



Policy Impact Evaluation Research Initiative (PIERI)

PEP-AusAID Funding Agreement No. 41101

FINAL ACTIVITY REPORT
2012-2013



Australian Government

AusAID

I. Introduction

In 2007, the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) provided the Partnership for Economic Policy (PEP)¹ with funding to support a series of nine (9) impact evaluations of programs that seek to foster human capital investment in rural areas of developing countries. The PEP Policy Impact Evaluation Research Initiative (PIERI) was launched.

1.1. Background

Through the global infrastructure of the PEP Network, the PIERI initiative provided financial, scientific and technical support to teams of southern-based researchers for the conduct of rigorous impact evaluations of social policies/programs on targeted populations in their home countries.

Based on either experimental or non-experimental approaches, these evaluations produced crucial empirical evidence to:

- inform decision-makers, donors and taxpayers on the attainment of expected benefits
- help improve and assist in program design and implementation
- foster accountability of implementation processes
- generate political support for continuation or expansion of programs, both within and beyond national boundaries (public good value)

Moreover, the PEP support and international mentorship program contributes to building capacity and experience of local researchers in the conduct of scientifically-sound impact evaluations in developing countries.

The advantage of conducting a series of evaluation projects centered on a unified theme – rural human capital investment programs - is that it increases the external validity of findings beyond that of a single analysis. It also makes it possible for researchers from different countries to compare findings in order to both draw general conclusions and identify country specificities. For this reason, it contributes to the accumulation of knowledge on the behavioral responses to incentives embedded in such programs.

For a detailed description of the PEP research program (PIERI) that emerged from the initial PEP-AusAID funding agreement (41101), please refer to this recently published presentation document: [PEP-PIERI presentation²](#). The document comprises a summary of the various

¹ Previously the Poverty and Economic Policy (PEP) Research Network.

² www.pep-net.org/fileadmin/medias/pdf/PEP_official_documents/PEP_PIERI_presentation.pdf

themes and specific policy issues that PEP impact evaluations explore, the methodologies applied in the context of such analyses, as well as a description of the policy engagement and influence that result from the implementation of these projects.

The following report presents the list of related activities and overall progress regarding the nine (9) impact evaluation projects that were implemented with AusAID's financial support in 2007.

1.2. Synthesis

The following sections of the report provide:

- II. A list of the 9 PIERI projects supported under AusAID-PEP agreement no. 41101 p. 3
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II. List of projects funded through agreement no. 41101

A total of 9 project proposals (involving a total of 41 developing country researchers) were selected for support through this agreement; 4 experimental³ evaluations, 3 non-experimental evaluations and 2 seed projects⁴.

Project name	Type	Project title	Country	Project leader
PIERI-11239	Non-experim	An Impact Evaluation of PANES - CCT	Uruguay	Veronica Amarante
PIERI-11242	Non-experim	Estimating Participation and Spill-over Effects in Conditional Cash Transfer Programs - CCT	Brazil	Fabio Soares
PIERI-11243	Non-experim	Assessing the Impact of Argentina's Ley Federal de Educación on Educational and Labor Outcomes - VOCATIONAL	Argentina	Leonardo Gasparini
PIERI-11213	Seed	Does Redundancy Compensation Package Help Increase Income of Redundant Workers of Restructured State-owned Enterprises in Vietnam? - VOCATIONAL	Vietnam	Lan Anh Vu
PIERI-11204	Seed	Effect of Sexuality and Procreation Education on Health and Poverty Reduction of Girls in Rural China - The Case of Gansu Province, China - HEALTH	China	Wei Qu
PIERI-11857	Experim	Improving School Quality in East Africa: Randomized Evaluation of Policies to Create Local Accountability under Free Primary Education in Uganda - EDUCATION	Uganda	Madina Guloba
PIERI-11283	Experim	Improving School Quality in East Africa: Randomized Evaluation of Policies to Create Local Accountability under Free Primary Education in Kenya - EDUCATION	Kenya	Germano Mwabu
PIERI-11229	Experim	Évaluation de l'impact des programmes de cantines scolaires et de déparasitage des écoles primaires rurales au Sénégal - EDUCATION/HEALTH	Senegal	Abdoulaye Diagne
PIERI-11200	Experim	Assessing the Impact of Ishraq Intervention, A Second-Chance Program for Out-of-School Rural Adolescent Girls in Egypt - EDUCATION	Egypt	Asmaa Elbadawy

³ Initially, the 2 experimental projects from Kenya and Uganda were treated as a single project, and an additional project was selected in Argentina. The latter was not carried out because of coordination problems with the implementing agency, and the Kenya/Uganda project was subsequently divided into two independent projects (separate budgets and contracts) to facilitate operations.

⁴ The initial proposal to AusAID had set out the objective of selecting at least two proposals from Asia. However, as Asian proposals were clearly weaker than those from other regions, it was decided through consultations with AusAID officers that two of the three applying Asian teams were to be offered "seed funding" to further develop their proposals and assist in future fund-seeking activities. The objective was to build researchers' capacities and further develop their experimental research projects.

