

pep impact stories



A series of brief accounts describing how PEP researchers' findings and recommendations have contributed to inform and influence policy in developing countries

The testimony reported in this document was collected through surveys of PEP-supported project teams conducted in 2011-2012.

ARGENTINA (2009-2012)

Leonardo Gasparini, Carlos German Bet, María Laura Alzua, Francisco Haimovich Paz

Assessing the impact of Argentina's Ley Federal de Educación on educational and labor outcomes

PEP researchers stir up education policy debates in Argentina

In 2009, a team of Argentinian researchers were granted the support from PEP to provide training in the application of advanced techniques for impact evaluation research, as they aimed to produce an empirical assessment of the effectiveness of a major national education reform implemented in the 1990's, "*Ley Federal de Educación (LFE)*".

Their findings led them to conclude that this particular policy, which basically entailed the addition of two years of compulsory education, had had virtually no effect on schooling and labor outcomes in the country. In other words, those poor young adults educated under the LFE (i.e. after 1994) derive no benefits in terms of greater integration into the labor market or higher wages when employed.

Their findings were presented and discussed in various relevant seminars and conferences in Buenos Aires and La Plata, as well as largely disseminated through mass media in the country. As a result, the evidence produced by this PEP-supported policy impact evaluation has been assimilated, cited and used by several policy makers and civil society representatives involved in ongoing debates around new reform of national education policies in Argentina.



CAMEROON (2006-2008)

Dia Bernadette Kamgnia, Afor Josephine Fosah, Simon Jules Leunkeu Wangun and Tatsinkou Christophe

Acquired Benefits and Poor Targeting in Public Spending on Health and Education in Cameroon

PEP research leads to improvement of health services to the poor in Cameroon

As important reforms of the public sector were underway to help Cameroon achieve the MDGs in 2006, a team of local researchers was selected to receive PEP training and support to conduct a rigorous analysis on how the country's poor actually benefited from public spending in education and health services. The project was conducted in direct consultation with the Ministry of Economy, Planning and Territorial Management, the Committee in charge of monitoring the implementation of the National Strategy for Growth and Employment and the National Bureau of Statistics.

Specific results on the distributional impacts of public spending in health services and education, as well as the overall access to and quality of health services provided, were taken up by the Ministry of Public Health in the elaboration of the National Plan for Sanitary Development. The research findings were used, in particular, to help improve the delivery of quality health services, especially those provided at the district-level medical centers and hospitals, as well as services provided in rural areas, where it was specifically recommended that increased resources should be devoted to the improvement of hospital hygiene, quality of personnel, equipment and infrastructure.

CAMEROON (2006-2008)

Paul Ningaye, Virginie Takoutio Feudjio and Alexis Tiomela Yemedjeu

Dimensional and regional distribution of multi-poverty in Cameroon

Cameroon national statistics adopt new multidimensional approach to poverty analysis

The purpose of this particular study, led by a team of local researchers, was to provide a fuller characterization of poverty in Cameroon, through the use of the "Dimensional Scores" methodology to measure precisely the level and spatial distribution of deprivation in each welfare dimension – i.e. health, education, income, infrastructure, etc. This type of analysis contributes, in particular, to identifying the specific needs of various population groups and thus contribute to targeting the vulnerable and poor households at different levels.

After attending a conference organized by the team in the country's capital (Yaoundé) to share their work and findings with the public, officials from the National Bureau of Statistics contacted the team leader, Dr Paul Ningaye. His collaboration and advice was requested for the integration of new indicators to monitor/measure poverty in the 2013 ECAM IV (national household consumption) surveys, to ensure that national statistics better reflect gender-related and multi-dimensional aspects of welfare in the future.



CHAD (2004-2006)

Tabo Symphorien Ndong, Anatole Toinar Mogota, Nakar Djindil Syntiche

How does public spending in Chad benefit the various population groups?

