

Call for expression of interest – Local researchers for PEI’s Economic Inclusion Impact Evaluation Collaborative,

In collaboration with DIME and Technical Partners

(Countries of focus: Malawi, Sierra Leone, Cameroon, Angola, Ethiopia, Bangladesh, Mozambique, Haiti, and South Sudan)

With the massive surge of government-led economic inclusion programs globally, the next few years are critical to evaluate the potential and limits of these interventions implemented at scale for the poorest. [The evidence from first generation of studies](#) show that Economic Inclusion programs help the poorest and vulnerable people escape the cycle of poverty by boosting their incomes and assets and help them gain productive employment and build sustainable livelihoods. These programs can provide effective pathways out of extreme poverty. As global attention focuses on the scale-up of government led economic inclusion programs, PEI in collaboration with DIME and Technical Partners is looking to build evidence on the learning agenda focused on impact and cost-effectiveness of programs at scale (see Annex 1 for background note and Annex 2 for learning priorities).

The World Bank’s Partnership for Economic Inclusion (PEI) in collaboration with Development Impact Evaluation department (DIME) and PEI’s Technical Partners have launched an Impact Evaluation Collaborative on Moving Economic Inclusion to Scale (IE Collaborative) with the goal of informing an evidence-based scale-up of economic inclusion programming. The IE collaborative will seek to generate rigorous answers to several ongoing debates in economic inclusion programming and disseminate actionable recommendations to governments planning to expand their economic inclusion programs or implement related innovations.

As part of the IE Collaborative, we will support a strategic portfolio of studies on impact evidence and cost effectiveness. Several government-led projects linked to World Bank operations have expressed interest to design strategies to learn about the impacts (and cost-effectiveness) of their planned economic inclusion innovations. Selected teams will be invited to participate in an Impact Evaluation Policy Workshop (expected to be held at the end of May 2022). The workshop will provide technical assistance to help teams develop an impact evaluation design to address the highest priority policy questions to inform the scale-up of economic inclusion programs in their context. At a later stage, it is expected that a competitive Call for Proposals will be organized to provide complementary financial support to implement the designed studies.

We are launching an open call for young local researchers with interest in evaluating economic inclusion programming by using prospective and rigorous causal inference methods. Selected researchers will be matched with teams participating in the Impact Evaluation Workshop. Local researchers will liaise with counterparts to prepare a brief presentation in preparation to the workshop, before supporting counterparts to develop an impact evaluation design during the workshop. Local researchers will be supported and mentored by experienced international faculty in the field of economic inclusion. Participation in the workshop may lead to additional involvement in implementing these studies (over the next 2-3 years potentially), depending on availability of financing and feasibility, something that will be decided after the workshop.

This open call seeks to identify promising young researchers, with a priority for researchers from or with strong link to the countries of focus (*Malawi, Sierra Leone, Cameroon, Angola, Ethiopia, Bangladesh, Mozambique, Haiti, and South Sudan*). The ideal profile is a researcher (approximately within 5 years of a

PhD in economics) with a track record of working papers or publications on applied microeconomic development topics that link to social protection, labor, livelihoods, empowerment, or economic inclusion of vulnerable populations. Prior experience working on impact evaluations or leading large-scale data collection in the field is a plus. Researchers from countries other than the countries of focus who have relevant research experience may also express interest, provided they are willing to spend substantial time doing research in the countries of focus moving forward.

Interested researchers are invited to complete a basic form and submit a brief statement of interest (at most 1 page) and their CVs detailing educational background, research, and work experience by COB 6:00 PM Eastern April 5, 2022. [Please submit your application by accessing this link.](#)

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Annex 1: Background Note - PEI Impact Evaluation Collaborative on Moving Economic Inclusion to Scale

In collaboration with DIME and Technical Partners

Background and Rationale

To date, the scale up of economic inclusion programs builds on a promising evidence base, however, as highlighted in the [State of Economic Inclusion Report 2021](#), existing evidence does not yet go far enough in addressing [several ongoing debates](#) in economic inclusion programming. There are still critical gaps in understanding the mechanisms and drivers of impact and cost-effectiveness especially for large-scale government-led programs (Annex 2). Additionally, Governments are reaching out to PEI for support on embedding economic inclusion into their strategy, financing, and operations and there is a growing demand for technical advice on program design under constrained government budgets.