III. Summary of past activity reports and progress

3.1 2007-2008

- Call for letters of intention – over 100 letters submitted
- Pre-selection of proposals:
 - 40 shortlisted letters evaluated by members of PIERI program committee⁵ (two members for each letter)
 - Selection of 13 teams invited to develop a full proposal
 - Evaluation of the 13 proposals by the PIERI program committee
 - Selection of 10 proposals to be presented and discussed at the 1st PIERI meeting in Quebec City (Canada)
- The PIERI initiative is presented at the 2007 PEP general meeting in Lima (Peru) and widely publicized in the Network's communication and dissemination activities (presentation of PEP researchers in several international conferences)

3.2 2008-2009

- 1st PIERI meeting held June 9-13, 2008, in Quebec City – final selection
 - Training of participant researchers in policy impact evaluation
 - Presentation and discussion of 10 finalist proposals
 - Selection of 9 proposals to receive grants and support⁶
 - Assignment of mentors – among PIERI program committee members – to selected research teams
- Additional AusAID funding (373,200 AU\$) provided to PEP to finance additional projects and core costs
- 7th PEP general meeting held in Manila (Philippines), December 6 to 12, 2008.
 - Presentation of progress reports from 4 experimental and 2 seed projects
 - Presentation of interim reports from 2 non-experimental projects⁷
 - Individual meetings/discussion of projects with PIERI program committee members, mentors and resource persons – scientific support provided
 - One-day training workshop on policy impact evaluation methodologies open to all PEP researchers participating in the general meeting.

⁵ The "PIERI program committee" was composed of Habiba Djebbari (Université Laval, program director), John Hoddinott (IFPRI), Christopher Ryan (U. of Melbourne), Deborah Cobb-Clark (U. of Melbourne) and Martin Valdivia (GRADE).

⁶ In the cases of experimental projects, a revised detailed budget, including a budget narrative, and a detailed timeline were requested from the research teams prior to selection. All four projects were also subjected to a formal ethical review through various institutions.

⁷ One non-experimental project, from Uruguay, had not yet started as the team was instructed to complete a previous PEP research contract before undertaking their PIERI project – the team was nonetheless represented in the context of this former project. Progress reports – only requested for experimental projects – provide information on the implementation of the various elements of the experiment: baseline survey and analysis, intervention and its monitoring, follow-up survey, impact evaluation. Interim reports, which are requested of all non-experimental projects, consist in a draft research report with close to complete analysis. Following discussions in Manila, experimental project teams were requested by the PIERI program committee to submit regular (monthly or trimestral) progress reports on the progress of their project execution to facilitate ongoing monitoring.

- The PIERI initiative continues to be publicized in PEP general communications and presented in conferences internationally by researchers and PIERI committee members. Collaborations with other international organizations/institutions to expand the initiative are discussed.

3.3 2009-2010

- Experimental projects (Kenya, Uganda, Senegal, Egypt):
 - Research teams submit regular progress reports, which are revised/commented on by and discussed with mentors
 - Formal ethics review + review of survey and experimental instruments
 - Undertaking of baseline survey and commencement of experiments
 - International conference calls held with project teams, mentors and program leaders, to discuss progress and obstacles
 - Submission of first and second interim reports + first technical reports
- Seed projects
 - China: progress reports discussed with mentors on a regular basis
 - Vietnam: submission of draft final report
- Non-experimental projects (Uruguay, Brazil, Argentina):
 - Submission of interim and technical reports
 - Study visit completed by Elydia Silva (Brazilian project) at the Barcelona Graduate School of Economics
 - Maria Laura Alzua completed a study visit at the Department of Economics of the University of California (Berkeley)
- The PIERI initiative gains recognition around the world:
 - Maria Laura Alzua (Argentina) is invited to present results from the Argentine PIERI project at the European Association of Labour Economics (EALE) meeting in Tallinn, Estonia
 - The Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) commissions PEP's Latin American Office to launch a new impact evaluation initiative focused on prevention of teenage pregnancy in the region
 - Several institutions announce the participation of their impact evaluation experts at PEP's general meeting in Dakar - 3ie, UNICEF, AFD (the French cooperation), etc.
 - PEP devotes part of its core funding to a new round of non-experimental PIERI projects
 - Veronica Amarante and Andrea Vigorito receive the first PEGNet Best Practice Award for their success in effective cooperation between research and policy in the context of their PEP projects [PMMA-11083](#) and [PIERI-11239](#) for impact evaluations in Uruguay.

3.4. 2010-2011

- New call for proposals – selection of six new impact evaluation proposals for presentation in Dakar (AusAID funding agreement no. 53091)
- 8th PEP general meeting held in Dakar, Senegal, June 12 to 18, 2010
 - Participation of one representative from each of the 7 project teams (not from the seed projects)

- One-day training workshop on impact evaluation techniques for all members of the PEP network who were attending the general meeting (more than 50 participants)
 - Presentation of interim reports from 4 experimental projects
 - Presentation of draft final reports from 3 non-experimental projects
 - Individual meetings/discussion of projects with PIERI program committee, mentors and resource persons – direct assistance & scientific support
- Study visit completed by Mery Ferrando (Uruguay project [11239](#)) at the Barcelona Microeconomics Summer School
- On December 8, 2010, the Brazilian research team presented their preliminary findings at a national policy conference entitled “Beyond Cash: Assessing Externality and Behaviour effects of Non-experimental Cash Transfers”, organized by the Brazilian Society of Econometricians, in Salvador, Brazil.
- Researchers were also invited to present their PIERI projects in the context of international conferences, such as:
 - Clarissa Gondim Teixeira (Brazil, [11242](#)), Veronica Amarante (Uruguay, [11239](#)) and Maria Laura Alzua (Argentina, [11243](#)) presented at the Latin American and Caribbean Economic Association (LACEA) general meeting in Medellin, Colombia
 - Abdoulaye Diagne (Senegal, [11229](#)), Madina Guloba (Uganda, [11857](#)) and Alice Muthoni Ng'ang'a (Kenya, [11283](#)) presented at the Conference on Impact Evaluation Studies in Africa (CIESA) 2011 meeting in Cotonou, Benin. PEP in fact collaborated with the Institute for Empirical Research in Political Economy (IREEP) in Benin to organize the event, along with several institutions - including the AFD, CREPOL, IDRC and IFPRI.
 - The Ugandan project team was also invited to present their work in Bangalore, India, during a conference organized by the Institute for Social and Economic Change (ISEC), on September 2-3, 2010. *Did not require PEP funding.*