How PEP support leads a local researcher to advise national development strategies in Chad

In 2004, PEP provided support to researchers in Chad to conduct an incidence analysis on existing national household survey data, to investigate the impact of public spending in health and education. The study evaluated the welfare benefits to the population, as well as the distribution of such benefits among different groups and regions. The project aimed to provide evidence to inform the government's decisions, while defining priorities in the context of the National Poverty Reduction Strategy initiated in 2003. Based on the researchers' recommendations, the government decided to organize follow-up surveys to trace health and education spending to their intended targets, in order to measure the share of the budget that reached the target population.

Thanks to the quality of the ensuing paper, as well as the advanced skills gained through this PEP-supported project, the team leader was first recruited by the International Monetary Fund Office in Chad, in 2008, and then as a long-term consultant in economic studies by AFRISTAT, in Mali, in 2009.



He was also called upon by the African Development Bank, as the official consultant and correspondent for Chad, to contribute to the African Economic Outlook five years in a row. Subsequently, in 2012, the researcher was recruited by the UNDP, as a consultant, to assist the Government of Chad in designing the 2012-2015 National Strategic Development Plan. The research findings and new skills in multidimensional poverty analysis thus contributed to better identifying and targeting the specific needs and interventions for welfare improvement in the country.



CHINA (2010-2012)

Xinxin Chen, Chunlei Lang, Lijuan Guo, Pingping Gu and Shaoqing Zhang
The impact of tuition relief program in senior high school on poor students in rural China

PEP research findings inform policy debate regarding investment in education in rural China

Despite considerable improvements in schooling of rural youth populations over the past decade, the Chinese government is still looking at ways to address the sizable remaining gap between the enrollment rates in rural and urban areas, especially at senior high school level. In 2010, a team of Chinese researchers began assessing the early impacts of a tuition relief program for senior high school students, implemented in the relatively poor rural county of Ningshan, in Shaanxi Province. When compared with those of other counties, the results show that the program contributed to significant improvement in both the enrollment and performance of rural pupils in senior high school.

Based on these findings, the Education Bureau of Ningshan County decided to maintain and extend the program for an additional five years, and has disseminated the researchers' results and recommendations further up to the provincial level where they are being considered for wider adoption. While China' Ministry of Education is looking to increase investment in rural education, and debates are ongoing on how to proceed, it is hoped that these results will find their way even further up to national educational policy level, and possibly lead to expanding the piloting of tuition relief programs for all of the poorest rural areas in the country.

CHINA (2010-2012)

Can Liu, Hao Liu, Wenqing Zhu, Qingjiao Rong

Assessing the impact of China's priority forest programs on rural households' income and income mobility

PEP research findings support and inform Chinese environmental strategy

At the end of the 1990s, while facing severe threats in terms of resource management and ecological sustainability, the Chinese government implemented a new environmental strategy including six "Priority Forest Programs" (PFPs), which combined objectives of environmental restoration and reduction of rural poverty.

In 2010, PEP granted support to a team of local researchers to lead a research project in which they would use data collected from over 3000 households in 6 different provinces in order to assess the actual impact of these programs on rural household income and income mobility.

This evaluation project was carried out in direct consultation with the PFP Management Officers from the State Forestry Administration, as well as Officials from the Ministry of Finance and Department of Agriculture. As a result, the researchers' findings and recommendations were taken up by the State Forestry Administration in preparation of the next (12th) Five-Year National Forestry Development Plan.





EGYPT (2008-2012)

Asmaa Elbadawy, Nadia Zibani and Rania Roushdy

Assessing the impact of Ishraq intervention, a second-chance program for out-of-school rural adolescent girls in Egypt

PEP research helps to improve the welfare and livelihoods of rural adolescent girls in Egypt

This experimental impact evaluation project aimed to assess whether the Ishraq program, implemented in Egypt between 2009 and 2012, has been successful in improving the welfare and prospects of rural adolescent girls, by helping them to make better-informed life decisions in regards to education, marriage and livelihood opportunities. As a result of their evaluation, the researchers found evidence that the program has had particularly large impacts on the following outcomes: literacy skills (including financial), participation in and attitudes towards sports for girls, aspirations in regards to education and work, gender role attitudes, general and reproductive health knowledge, the extent of peer networks and participation in decision-making processes. However, they also found that the program fell relatively short in informing beneficiaries on issues related to nutrition, female genital mutilation, reproductive health (room for improvement), infant care and attitudes related to harassment and violence. Nonetheless, the researchers strongly recommend the scaling-up of the Ishraq program, at the national level, to help Egyptian girls acquire the literacy and life skills needed to become empowered citizens.

