15 years from now (for the closure of those long-term multi-sectoral programs and then some time after) before being able to evaluate them. Moreover, many of the approaches used in current programs have grown out of older ways of working, and so there is something to be learned and concluded from the level of sustainment among older programs even if they are not exactly what the current programming thinking looks like.

On a different note, even when ex-posts looked at younger programs--those closed in 2014-2015, which was 1-2 years prior to measurement. The Sustainability and Transition strategies of these 'newer' programs suffer from the same issues as the 'older' programming: lack of benchmarking, lack of clarity of what to sustain, etc.

It is difficult to know how many sites other organizations have studied for their ex-posts, given that these types of studies are relatively new and there is a cultural bias of posting primarily studies with successful findings. However here are a few public ex-post reports with similar numbers of sites:

- Between 2003-2004 the International Labour Organization conducted six exploratory studies focused on tracing their beneficiaries, much like our initial three ex-posts in Uganda, Kenya and Sri Lanka. Upon refinement of their methodologies and internalized learning, in 2010-2011 they conducted another six studies. Four of these studies are posted online (report and data sets). <http://www.ilo.org/lippec/programme/Designandevaluation/ImpactAssessment/tracer-studies/lang-en/index.htm>
- USAID's Office of Food for Peace (FFP) conducted four ex-post studies in Kenya, Honduras, Bolivia, and India. A synthesis of the reports was released in 2016 providing a summary of findings and lessons learned across the studies. <https://www.fantaproject.org/research/exit-strategies-ffp>

2. How did you pick what to evaluate in the ex-posts?

The primary goal for all World Vision programming is the **sustained well-being of children within families and communities, especially the most vulnerable**. World Vision's development approach has evolved over the last two decades, but the **focus** on improved well-being for children has always been central to the organization's mission. For this reason, the initial three ex-post evaluations, which measured outcomes, focused specifically on measuring long-term outcomes among former registered children and their families with a focus on key health, education, employment, and economic well-being indicators. These indicators were purposefully chosen for their generalizability; to align with the child well-being aspirations of educated for life, enjoy good health, and are provided for; and to be close to donor promise. The choice for the domains studied and indicators used also was aligned with those sectors where programs had invested the most.

3. Are there success stories coming from these studies? What can we learn from them?

Yes. As with many evaluations, there are success cases that World Vision can learn from, celebrate and share internally and externally. These success cases are more often found in a particular context/site or may belong to one type of intervention or approach; hence, they are not be large enough to be representative of World Vision's work. Additional contextual factors, which need to be accounted for, may have contributed to these successes. Resources for the studies prevented these factors from being validated in-depth.

Most of the success stories identified belong to our community development approach manifested through the work of community groups. Here are a few examples:

- **Interpersonal Psycho-therapy Groups (IPT-Gs)** implemented in Rakai, Uganda have lasted much longer than the expected model designed by John Hopkins University (2004) in support of World Vision's work around mental health issues for those affected by HIV/AIDS.¹²³
- **Savings groups** in Krupasagar, India are in good health. During the life of the program, World Vision formed 1,034 women's savings self-help groups organized into 41 Samakhya (umbrella groups covering self-help groups in 25-30 villages). As of 2017, thirty (30) Samakhya-level women's savings groups are still active in the area, continuing their services beyond the closure of Krupasagar program.
- In Tiraque, Bolivia all water facilities are functional and maintained by water committees 2 years after program closure.
- We found benefits persistence among some of the former Community Based Organizations (CBO) leaders and members. The most notable example is in Krupasagar, India, where more than 30 members from the Village Development Committee (VDC) groups had been elected in official positions, fulfilling the expectation and program strategy to capacitate local leaders to take official positions.

4. What can grant funded projects learn from these ADP studies?

The main learning would be the awareness that post-program evaluations are the new wave of impact studies. While these internal studies focused on our ADPs, our donors and competitors have been conducting them for grant funded projects as well. How are our grants preparing for post-program studies?

Most of the learning for grants would come from the process related findings. For example how are our grant interventions designed with sustainability imbedded from the start? What are the expected benchmarks for sustainability? How robust are our exit strategies?

A few success case stories may be of relevance to different audiences within the grant-funded programs. However, learning and/or communicating around these stories comes with limitations (i.e. not large in scale/magnitude, not representative, with limited information on other factors that may have contributed to success beside WV).

For more info or new questions, contact: Holta Trandafili (htrandaf@worldvision.org)

¹ Bass, J., Neugebauer, R., Clougherty, K.F. et al. Group Interpersonal Psychotherapy for Depression in Rural Uganda: 6-month Outcomes: Randomised Controlled Trial. (2006). *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 188, 567-573 /

² Bolton, P., Bass, J., Neugebauer, R., et al. Group Interpersonal Psychotherapy for Depression in Rural Uganda A Randomized Controlled Trial. (2003). *JAMA*. 289(23), 3117-3124.

³ Lewandowski, R.E., Bolton, P.A., Feighery A., et al. Local perceptions of the impact of group interpersonal psychotherapy in rural Uganda. (2016). *Global Mental Health*, 3(23). Available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5454764/>