3.5. 2011-2012

- Presentation of PIERI projects [11239](#) (Uruguay), [11242](#) (Brazil) and [11243](#) (Argentina) - by team representatives Mery Ferrando, Clarissa Gondim Teixeira and Maria Laura Alzua - at the 2011 Annual Meeting of the Canadian Economic Association (CEA) in Ottawa, June 3 -5, 2011. Their participation was co-funded by the Canadian Development Economic Study Group (CDESG).
- On October 27-28, 2011, the team of the Uruguayan project was also invited to present its work and findings at the “Jornadas de Mercado de Trabajo y Protección Social” (conference on labor market and social protection), organized by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in Buenos Aires, Argentina. *Did not require PEP funding.*
- 9th PEP general meeting held in Siem Reap, Cambodia, December 3 - 9, 2011
 - Veronica Amarante presented the main outcomes from the Uruguayan project ([11239](#)) during a special session of the international policy conference held on December 5. This particular event gathered a number of policy makers, international institution representatives and

world-renowned academics. The session was devoted to exploring policy lessons drawn from PEP impact evaluation projects, the issue of general research capacities and the need for impact evaluations in developing countries.

- Presentation of draft final reports from 3 experimental projects
 - Senegal 11229 : [Paper](#) | [Presentation](#)
 - Uganda 11857 : [Paper](#) | [Presentation](#)
 - Kenya 11283 : [Presentation](#)
- Individual meetings with PIERI program committee members, mentors and resource persons - providing comments on drafted final research reports, as well as direct assistance, scientific support and guidance for project completion.
- Special seminar given by Habiba Djebbari (PIERI program director) and Maria Laura Alzua (PEP researcher and project leader) on “Field experiments and policy impact evaluations”
[Presentation 1](#) | [Presentation 2](#)
- At the same time, in December 2011, the rest of the Ugandan project team presented their main findings and policy recommendations to relevant policymakers from different government agencies, during two national policy conferences.
 - On December 2, 2011, they presented their work to targeted stakeholders during an event they organized themselves - in collaboration with the Center for the Study of African Economies (CSAE - Oxford, UK) and the Economic Policy Research Center (EPRC - Uganda) - in Kampala, on December 2, 2011. Find out [more](#).
 - On December 5, 2011, they were also invited to present at a national conference organized by the IIG and BRAC, again in Kampala. *Did not require PEP funding.*

IV. Activities undertaken in the year 2012-2013

All nine (9) impact evaluation projects supported under this funding agreement were concluded by the end of December 2012, as all final research reports were submitted and eight (8) of them have been approved and published⁸. **See table of section 5.1. below, for the delivery of expected outputs** (page 10).

Most activities undertaken in 2012 were led by the four (4) teams engaged in an experimental type of impact evaluation project (see last four rows of the tables below). By nature, and as expected, these projects were to be carried out over a longer time period - given the data collection requirements and to allow time for the experimental intervention to be introduced and have impacts.

⁸ Click on any of the project links, in the left column, to access all (approved, thus public) documents related to each project. In the case of the Egyptian team, the report is undergoing a final revision, by the researchers, according to the last comments provided by PEP evaluators (after several rounds of evaluation), and should be made public within a few weeks (February 2013).

Most of the activities undertaken in 2012 focused on the dissemination/communication of the teams' research findings and policy recommendations (**See list of activities below**, pages 8-9). Team [11857](#) (Uganda) has already published its working paper and policy brief, whereas team [11283](#) (Kenya) has published its policy brief and is finalizing its working paper and team [11229](#) (Senegal) is currently finalizing both (see section 5.1. below). Team [11200](#) (Egypt) will proceed to the publication of its working paper and policy brief when its final report has been approved.⁹

Overall, by the end of 2012, six (6) out of nine (9) project teams¹⁰ had presented their research work and findings in (at least one, but usually several) national or international conference events gathering audiences from both policy and academic circles. **See table in section 5.2. below for those events that were subsidized by PEP** (page 11) and **section 5.3. for PEP's internal monitoring and evaluation survey results** of the projects' overall consultation and dissemination activities (undertaken with or without PEP funding).

Finally, most of these teams have also stated that they intend to pursue such initiatives, and continue advocating for national decision-makers to take into account the evidence produced in their PEP impact evaluation projects, while designing programs and policies. **See Annex 1** for detailed accounts of what this evidence consists of for each project, and the results or impacts of the teams' advocacy work in terms of policy influence.

Below is the list of specific activities undertaken in 2012, mostly by the four experimental project teams:

- Project teams from Senegal ([11229](#)) Kenya ([11283](#)) and Uganda ([11857](#)) were invited to present their work and findings at the 2012 CSAE (Center for the Study of African Economies) international conference entitled "Economic Development in Africa", held at Oxford University from March 18 to 20, 2012.
- Asmaa Elbadawy (leader of project [11200](#)) completed a study visit at GREQAM in Marseille, France, from April 6 to May 5, 2012.
- The project team from Kenya was invited to present its work and findings at several international conferences in 2012 (*Neither required PEP funding*):
 - May 14-15, in Accra, Ghana: "Evidence-Based Education: Policy-Making and Reform in Africa", organized by Innovations for Poverty Actions (IPA)
 - June 3-4, Arusha, Tanzania: "Institutions and Service Delivery in Sub-Saharan Africa", organized by the AERC (Biannual Research Workshop)
 - October 26-27, Ann Arbor, Michigan (USA): 23rd Annual Conference of the Bureau for Research and Economic Analysis of Development (BREAD) on Development Economics
- Madina Guloba (from project team [11857](#)) completed a study visit at the CSAE, Oxford University (St-Catherine's College), UK, from May 19 to 31, 2012.
- The Senegalese project team ([11229](#)) organized a national policy conference in Dakar (Senegal) on July 10, 2012 – in collaboration with the National Department of Education – to communicate their findings directly to relevant government officials/agencies, international institutions' representatives and the general public (through the media). Find out [more](#).