In addition to working in close collaboration with and from the institution in charge of implementing the Ishraq program, the researchers also provided advice and consultations to a number of concerned NGOs in the country (CARITAS, Teaming for Development, the Egyptian Food Bank – all program collaborators), and had frequent meetings with several officials from the National Council for Youth (NCY) and the Ministry of Education (including at local-, governorate- and national levels, from both successive regimes). These consultations and meetings have contributed to significantly improve of the program, as well as to ensure broad dissemination of the project's results amidst all concerned institutions and government bodies. The PEP research team was even requested to provide a series of "Training of Trainers" workshops and mentoring for selected cadres within the NCY, and to prepare a "guidance manual" providing detailed information on best practices for scaling up the program.

GHANA (2013-2014)

Edgard F.A. Cooke, Sarah Hague, John Cockburn, Abdel-Rahmen El Lahga and Luca Tiberti

Estimating the Impact on Poverty of Ghana's Fuel Subsidy Reform and a Mitigating Response

Ghana taking steps to reduce poverty in response to a PEP report on fuel subsidies

In early 2013, the Ghanaian Government introduced the removal of fuel subsidies over the first half of the year. Prices of petrol, kerosene, diesel and LPG saw rises of between 15% and 50%, until prices reached their market level in mid-September 2013. Following the subsidy removal and before the 2013 budget was finalised, PEP was commissioned by UNICEF to assess the impact of the reform on the poor and to ensure a mitigating response in the form of a social safety net. Initiated on the request of the Government, this project was to be the first study to examine the effects of Ghana's fuel subsidies.

The analysis confirmed that, so far, government aid has disproportionately benefited the country's wealthiest group - with 80% of fuel subsidies going to the country's wealthiest, while Ghana's poor receive only 3% of the revenues generated. However, the findings also showed that removing fuel subsidies would increase poverty by 1.5% (an additional 395,000 people pushed into poverty). On the other hand, in terms of policy responses, the researchers demonstrated how doubling the national cash transfer program (LEAP) to 150,000 households in 2014 would reverse the national increase in poverty and reduce inequality. In response to these findings, the Ghanaian government committed to doubling LEAP to 150,000 households, and announced that they plan to eventually triple their commitment.

INDIA (2005-2006)

Sugata Marjit, Archita Banik and Saibal Kar

Urban informal sector and poverty - effects of trade reform and capital mobility in India?

Research findings in India prompt initiatives in favor of social security for informal sector workers



In this particular project, a team of PEP-supported researchers in India assessed the impact of wage fluctuations in the informal sector on poverty incidence across various states in the country. They found that informal wage growth – which is facilitated by freer movement of capital – can be instrumental in lifting a significant share of the population out of poverty.

The National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganized Sector (NCEUS) – a national body commissioned by the Indian government to address the issues faced by enterprises in relation to the informal employment sector – demonstrated keen interest in the research findings. In 2010, the researchers were involved in initiatives to inform program design by NCEUS based on their findings from 2006 and 2008. This has further contributed to taking subsequent steps towards the implementation of policies related to social security benefits for workers in the informal sector, and initiated consultations with banks concerning lending and credit facilities to informal sector workers.

