

# WBI Evaluation Briefs

REPORTING ON CLIENT AND STAFF LEARNING AND CAPACITY ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMS

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World Bank Institute Evaluation Group

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## What Works In Four Thematic Programs

### Background

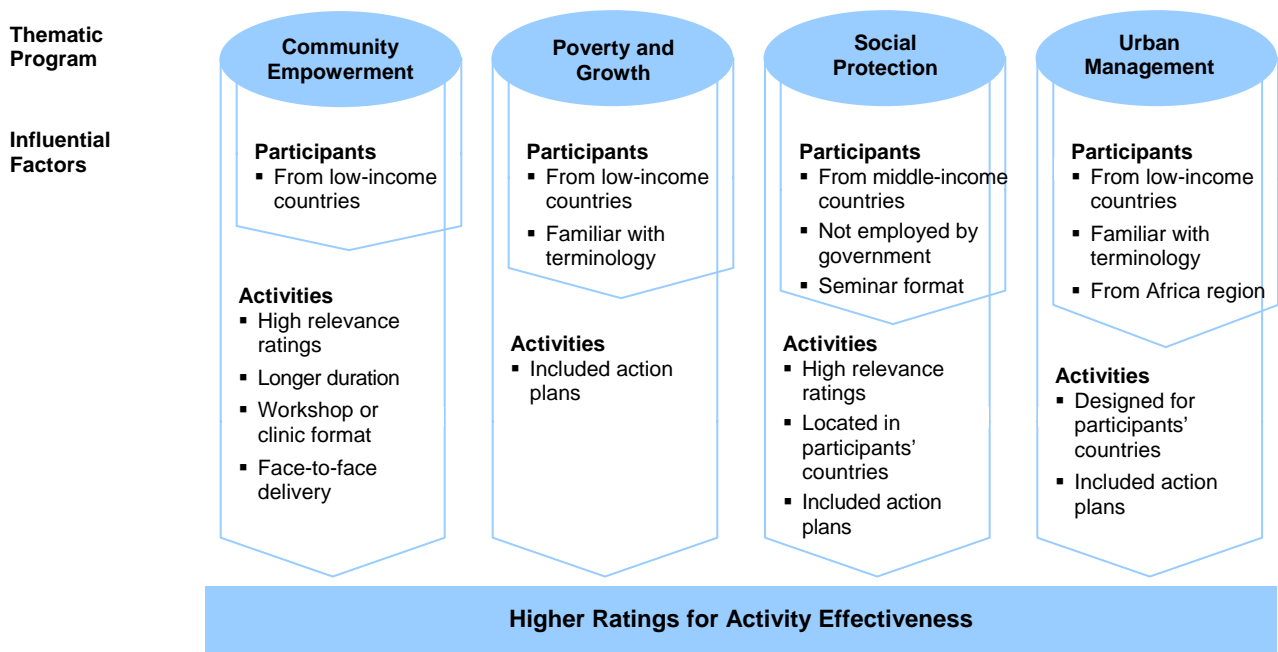
The World Bank Institute (WBI) offers learning and capacity development programs in a wide range of subjects. Many activities are tailored to specific country needs, and other activities address global issues such as governance or knowledge for development. Activities include courses, seminars, and policy advice on topics that are important to development. As noted in the *WBI 2005 Annual Report*, WBI delivered a total of 925 learning offerings in FY05 to 108,900 external participants and 700 Bank staff.

### Evaluation Questions

This brief presents the results of impact evaluations of four of WBI's thematic programs: Community Empowerment and Social Inclusion (CESI), Poverty and Growth (PG), Social Protection (SP), and Urban and City Management (UCM). These studies addressed four questions:

- What is the program's relevance?
- What is the program's effectiveness?
- What is the program's impact?
- What factors influence the program's outcomes?

**Figure 1. Factors Associated with Ratings for Effectiveness, by Thematic Program**



## Evaluation Results: Relevance and Effectiveness

**1. All four thematic programs received moderately high ratings on their activities' relevance to participants' work and country needs.** On a scale from 1 (not relevant at all) to 7 (extremely relevant), the mean rating by theme was 5.5 (CESI, UCM) and 5.6 (PG, SP).

**2. Participants rated all four programs as effective, especially for raising awareness of development issues.** The composite means across six dimensions of effectiveness were 5.3 (CESI, PG, and UCM) and 5.5 (SP) on a scale from 1 (not effective at all) to 7 (extremely effective). The six dimensions of effectiveness included raising awareness of development issues, providing knowledge and skills, developing understanding of role as agent of change, developing strategies to address organizational needs, developing strategies to address country needs, and networking.

**3. The perceived relevance of a thematic program for participants' work and country needs was associated with ratings of effectiveness.** Among CESI and SP participants, high ratings for relevance were associated with high ratings for effectiveness. This link was not significant for UCM or PG participants. However, UCM participants did assign higher ratings for effectiveness when they perceived that the activity was designed specifically for their country.