⁹ As the contract period has expired, the teams from Senegal and Egypt will not receive the customary 2000\$ grant for the publication their working paper.

¹⁰ In the case of the two "seed projects", no dissemination activities were undertaken.

- On August 14, 2012, the Kenyan team presented their project results and ensuing policy recommendations to several government officials and decision-makers, during an official meeting of the [NASMLA](#) Steering Committee organized, in Nairobi, by the Kenya National Examination Council.
- Project teams from Uganda, Kenya and Senegal presented their work and findings during a special session of the 2012 PEGNet international conference, entitled “*How to make African Economic Lions: Tapping Africa's Growth and Poverty Reduction Potentials*” held in Dakar (Senegal) on September 6-7, 2012, and organized in collaboration with the PEP African Office. Find out [more](#).
- Alice Ng'ang'a Muthoni (from project team [11283](#)) completed a study visit at IFPRI in Washington, D.C, USA, from September 30 to October 13, 2012.
- Abdoulaye Diagne (leader of project [11229](#)) completed a study visit at IFPRI in Washington, D.C., USA, from October 1 to 11, 2012.
- From October to December 2012:
 - project teams from Uganda, Kenya and Senegal published their final research reports
 - the Ugandan team published a working paper and a policy brief
 - the Kenyan team published a policy brief

Finally, the team from Egypt ([11200](#)) – which had been delayed due to specific difficulties related to field constraints in recent years – has confirmed that they have already been invited to present their research work and findings at two international conferences; one is the 19th Economic Research Forum (ERF) to be held in Kuwait, in March 2013, and the other is the 27th IUSSP International Population Conference, to be held in Korea, in August 2013. See table of section 5.2. (page 11).

V. Overall progress

5.1. Delivery of expected project outputs

While ongoing support is provided by mentors and program leaders to assist researchers in scientific, logistical and technical aspects of project execution, research teams are required to produce a series of reports to keep PEP updated on their progress.

Following approval of their project proposal, all research teams must submit interim and final reports on research outcomes¹¹, as well as technical reports on overall progress in terms of capacity building, policy findings, consultation & dissemination activities (including a detailed dissemination strategy) and policy impact. Finally, in order to assist in dissemination and policy impact, researchers are also required – and provided support – to publish their research findings in two more accessible formats, i.e. working papers and one-page policy briefs.

¹¹ In the case of experimental projects, research teams are also requested to submit progress reports (not listed here), on a monthly basis, regarding progression of their specific experiments.

Below is a table summarizing the progress of each of the nine (9) supported projects in yielding the expected outputs. All published reports and documents can be accessed via the links included in the left column of the table.

Project code/country	Proposal approved ¹	Interim report(s) approved		Final report approved	Tech report updates ²	WP	PB
Non-experimental projects							
PIERI-11239 Uruguay	2009-06-29	2009-12-29		2011-03-24	6	2011-22	85
PIERI-11242 Brazil	2008-11-26	2009-10-22		2011-03-24	2	2011-18 2011-19	89 90
PIERI-11243 Argentina	2008-08-27	2009-09-30		2011-03-28	4	2011-21	88
Seed projects							
PIERI-11204 China	2008-09-29	2009-01-29		2011-03-24	2	N/A	N/A
PIERI-11213 Viet Nam	2008-09-29	N/A ⁴		2010-11-19	2	N/A	N/A
Experimental projects							
PIERI-11857 Uganda	2009-04-14	2009-11-30	2010-05-06	2012-10-29	7	2012-14	98
PIERI-11283 Kenya	2009-04-14	2009-11-30	2010-07-05	2012-10-31	7	In revision ⁴	106
PIERI-11229 Senegal	2008-10-17	2009-08-18	2011-03-29	2012-11-01	4	In revision	In preparation ⁵
PIERI-11200 Egypt	2008-11-04	2008-11-18	2012-02-14	In revision	4	In preparation	In preparation

1. Approved = date on which the final version of the document was published and posted on the PEP website (click on the project code name in the right column to find each project's published reports).
2. The technical report's content must be updated several times throughout a project's execution and at least once after completion.
3. N/A = Documents are not requested/expected from research team
4. In revision = a preliminary version (draft) of the document has been submitted evaluated and commented by PEP resource persons, and researchers are revising according to their comments and suggestions.
5. The document is currently in preparation (or being drafted) by the research team

5.2. Grant disbursement

PIERI non-experimental projects were offered standard PEP grants, which include a \$20,000 research grant as well as funding, subject to separate approval, for the following set of activities:

- Participation of one team member in PEP meetings - to present their proposal, interim report (experimental projects) and final report - roughly \$5000 per participation
- The participation of one junior member in a PEP meeting - roughly \$5000
- Participation of one member in a 3-4 week study visit - roughly \$5000
- Presentation in an international conference - roughly \$5000
- Grant for the publication of a working paper - \$2000
- Grant for publication of an article - \$2000
- Subsidy for the organization of a national policy conference - \$2000

Experimental projects were offered an additional \$90,000 for survey/experiment activities.