Therefore, PEI is strengthening its innovation and learning function (I&L), in the form of an I&L Hub, to support evidence-based economic inclusion programming at scale. PEI is uniquely positioned to do so given its global partnership network and ability to leverage World Bank's country engagements. The Hub will support the following two tracks: (1) program design and learning from implementation; and (2) impact evidence and cost effectiveness (Annex 3).

To implement high quality impact evaluations and assess cost-effectiveness of government-led economic inclusion programs, PEI and DIME are forging a strategic technical partnership to exploit both PEI's deep engagement with World Bank's operations and wide partnership network, and DIME's expertise to evaluate large scale interventions and develop pathways to maximize program impact. Both PEI and DIME are uniquely placed within the World Bank which would allow both teams to maximize mobilization of expertise, resources, and influence both on the operational and research front. In this regard, both partners will work closely to anchor the engagement across various global practices and cross-cutting solution areas of the World Bank.

Furthermore, the collaborative will engage [PEI partnership network](#)¹ which includes an evolving set of stakeholders from national governments to bilateral, multilateral, NGO, research, and private sector organizations with a wide range technical expertise from cutting edge research and evaluation to designing and building resilient economic inclusion programs. Therefore, PEI's technical partners will play a pivotal role bringing in technical expertise, operational insights, and diverse organizational perspectives in the implementation of Impact Evaluations. DIME Team already collaborates with some of PEI's technical partners and affiliates such as IPA. Both PEI and DIME will leverage their existing partnerships with research and academic institutions and find synergies to move the agenda forward.

¹ **Funding Partners:** GIZ, Irish Aid, Co-Impact, BRAC; **Technical Partners:** Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), UNHCR, Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA), BOMA Project, Trickle Up, Concern Worldwide, Fundación Capital, RESULTS, Village Enterprise, World Vision International.

Impact Evaluation (IE) Workplan

In the proposed workplan, up to 6-10 Government-led Economic Inclusion programs will be selected, which are supported by the WBG. These programs will be selected for a technical assistance and four-year financial support (subject to availability of funds) from leading experts and researchers on designing and implementing robust impact evaluations. Collectively, this evidence base will not only enhance the effectiveness of country operations but will also inform global evidence on the scale-up of economic inclusion programs led by government.

The strategic portfolio of evaluations will be structured following the Impact Evaluation to Development Impact [\(i2i\) model](#), wherein interested task and project teams submit Expressions of Interest (EOI), and selected teams are trained and matched with a team of world class researchers for technical assistance, and are invited to apply for financial support on the basis of technical quality and policy relevance. A set of activities to advance the portfolio of evaluations are described below:

1. **Expression of interest for participation in the Impact Evaluation workshop.** Government agencies programs with an interest in learning about the impacts (and cost-effectiveness) of ongoing or planned economic inclusion innovations will be invited to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI). This will help identify potential innovations that country teams and World Bank operations are considering, assess the alignment in learning priorities with the strategic areas to be prioritized, and understand current learning and impact evaluation potential under these projects.

The evidence priorities identified in the State of Economic Inclusion 2021 report and insights raised during PEI's Global Learning Event will provide a basis to prioritize operations. Selection of economic inclusion operations expressing interest to participate in the Impact Evaluation Workshop will be prioritized based on the following criteria:

