

Authors

Meredith Startz
Dartmouth College

Are you an evidence conscious donor?

IPA and like-minded organizations are all about generating evidence on what works in the fight against poverty, so that those who direct funding and design policies and programs can make better-informed decisions. When we think about our audience, we usually have the giants of the field in mind: government agencies, multi-million dollar foundations and NGOs, international organizations, and so on. And appropriately so. These are the folks who have the power to design or revise whole programs, or to champion a new way of thinking on the national or international stage.

But I wonder how those of us who aren't in a position to direct billions of dollars can and should interact with this evidence. As individuals who make charitable donations of time or money, we are faced with options that are constrained in many ways. We don't have the power to design a whole new program according to our ideal standards, and we frequently don't have access to full information about the organizations we consider supporting. Instead, we usually have to decide whether to write a small check to an individual NGO, or to sign a petition, or to volunteer with local group.

I'm curious how the readers of this blog -- surely a better informed and more evidence-conscious group than most, when it comes to anti-poverty interventions -- approach this challenge. Do you donate money? To whom? How do you decide where to donate? Do you sign petitions? Do you volunteer? What sort of information affects your decisions?

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