As for the seed projects, given that the teams were only requested to develop a complete research project proposal, the available funding was limited to research grants of \$10,000 (for Vietnam) and 20,000\$ (for China), plus funding to participate in one PEP general meeting (Manila, December 2008).

The core research grants were disbursed to research teams in several payments, each released upon delivery and approval of the various research outputs/reports, as listed in the table of section 5.1. above (page 10). The table below presents the activities for which each project team has received specific PEP financial and technical support to date (with exception of research reports and publications, listed in table of section 5.1. above, page 10).

Project name/country	Participation in PEP meeting(s) ¹				Junior researcher in PEP meeting	Study visit	International conference(s)		National conference
	June 08	Dec 08	June 10	Dec 11					
Non-experimental projects									
PIERI-11239 Uruguay	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		X ²
PIERI-11242 Brazil	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		X ³
PIERI-11243 Argentina	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Seed projects									
PIERI-11204 China	✓	✓			N/A	N/A	N/A		N/A
PIERI-11213 Viet Nam	✓	✓			N/A	N/A	N/A		N/A
Experimental projects									
PIERI-11857 Uganda	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	May 2012	✓	Sept 2012	Dec 2011
PIERI-11283 Kenya			✓	✓	✓	✓	Oct 2012	✓	Sept 2012
PIERI-11229 Senegal	✓	✓	✓	✓	X ⁴	Oct 2012	✓	Sept 2012	July 2012
PIERI-11200 Egypt	✓	✓	✓			April-May 2012			

1. There are only 2 participations for non-experimental projects and seed projects. The other 1 or 2 are participations as resource persons for the new round of PIERI projects financed from core resources.
2. Although the team did not organize an official national policy conference, they have worked in close collaboration with the government agencies involved in the program's design and implementation, resulting in several direct consultation meetings, none of which, however, required PEP's financial support. See Annex 1
3. The research team did participate in a national policy conference entitled "Beyond Cash: Assessing Externality and Behaviour effects of Non-experimental cash transfers" in 2010, but did not require funding from PEP.
4. No additional funding required as PEP general meeting held in Senegal.

5.3. Project monitoring and evaluation

In 2008, several performance indicators were proposed as part of a new PEP Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Strategy, which aims to assess the progress of the Network in achieving its general objectives. These indicators relate to the three areas in which PEP activities are now focused: capacity building and promotion, bridging evidence gaps and policy influence.

The M&E Plan has two clearly defined objectives:

- 1) To provide the PEP Management Committee with reliable and updated information on the achievement of the Network's objectives and the multi-level impact of its activities – in order to assist in general programming decisions.
- 2) To provide donor organizations with an effective handle on how PEP has :
 - contributed to strengthen and promote the use of existing research capabilities in developing countries
 - brought about sustainable improvement in national and local-level policies or in the well-being of targeted beneficiaries.

At the end of 2010, a new system was created and implemented to collect, directly from the research teams, specific information related to each of the performance indicators in the M&E Plan. The technical report that research teams are required to submit at different stages of research project execution was re-modeled into an automated computerized form, from which data can now be targeted and automatically compiled into a pre-set database. This database now constitutes the source of PEP's Monitoring and Evaluation reports.

The following (p. 12-13) statistics were obtained after compiling the latest technical report updates provided by each of the 9 research teams supported in the context of this funding agreement.

CAPACITY BUILDING	Nb	%
Nb and % of supported female researchers (/41)	25	61%
Nb and % of female project leaders (/9)	5	56%
Average age of supported researchers (/41, at time of project selection, in 2008)	32	-
Average age of project leaders (/9, at time of project selection, in 2008)	36	-
Nb and % of researchers who have learned and/or taken up in research practice (/41):		
New methodologies	30	73%
New concepts	20	49%
New software tools	25	61%
New literature	24	59%
Nb and % of projects that resulted in the undertaking of parallel research studies¹	6	67%
Nb and % of researchers who have experienced career-promoting events² (/41)	20	50%

1. These studies were commissioned by GDN, IADB, IPC-IG/UNICEF, the Ministry of Local Development and the World Bank in Senegal, the Population Council (Egypt) and the UNDP.
2. Promotions, postings, awards and other major career events for researchers since the beginning of their PEP project

CONSULTATION & DISSEMINATION (/9)	Nb	%
Nb and % of projects designed in consultation with policy makers & stakeholders¹	9	100%
Nb and % of projects that resulted in external (non-pep) publications²	5	54%
Nb and % of projects presented at a national stakeholder/policy conference³	6	67%
Nb and % of projects presented at an international conference³	6	67%
Nb % of projects (and/or partial findings) reported as news through mass media⁴	5	54%

1. A total of 35 policy makers/stakeholders/program implementers were consulted, of which 24 (69%) were said to be direct research users, from various national government agencies and international organizations.
2. 3 of these 5 projects published more than one article
3. Most of these projects were presented in more than one conference, for a total of 32 (national and international) conference presentations, of which only 12 were subsidized by PEP (AusAID) funds.
4. Radio, newspapers, television, etc.