- World Bank Group's operations supporting government-led programs integrated in national social protection systems or with strong linkages with Social Protection policy issues.
 - Operations' learning interest is aligned with PEI's learning priorities and knowledge gaps, as described in **Annex 1**. Particular attention will be paid to operations with potential to answer questions regarding "effectiveness at scale" or "scalable delivery modalities".
 - Operational linkages with PEI's cross cutting thematic priorities: (a) programming for women and youth; (b) programming in urban areas, FCV, and displacement-affected contexts; and (c) low- and middle-income countries. To amplify learning, attention will be paid to existing country operations supported by PEI through its technical assistance pillar.
 - Operations that could build potential evaluations that are "forward-looking", meaning that evaluations can be designed, planned, and incepted before targeted beneficiaries start receiving the next phase of the intervention.
2. **Identification of interested researchers and matchmaking of Principal Investigators (PIs) and projects.** Matchmaking refers to the process of connecting a participating economic inclusion operation (and their project staff and key government counterparts) with a team of researchers. DIME and PEI will identify potential local and international researchers interested to work on a

new wave of impact evidence. The matchmaking process will start before the IE workshop to take advantage of the opportunity to develop an IE design during the workshop.

3. **Organization and delivery of impact evaluation workshop(s).** In the IE workshop the country teams from selected economic inclusion projects will be exposed to the methodologies and practicalities of embedding IE into operations, with the goal of emerging from the workshop with a rigorous design addressing strategic knowledge gaps tailored to their project. In the workshop, task teams will learn about the state of the evidence on economic inclusion, IE methodology, and initiate an IE design discussion for their projects.

During the workshop, each participating project (composed of project staff and key government counterparts) will be paired with a team of local and international researchers that are experts in the field of the project's operations. These researchers/principal investigators (PIs) will accompany these country teams' participants to facilitate the training and guide them on the IE design sessions. Country teams will learn about the existing evidence and knowledge gaps related to economic inclusion interventions, and specifically, the types of innovations that correspond to their projects. Theoretical sessions on IE methods, evaluation questions and program theory of change will be complemented with practical sessions where these teams, supported by the workshop staff and their PIs, will prepare a potential IE design for their projects.

4. **Call for Proposals (CfP) to provide funding for the implementation of impact evaluation projects.** The number of IE projects to be financially supported by the call for proposals will depend on the funding available². Country teams (and matched research teams) attending the impact evaluation workshop will be encouraged to submit their initial designs into the window for funding. The amount of funds will depend on the capacity and the existing funds project teams have to manage data collection. The projects selected for funding will follow strict guidelines to ensure technical quality, policy relevance, and strategic alignment with PEI learning priorities.
5. **Portfolio monitoring and management.** Staff from PEI and DIME will facilitate the management of the IE portfolio, including EOI, CfP, monitoring, regular reviews, and others. Progress of IE studies supported in the portfolio will be tracked via DIME's MyIE platform. MyIE is a web-based database management system covering 200 indicators on each impact evaluation's profile and status, evaluation design, data collection aspects, monitoring and quality indicators, counterpart details, influence on programs and policies, and project's documents (reports, working papers, etc.). The system facilitates management of the IE portfolio and allows users to produce tailored reports on different variables (including cost, timeline, analytical design, data collection, and geographic area).
6. **Collaborative for innovation and learning:** In addition to the technical and financial support offered to IE studies in the evaluation window, the evaluations will be complemented with the organization and delivery of technical and capacity building events with technical partners,

² So far PEI has secured funding for the implementation of the Impact Evaluation workshop only. Funding is yet to be secured for the IE implementation; however, the fundraising conversations are ongoing with multiple donors and PEI team is optimistic to secure funding for the proposed workplan.

government practitioners, academics, funding partners, etc. to further inform the country evaluations. The activities envisioned under this line of work are as follows:

- **Cross-regional innovation and learning (I&L) clinics:** Will encourage governments to learn from each other, build peer networks, and jointly identify common challenges.
 - **Research workshops/conferences:** Will create a platform for the dissemination of activities under the evaluation window to facilitate knowledge-sharing and further encourage the scale-up of effective interventions.
7. **Promotion of knowledge through public goods, tools, and data:** Finally, this collaboration will deliver global knowledge products and tools to inform the evidence-based scale up of economic inclusion programs through government systems. Likely outputs and tools to support task teams would include:
- **Economic inclusion evidence database/knowledge repository:** A database of completed, ongoing, and upcoming quantitative and qualitative evaluations, mapped to the topics in the strategic research agenda, as well as by country/region.
 - **Synthesis reports, briefs, policy notes and meta-analysis:** Synthesis of emerging evidence around impact at scale, evidence-based design and delivery will be produced and a systematic review or meta-analysis.
 - **Costing analysis and optimization:** Use in-house costing tool for complementary analyses, including identifying cost-drivers, cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness analysis as part of IE impact analysis, to provide further evidence-based inputs on optimizing program design to project teams and contribute to broader knowledge.