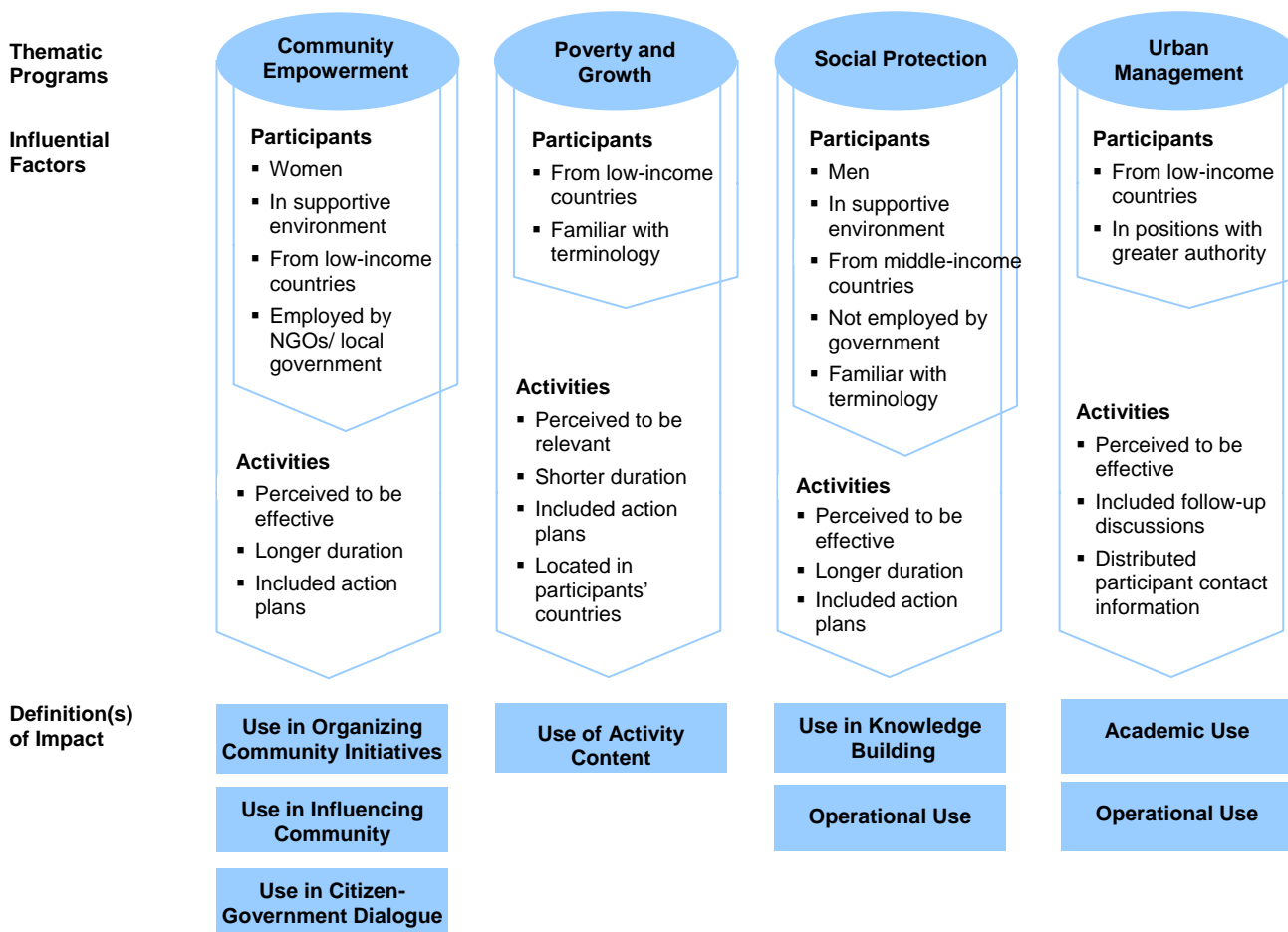
**4. Development of action plans during activities was positively associated with perceived effectiveness of thematic learning programs.** The survey asked participants to indicate whether they had developed an "action plan/strategy (e.g., work plans, strategy papers, or policy documents) to apply the knowledge and skills" gained through the activity. Ratings in three of the four programs (PG, SP, and UCM) associated the inclusion of action plans with effectiveness. Other activity features and participant characteristics associated with ratings of effectiveness varied by theme (see figure 1). For example, in the CESI, PG, and UCM programs, participants from low-income countries were more likely to assign higher ratings for effectiveness than were participants from middle-income countries, whereas SP participants from middle-income countries were more likely to assign higher ratings than were SP participants from low-income countries.

## Evaluation Results: Use and Impact

**5. Participants reported moderate use of knowledge and skills gained from these thematic activities.** The composite means for use across seven dimensions were 4.8 (PG and UCM) and 4.9 (CESI and SP) on a scale from 1 (not at all used) to 7 (very often used).