The statistics above show remarkable initiative by the research teams in terms of consultation and dissemination activities. Moreover, information gathered from the PEP M&E surveys reveals that the initiatives undertaken by the project teams to communicate the results from their respective impact evaluation projects have already had important repercussions, in terms of both career advancement of supported researchers (promotion of local expertise) and policy decisions in their respective countries. For example, out of the nine project teams:

- 4 (44%) have been granted further funding to pursue research related to their PIERI project - from the International Development Research Center (Senegal), the National Social Sciences Foundation (China), UNIFEM (Brazil) and the World Bank (in Uganda).
- 2 (22%) have obtained new research contracts as a result of reputational effects from work undertaken in PIERI project :
 - Argentina: from IDRC, to study the labor markets in Latin America, and the World Bank's Trust Fund to undertake various activities (summer school, conferences, database) on poverty and labor markets in the region.
 - Uganda: from the World Bank, to examine how political patronage influences the high rates of teacher transfers in Uganda and how this, indirectly, affects school performance
- 6 (67%) have at least one member who has been hired/promoted/awarded as a result of work undertaken in the context of their PIERI project
- 5 (54%) have already had a direct impact on policy formulation/program design at the national level in the country under study – see Annex I

Please see Annex I for detailed accounts testifying to the actual impact/influence of these nine projects on policy formulation/decisions in their respective countries.

VI. Achieving general objectives

The general objectives of the PIERI initiative, as determined in the PEP-AusAID funding agreement were the following:

- a) To secure the engagement of developing country researchers in contributing to AusAID and PEP strategic interests by performing research that aim to assess the effectiveness of development assistance programs.

Initially, PEP was engaged to provide support to 4-to-6 research proposals submitted by developing country research teams. Following the selection process however, both parties (PEP, AusAID) agreed that use of funds would be optimized if divided into a greater number of projects, including non-experimental impact evaluations and seed projects that required considerably less funding. As a result, the PIERI initiative has:

- secured the involvement of a total of 41 researchers in 9 different developing countries (3 in Latin America, 2 in Asia, 1 in MENA and 3 in sub-Saharan Africa) to:
- assess the impact/effectiveness of a variety of development programs related to conditional cash transfers (CCTs), vocational training, education- and health-promoting interventions

The relatively weaker participation of Asian research teams has since been compensated by the selection and support, with subsequent AusAID core funding for PEP, of 3 new PIERI research projects in Asia.

- b) To produce outcomes valuable to the strategic interests of Australia's aid program, in the form of "lessons-learned" reports into effective development practice, and recommendations for future directions in development assistance

The funded PIERI project teams have been producing a series of reports (see section 5.1), on the progress of their scientific impact evaluations of the pre-mentioned development programs, which will be of great use in future program design, implementation and assistance, not only to AusAID but also to concerned national authorities. In most cases (except the two "seed projects"), the main outcomes, lessons learned and policy recommendations from these projects have also been (or will be) summed up and published as research working papers and policy briefs (see the links in table of section 5.1. page 10) which AusAID (as well as other potential users) may refer to for the improvement of future development practice.

As, by nature, the conduct of impact evaluation projects requires direct involvement in the implementation process of the programs and policy interventions under study, researchers are necessarily focused on the lessons to be learned from such process and the recommendations that their impact evaluations entail. Most of these recommendations have already been communicated to responsible authorities, at the national level, through consultation and dissemination activities, to ensure take-up in development practice (see Annex I).

c) To build the capacity of Australian/international/developing country researchers and research institutions to

- conduct scientific evaluation of aid policy and program effectiveness, and
- promote links between these researchers and institutions

in a manner commensurate with *Australian Aid: Promoting Growth and Stability, A White Paper on the Australian Government's Overseas Aid Program*.

Each of the selected PIERI research teams has been provided with both training and ongoing support to ensure the scientific rigor of their impact evaluations, while building capacities and expertise of developing country researchers in assessing the impact/effectiveness of development programs.

Scientific literature, detailed comments on proposal revisions and progress/research reports, as well as technical advice have been provided by PEP lead researchers and resource persons on an ongoing basis. In addition, documentation and training material on impact evaluation methodologies have been made available, via the PEP website, not only to PEP researchers but to the general public access as well, as a contribution to the international research community. See:

- Literature - <http://www.pep-net.org/programs/pieri/recommended-readings/>
- Training material - <http://www.pep-net.org/programs/pieri/training-material/>

By the very nature of PIERI research, team members are required to interact intensively with:

- target groups - in designing and implementing interventions and in surveying their impacts
- government authorities - often directly involved in the interventions and very much interested in the results of the analysis, which feed directly into future policy design
- other actors and stakeholders - PIERI projects feature intensive interactions with organizations such as the Population Council, World Vision, the Centre for the Study of African Economies, UNICEF, etc.

throughout the entire research process, which contributes to create links between researchers and institutions, while bridging the gap between research and policy.

The four PEP meetings held during this project agreement – in June 2008 (Quebec, Canada - PIERI meeting), December 2008 (Manila, Philippines - 7th PEP general meeting), June 2010 (Dakar, Senegal - 8th PEP general meeting) and December 2011 (Siem Reap, Cambodia – 9th general meeting) – also provided unique opportunities to bring together researchers, research users and development partners¹² working on related issues. Training on impact evaluation methodologies was provided to all participants and research projects were studied and discussed among parties and participants. Such gatherings were the occasion to create links and reinforce collaborations at the international level.

Finally, PIERI was presented by several of the funded team members at various occasions to both academic and policy audiences, gathered either at the international or national levels, in different countries of Europe, Africa and Latin America. The PEP Latin American Office, in particular, has been quite successful at promoting the value of impact evaluations in the

¹² In particular, the international conferences held as part of PEP general meetings gathered participants from several development partner institutions, such as the World Bank, UNDP, UNICEF, UNIFEM, Irish Aid, AFD, ACFB, AfDB, IDRC, Swiss cooperation, GIZ, as well as a number of local and international NGOs and government officials.

region and beyond. In Africa, international experts have cited the PEP-PIERI initiative as an example of promising involvement of local researchers in the assessment of development programs' effectiveness.