Annex 2: Key knowledge gaps identified in the economic inclusion literature

Key policy-relevant knowledge gaps in the economic inclusion literature

Thematic priorities	Impact evidence and cost-effectiveness research questions
Effectiveness at scale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the cost-effectiveness of large-scale government-led programs? • What is the nature and extent of spillovers on the local economy and general equilibrium effects?
“Scalable” delivery modalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do alternative delivery modalities that enhance scalability affect program impact and cost-effectiveness? (low-cost vs. high-cost; low-intensity vs. high-intensity; digital vs. face-to-face; individual vs. group-based; NGO vs. government etc.)
Dynamics over time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do impacts vary over time? Are they sustained in the short to long-term? • How does it affect cost-benefit analysis?
Bundling of Interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the marginal contribution of constituent interventions (including cash) to overall impact and overall cost? What is the minimum appropriate bundle or optimal bundle for a given context? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What elements are better replaced by cash (cash benchmarking)? ○ What elements of economic inclusion package are essential? Is it necessary to build on regular cash transfer (layering)? • Does the timing, sequencing, and intensity of interventions matter? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What is the role of psychosocial interventions or behavioral nudges to bring about sustained economic inclusion? ○ What is the impact of low intensity “refresher” interventions? ○ What is the effect of add-on interventions to promote gender empowerment? ○ Are interventions facilitating referrals with service providers effective, or linkages with value chains effective?
Targeting/heterogeneity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the cost-effectiveness of economic inclusion programs across population groups? • What modifications in bundle design and delivery are necessary to increase cost-effectiveness for different sub-groups?
External validity across Settings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to adapt economic inclusion programs in Urban, FCS and displacement affected contexts?
Resilience and shock-responsiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do economic inclusion programs improve households’ resilience to (climate, conflict, or economic) shocks? How? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What elements in the bundle can help beneficiaries build resilience? How can economic inclusion programs be tailored to improve resilience? ○ Are economic inclusion programs also effective to build resilience in conflict-affected and shock-prone areas?

Annex 3: PEI Innovation & Learning (I&L) Hub overview

PEI is strengthening its innovation and learning function, in the form of an Innovation & Learning (I&L) Hub, to support evidence-based economic inclusion programming at scale. This responds to a surge in economic inclusion programming, an evolving learning agenda, and a growing demand for technical advice along the program cycle. The I&L hub will use a twin-track comprehensive evaluative approach to provide evidence-based answers to some critical “how to” questions that are frequently raised by governments that are in the process of introducing and scaling up economic inclusion programs. The two tracks supported by the I&L Hub model are: 1) program design and learning from implementation; and (2) impact evidence and cost effectiveness.