**6. Participants in all four programs reported positive changes.** Through the surveys, participants indicated whether the learning activity influenced or led to positive changes in seven areas: research, teaching, public awareness of development issues, new practices within work organization, collective initiatives, legislation and regulation, and country development strategies. On a scale from 1 (negative influence) to 7 (positive influence), the composite means were 5.6 (PG and SP), 5.5 (CESI) and 5.2 (UCM). The areas rated as being influenced most varied by program, but, across the four programs, legislation and regulation were reported to be least influenced by the learning activities.

Figure 2. Determinants of Program Impact, by Thematic Program



**7. Perceived effectiveness was a strong determinant of program impact across all four themes.** Those participants who perceived that activities were more effective were more likely to indicate that the program led to changes. The definitions for impact and the identification of other determinants such as activity features or participant characteristics varied by program (see Figure 2).

**8. Participants found the WBI thematic programs to be marginally more effective than other comparable non-WBI programs with which they were familiar.** On a seven-point scale from 1 (much less useful) to 7 (much more useful), mean ratings for the WBI programs were 4.6 (SP), 4.7 (PG), and 4.9 (CESI and UCM). Nearly half (48 percent) of UCM participants were familiar with similar non-WBI events, with smaller percentages of participants aware of comparable programs for CESI (36 percent), SP (30 percent), and PG (26 percent).

**9. A majority of participants reported that WBI did not conduct any follow-up after the end of the thematic activity.** Roughly three-quarters of participants of each program indicated that there was no subsequent contact initiated by WBI. Participants of some activities reported that they continued to share knowledge with each other after the activity ended, but the practice

of distributing participants' contact information varied. Nearly three-quarters of respondents (71 percent) who participated in PG activities reported receiving participant contact information compared with 63 percent of CESI respondents, 63 percent of UCM respondents, and 49 percent of SP respondents.

## Implications and Conclusions

The WBI thematic programs focused on community empowerment and social inclusion, poverty and growth, social protection and risk management and urban and city management are all achieving positive outcomes. Results from the four program evaluations provide important guidance for strengthening these and other thematic programs in the future:

- The development of action plans during learning events is an important predictor of impact. Where possible, thematic activities should incorporate or continue action-oriented learning activities such as developing work plans, strategy papers, or policy documents.
- A country-focused approach is key to the success of thematic programs. Providers of thematic activities should customize events to maximize relevance for participants' work and country needs.
- WBI should increase follow-up activities and take measures to distinguish its programs from those offered by competitors.

The most effective mix of activity features and participant characteristics varies by thematic program. Activity planners can use evaluation results to inform learning design and delivery strategies and to target the most appropriate participants.

## Methods and Data

Data sources varied across the four evaluations, but all relied on a participant survey, focus groups with participants, a desk review of program documents, and data in WBI's Client Registration System. Other data sources included interviews with participants (UCM), and interviews with WBI local partners, World Bank country staff, and team leaders of the thematic programs (PG and SP).

Participants in these four evaluations responded to an identical survey, which included questions on how relevant and useful the thematic learning activity was for participants' jobs; what changes the activity precipitated in work practices, legislation, or development strategies; how the learning activity compared with similar activities offered by other organizations; and what the characteristics were of the learning activity and the individual respondents. Based on the quantitative data produced by survey questions about participants' experiences, the studies included regression models to identify determinants of effectiveness and impact.

WBIEG used similar but not identical sampling strategies for the participant surveys in the four programs. In all four cases, participants were eligible to be sampled if they had attended at least one learning activity lasting longer than one day in a respective thematic area during FY02-03. WBIEG coordinated data collection efforts for the impact evaluation of WBI sector and thematic programs with those for the country focus evaluations

completed in FY04. Respondents in the retrospective country studies who had participated in a relevant thematic activity were included in the sample for that thematic program. Each evaluation also used stratified random sampling of participants from those countries with the highest levels of participation for that theme. Response rates ranged from a high of 68 percent (CESI and PG) to a low of 34 percent (UCM).

## References

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### About WBI

**World Bank Institute (WBI)** helps people, institutions, and countries to diagnose problems that keep communities poor, to make informed choices to solve those problems, and to share what they learn with others. Through traditional and distance learning methods, WBI and its partners in many countries deliver knowledge-based options to policy makers, technical experts, business and community leaders, and civil society stakeholders fostering analytical and networking skills to help them make sound decisions, design effective socioeconomic policies and programs, and unleash the productive potential of their societies.

**Institute Evaluation Group (WBIEG)** works with WBI's Leadership Team and with the World Bank's Learning Board to design, implement, and report evaluation results for staff, client, and joint learning events. IEG also offers distance learning and face-to-face training in program evaluation. WBI Evaluation Briefs report on these evaluation results.

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