VII. Conclusion

The complexity and magnitude of impact evaluations are challenging for all parties involved. In particular, experimental projects involve budgets that dwarf standard PEP small grants. Their interventions and surveys require careful design in consultation with target groups, government and other participating organizations; the delicate nature of some interventions has required teams to carry out formal ethical reviews and coordination of a large number of people is required throughout. In some cases, the research teams have had to face serious impediments to their project's execution¹³.

At the same time, these projects are stimulating for several reasons. First, they all deal with *actual* policies in place or under consideration, rather than with more abstract "pure" research issues. Second, these interventions target groups that are both extremely vulnerable – the poor, children or adolescents, unemployed, etc. – and also extremely important for the future development of their countries, while addressing urgent and crucial development issues. Finally, the multi-level interactions required in the PIERI research process bring great and unique richness to the initiative.

In a period where a number of high-profile Northern institutions have been expanding their influence in the conduct of impact evaluations in developing countries, PIERI has been a pioneer in championing the **leadership** of impact evaluations by local researchers, who have a unique advantage in understanding local contexts, providing ongoing monitoring of surveys and interventions, and engaging on a long-term basis with policy makers and other stakeholders.

Since the initiative was launched in 2007 with AusAID funding, the PEP PIERI program has (continually) gained increasing recognition around the world, raising interest and leading to collaborations with several important development institutions: 3IE, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, DFID, the IADB and UNICEF. This is explained not only by the rising popularity of impact evaluations as a method to assess the effectiveness of development programs and interventions, but also because PEP is the only organization of its kind that can ensure a leading role of local researchers in the conduct of such initiatives, along with scientific rigor and quality of the research outcomes.

¹³ For example : the Kenya project, which involved the recruiting of contract teachers, was delayed by the National Teachers Union, which stood against decentralized hiring of teachers on limited-time contracts. The dispute went to court, but the experiment was eventually implemented with the support of the Ministry of Education and national authorities.

The nature of the difficulties encountered by the Egypt team is more common. Donors for the Ishraq intervention, national and local authorities and the NGO in charge of implementation all agreed on a randomized experiment in principle. But, for logistical reasons, the implementing agency reneged: random selection of communities for treatment required far more resources than were available. The impact evaluation, which was programmed as a randomized experiment, had to be adapted in the course of the study cycle in close consultation with the project mentors.

ANNEX I

Policy implications, engagement and influence of nine PIERI projects

ARGENTINA PIERI-11243

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

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

See [PEP policy brief 88](#)

This team of Argentinian researchers 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)*" in fostering improvement of educational and labor outcomes. 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 in the country. In other words, those poor young adults educated under the LFE (i.e. after 1994, and thus cumulated 2 additional years of education) derive no benefits in terms of higher wages, increased performance or greater integration into the labor market today. The researchers concluded (and recommended) that increasing the number of mandatory years of education would remain insufficient to improve the labor situation of poor youths if not complemented with other specific measures. Throughout the project cycle, the teams consulted with the heads of departments working on social protection issues at CIPPEC (Center for the Implementation of Public Policies Promoting Equity and Growth) and the World Bank in Argentina, as well as government officials from the Departments of "Social Expenditure Planning" and "Public Policy Evaluation".

Their findings and recommendations were presented in various policy seminars and conferences in Buenos Aires and La Plata, extensively discussed with relevant stakeholders and education policy advocates, as well as largely disseminated through mass media in the country. As a result, the evidence produced by this PEP-supported impact evaluation has been assimilated by several policy makers and civil society representatives, and is frequently mentioned in national policy debates regarding education reform and the implementation of a new conditional cash transfer program in Argentina.



BRAZIL (PARAGUAY) PIERI-11242

Rafael Perez Ribas, Fabio Soares, Clarissa Gondim Teixeira, Elydia Silva, Guilherme Hirata

Estimating Participation and Spill-over Effects in Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) Programs

See [PEP policy brief 89](#) and [PEP policy brief 90](#)

Much of the debate concerning conditional cash transfer (CCT) programs focus on the issues of targeting and conditionalities. Despite the number of initiatives led, mostly in Latin America, to assess the impact of CCT programs, there is little evidence as to the actual effect of the cash allocations per se, or the value added by the conditionality. Based on the case study of a conditional cash transfer program implemented in Paraguay (Tekoporã), at pilot phase, a team of PEP Brazilian researchers sought to assess how non-monetary components of CCT programs may affect the consumption patterns and behaviors of beneficiary households.

They found, on the one hand, that the pilot phase of the program has been successful in improving children's attendance in both schools and health centers, as it aimed, but that the main driver of such improvement was the change in households' preferences, induced by the program rather than the additional income per se. Plus, the results also show that if the "message" (or signal) associated with the program's requirements (or conditions) has led to a change in families' behaviors, that change was not caused or influenced by the awareness of the program's conditionalities or enforcement methods (e.g. family support visits by social workers). Given the costs of implementation of such programs' "non-cash" components, the researchers strongly recommended that further examination of the relative contribution of each of the program's components be conducted, so as to clearly assess what is essential to secure the desired outcomes, prior to scaling up.

Over the past few years, the team has frequently been contacted by and/or met with officials in Paraguay, e.g. from Census Bureau, the Ministries of Finance and Social Assistance, as well as from the Department in charge of implementing the Tekoporã program, seeking information about the project's results and policy advisory with regard to the (re) design and potential expansion of the program. The researchers, however, lament the high turnover rate of appointed program managers, which has made it quite difficult to provide and see through such advisory work, i.e. as they had to resume the process with each newly appointed team. They eventually decided to focus their communications on more permanent Ministerial components and officials, through whom the influence may not be as direct but more likely to produce long-term effect.