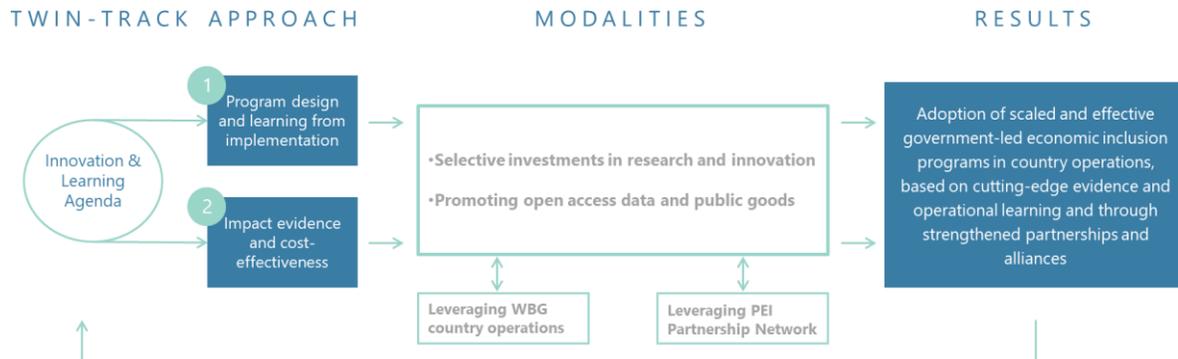
Track 1: Program design and learning from implementation. The track will support governments and country teams in enhancing program performance and promoting real-time course adjustment in program implementation. It will generate systematic learning from: (a) diagnostic studies to identify context-appropriate program design, delivery, and institutional arrangements; and (b) performance monitoring to identify implementation bottlenecks, course correct, and improve performance. The track will inform and complement Impact Evidence and Cost-effectiveness work under track 2.

Track 2: Impact evidence and cost effectiveness. This track will support the curation, analysis, and selective creation of evidence on impact and cost-effectiveness to respond to critical knowledge gaps. Initially, preference will be given to the evaluation of large-scale government-led programming implemented on PEI Grant Award countries, and projects attempting to identify the marginal contribution of components to overall impact, the role of alternative implementation modalities or delivery options, and heterogeneity of impacts across population groups. Selected projects will attempt to generate a more systematic evidence base, using comparable outcomes and indicators, and conclusively establish the overall impact and cost-effectiveness of economic inclusion programming over the short to long-term.

The Hub will promote a comprehensive evaluative approach that complements IE with quantitative and/or qualitative operational research to ensure learning takes place in a structured way. Both tracks will leverage PEI’s country engagement and partnership network and will operate through the two modalities: (a) selective investments in research and innovation; and (b) production of knowledge public goods, tools, and data.

- a) Selective investments in research and innovation: The I&L Hub will provide funding, through open calls for proposals, as well as some advisory services, general backstopping, and quality assurance. These grants will fund new operational research and innovations, help support IE that address critical knowledge gaps, and help build government capacity for monitoring, evaluation, research, and learning activities. With respect to impact evidence, proposals that have complementary operational research will be prioritized, in order to systematically draw lessons on learning from implementation.
- b) Promoting of knowledge public goods, tools and data: As PEI tackles questions on the expectations and debates on economic inclusion, the exchange of information and dissemination of public goods (e.g. open data, costing tools, diagnostic and M&E toolkits, evaluation wiki, systematic review or

meta-analysis, operational guidance notes, etc.) is critical to demystify common challenges, inform operations, and scale up. The I&L Hub will produce and disseminate a range of tools and online resources to inform program design and implementation. The use of common tools will allow systematic learning from implementation. The I&L Hub will support collaboration on key technical priorities and will continue to advance partner-driven public goods such as the Open Access Data Portal³ and cross-regional Innovation and Learning clinics to facilitate cross-program learning.



Countries. I&L Hub’s activities will be linked to PEI’s country engagement work that supports the capacity building of at least 25 national governments in designing, improving outcomes, and scaling up economic inclusion approaches by 2025.⁴

³ In 2020, PEI launched its website and with it an open data portal which provides access to information on over 200 programs operating across 75 countries. The data portal consists of a landscape and costing dashboards, based on data captured through the landscape and costing surveys, respectively. The data portal also provides an economic inclusion database listing all economic inclusion programs captured with the landscape survey, as well as a downloadable program factsheet.

⁴ On October 2019, PEI’s first round of technical grant awards were issued to economic inclusion programs led by World Bank task teams in 10 countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Egypt, Iraq, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Panama, Uzbekistan, and Zambia. A new wave of 10 countries were selected for grants in 2021 as part of PEI’s COVID-19 Recovery Call for Proposals, Round 2: Angola, Benin, Cameroon, Djibouti, DRC, Fiji, Ghana, Indonesia, Madagascar, and Uganda.