KENYA (2008-2012)

Germano Mwabu, Alice Muthoni Ng'ang'a, Mumia Phyllis Machio and Racheal Nakhumicha Musitia

Scaling education interventions in Kenya: the importance of institutions

PEP research findings help prevent undesirable education policy



One of the solutions proposed by the government to address issues of low school performance in Kenya in 2008 implied the scaling up of a "contract teacher intervention". This program, which involved funding of community-hired contract teachers and community-based performance monitoring systems (organized by school management committees) was previously introduced by an NGO in Western areas of the country, where it had shown to have improved test scores for primary school students. However, concerns were raised regarding the idea of generalizing results from one small experiment and extrapolate findings to the national level and whether an NGO-piloted program would be successful if implemented by governmental agencies. Hence, PEP-supported local researchers to carry out a rigorous impact evaluation – conducting randomized controlled trials on 192 schools in 8 different provinces - to assess the potential success (or effectiveness) of such an intervention if scaled up throughout Kenya.

The research results revealed that, beyond careful and rigorous design, the end results and effectiveness/success of an intervention in reaching target groups largely depend on the nature of program implementer and the institutional context/constraints. Indeed, the government-led interventions yielded completely different results from the NGO-led ones; when scaled-up nationally, the salient features of teachers' contracts were compromised, and the effectiveness of the program was undermined. The researchers concluded that extrapolating results from a locally-based NGO program to national government policy is not a valid option. The findings also suggest that, overall, free primary education policies in Kenya has only but benefited to the not-so-needy in society.

Throughout project execution, the researchers have worked in close collaboration with the Ministry of Education (MOE) and the Kenya National Examination Council (KNEC). The results have been shared directly with senior officials in both agencies, as well as with the Permanent Secretary and the "Vision 2030" Strategic Planning Group, which reports to the President. This has contributed to generating evidence that provides input to the policymaking process, through advice and recommendations provided to the MOE in regards to the design of effective and inclusive education policies.



PERU (2005-2008)

Martin Valdivia, Verónica Frisancho, Dean Karlan

Teaching entrepreneurship: impact of business training for microfinance clients and institutions

PEP findings help improve services of microfinance institutions in Peru and beyond

As microfinance institutions (MFIs) worldwide are pursuing innovations to improve the effectiveness of micro-lending in helping micro-entrepreneurs to escape poverty, a team of researchers in Peru were granted PEP support, in 2005, to assess the impact of a “business training” program. This program was implemented by FINCA-Peru (MFI) to improve entrepreneurial skills and business practices of poor female clients. Based on the encouraging results of the PEP-supported study, FINCA confidently expanded the training program to other groups and it has since become a regular feature of the services they offer to wider clients.

But the impact of this evidence extended way beyond that sole institution. As the research findings were presented at several academic and policy fora within Peru and other countries, it was later reported that many other Peruvian MFIs and national NGOs (such as PRISMA, ADRA and Manuela Ramos in collaboration with FFH) had started to add a business training component into their programs. A few years later, MIBANCO – a large regulated microfinance bank associated to Acción International – and Banco de Crédito – the largest commercial bank in the country – were also offering business training to their clients in Peru.

At the international level, the researchers were approached by analysts and MFIs in Mexico and India, planning to combine and mainstream business skills training into their regular microfinance services. The Peru team advised on the design of an (experimental) impact evaluation of an integrated business skills training component similar to the one used to assess the FINCA program's impact.

SENEGAL (2009-2012)

Abdoulaye Diagne, Mouhamadou Moustapha Lo, Fatoumata L. Diallo, Ibrahima Oumarou Sadou

Assessing the impact of a school canteen program in primary schools in rural Senegal

PEP research helps to expand a primary school feeding program in Senegal

In this PEP project, a team of researchers in Senegal set out to assess the impact of an experimental school feeding program on the performance of pupils in rural primary schools. Some 120 schools were selected in rural areas where the program had not yet been implemented. Half of these schools were randomly assigned to receive the program (treatment group) and the other half to the control group. This experiment enabled the researchers to observe the actual effect of their feeding program on the students' scores, on the schools' rates of grade repetition and dropouts, and other unintended effects. The evidence produced by the team showed significant positive impact of the program on several aspects of schools' and students' performance, not to mention on the students' nutrition.