EGYPT [PIERI-11200](#)

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

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 consulted with 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 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 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, as well as to prepare a manual providing detailed information on the program's implementation.

KENYA [PIERI-11283](#)

[Germano Mwabu, Alice Muthoni Ng'ang'a, Mumia Phyllis Machio and Racheal Nakhumicha Musitia](#)
Improving School Quality in East Africa: Randomized Evaluation of Policies to Create Local Accountability under Free Primary Education in Kenya See [PEP policy brief 106](#)

One of the solution proposed by the government to address issues of low school performance in Kenya in 2008 implied the scaling up of a "contract teacher intervention", 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 experimental program to assess the effect at the national level, as well as to whether an NGO-piloted program would be successful if implemented by governmental agencies. PEP-supported local researchers thus set out to realize a highly 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's scaling up throughout Kenya.

In the end, the evidence produced by the team revealed that, no matter how carefully and rigorously an intervention is designed, the end results and effectiveness in reaching targets largely depends on the nature of program implementer and the institutional context/constraints – as the government-led interventions yielded completely different results from the NGO-led ones. The researchers also demonstrated that extrapolating results from a locally-based NGO program to national government policy is not a valid option, and 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, that reports to the President. The latter, in particular, is likely to ensure that the results are used as inputs in the policymaking process, as they give recommendations to the MOE in regards to policy orientations in the education sector.



However, as free primary education has been the epicentre of an emerging political crisis in Kenya, and given that the results are disappointing for stakeholders at the MOE, the researchers found dissemination to be a highly sensitive process. They also decided to postpone the organization of their national public policy conference until after the coming elections scheduled for March 2013 – thinking more strategic to focus their communication efforts on the leaders to be, and have more chances to shape the future education policies. Nonetheless, the researchers have managed to have their results published (twice) in a national newspaper - and thus communicated to the general public.

SENEGAL [PIERI-11229](#)

Abdoulaye Diagne, Mouhamadou Moustapha Lo, Fatoumata L. Diallo and Ibrahima Oumarou Sadou
Assessing the Impact of a School Canteen Program in Primary Schools in Rural Senegal

In this PEP project, a team of researchers in Senegal set out to assess the impact of an experimental school canteen program on the performance of pupils in rural primary schools. 120 schools were selected in rural areas where the program had not yet been implemented. Half of these schools were assigned to receive the program (treatment group) and the other half, not (control group). This randomized controlled trial enabled the researchers to observe the actual effect of the feeding program on the students' scores, the schools' rates of (grade) repetition and drop outs, as well as on other external, potentially 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. The project was conducted in constant and direct consultation with Department heads at the Ministry of Education, as well with other involved or concerned institutions such as the World Food Program and UNICEF.

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.

In the end, both initiatives have been linked, as the results from the initial PEP project have led the authorities to consider that, in addition to improving school performance and child nutrition, the school canteen program may also be used to boost local agricultural production. With canteen products purchased directly from local farmers, the welfare of the latter shall also be improved.



UGANDA [PIERI-11857](#)

Madina Guloba, Lawrence Bategeka, Ibrahim Kasirye

Improving School Quality in East Africa: Management and Motivation in Ugandan Primary Schools

See [PEP policy brief 98](#)

Despite relative success in improving school access in Uganda since the mid-90s, learning outcomes at the national level remain poor and the government still faces important challenges, especially in terms of "quality" of education services, which, in Uganda, particularly suffer from 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 community involvement is key - and a cost-effective alternative - to improve performance and ensure proper school management in Ugandan primary schools. Such results have immediate implication for education policy in any country with similar contexts, i.e. where accountability is low and implementing test-based incentives may be too expensive.

The study was conducted in close collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Sports, the National Planning Authority, as well as the Board of National Assessment for Progress in Education (NAPE), all first-hand users of its expected outcomes. Consultations at the Ministerial level were mainly done with the Ministry of Education and Sports to ensure their adherence to the ensuing results and policy recommendations. It also created an entry point for the researchers into the Ministry, whose officials provided inputs for the design of the survey and intervention instruments used throughout the project implementation period.

More consultations were held with two “international organizations: the Netherlands Development Organization (SNV) and World Vision. As both are based at district and community levels, their collaboration was expected to facilitate the training of participants and monitoring of field activities, as well as to help the project's findings and recommendations, once issued, to reach and impact at the grass roots level. It was later reported that both institutions are now using these findings, as well as the analytical tools designed for the purpose of this project, in their own interventions and monitoring/evaluation activities. Moreover, as a result of the implementation - through the PEP project - of community-based systems to monitor the selected schools' management and performance, it was reported that a great deal of initiatives have later been 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 PIERI-11239

Veronica Amarante, Andrea Vigorito, Arim Rodrigo

School Attendance, Child Labor and Cash Transfers: An Impact Evaluation of PANES - See [PEP policy brief 85](#)

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 cash transfers, granted on a conditional basis, to poor households in the country. Simultaneously, a team of local researchers was granted PEP support to assess the actual impact or success of the previous program (PANES) on the intended outcomes - such as school attendance, child labor and income poverty.

Made aware of their research work, 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 decision-making process. On the one hand, results from their PEP-supported research work had led the team to conclude that, for several identified reasons, the cash transfer program had basically failed to achieve its core objectives in terms of 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 next (and reformed) program to be implemented. Based on these findings and recommendations, the Uruguayan authorities avoided repeating past mistakes and the new program was designed according to the scheme identified by the researchers as the most promising in terms of impact on school attendance, labor, poverty and inequality.