After they presented these findings to an audience of key national policy makers and stakeholders - especially from the Ministry of Education - as well as from some of the country's development partners, the government decided to not only pursue but even scale-up the program, and double the number of school canteens to be implemented over the next three years.

Moreover, the government decided to take further advantage of the researchers' new skills in the use of scientific methods and techniques for impact evaluation, to have them assist the Department of Agriculture in improving policies implemented in the context of the new “REVA” (agriculture revitalization) plan. This led to the linking of both initiatives, from the realization that in addition to improving school performance and child nutrition, the school feeding programs may also boost local agricultural production, as they create new markets for local farmers to sell their produce.

UGANDA (2009-2012)

Madina Guloba, Lawrence Bategeka, Ibrahim Kasirye

Community involvement improves performance in Ugandan primary schools

Assisting the government in findings ways to improve management of primary schools in Uganda

Despite relative success in improving access to schooling in Uganda since the mid-90s, learning and educational outcomes at the national level remain poor and the government continues to face challenges, especially in terms of “quality” of education services, e.g. high rates of teacher absenteeism. In this PEP-supported randomized control trial, a team of local researchers set out to assess the effectiveness of different types of “community-based monitoring interventions”, in order to inform policymakers of possible ways to improve the management of primary schools in the country. The results show that the introduction of a monitoring system based on a “participatory approach” (self-design of monitoring tools) seems to have significant positive effect on educational outcomes, leading to higher effort levels from both the providers and the clients of the schools.

The study was conducted in close collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES), the National Planning Authority, as well as the Board of National Assessment for Progress in Education (NAPE), all first-hand users of the research findings. Consultations at the Ministerial level were mainly done with the MoES to ensure local policy relevance and demand for policy recommendations. It also created an entry point and partnership for researchers with the Ministry, which provided inputs for the design of the survey and intervention instruments used throughout the project implementation period.

Further consultations were held with two NGOs: the Netherlands Development Organization (SNV) and World Vision, which had activities at the district and community levels. This collaboration was intended to facilitate the training of participants and monitoring of field activities, at the grass roots level. It was later reported that both institutions were using these findings, as well as the analytical tools designed for the purpose of this project, in their own interventions and monitoring and evaluation activities. Moreover, the effectiveness of the community based monitoring system stimulated other similar initiatives, which were later undertaken, by the communities, to tackle identified and related issues.

Finally, made aware of the PEP researchers' study, the World Bank provided them with funding to pursue their work and further examine, based on their initial PEP findings, the drivers of weak governance in Ugandan primary schools.



URUGUAY (2007-2012, 2 consecutive projects)

Veronica Amarante, Andrea Vigorito, Arim Rodrigo

Family allowances and child school attendance. An ex-ante evaluation of alternative schemes
School attendance, child labor and cash transfers: An impact evaluation of PANES

PEP research in Uruguay assists the government in re-designing a cash transfer program to promote education and human capital development

In 2007, the Uruguayan government was looking at the possibility of renewing a recently expired program that aimed to foster human capital accumulation (and alleviate poverty) through conditional cash transfers to poor households in the country. Simultaneously, a team of local researchers was awarded two successive PEP research grants: one to assess the actual impact or success of the previous program (entitled PANES) on the intended outcomes (such as school attendance, child labor and income poverty), and the other to evaluate the impact of a prospective program (entitled "Asignaciones Familiares") by providing an ex-ante analysis of various potential new schemes of social protection condition on school attendance.

Made aware of their research findings, officials from the Ministry of Social Development (in charge of designing and implementing the new program) called on the PEP team to become members of a special advisory committee that was mandated to assist in the related program design and targeting process. The initial results indicated that, for several identified reasons, the first cash transfer program failed to achieve its core objectives in terms of enhancing access to education and human capital accumulation.



On the other hand, they were able to assess the best policy options, in terms of program design and targeting, to ensure the success of the new program. Based on these findings and recommendations, the Uruguayan policymakers avoided repeating past mistakes and the new program was designed according to identified best practices and the most promising options in terms of impacts on school attendance and welfare outcomes related to poverty alleviation and equity.

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