

Abstract

So as to maximize the impact of future programs and, hence, their development impact, the World Bank and other institutions, including national governments, rely on program evaluation of social programs in order to determine what works and what doesn't.

I examine one such program, namely the National Functional Literacy Program (NFLP) in Ghana, which is a literacy program targeted to adults in rural areas, and its impact on child mortality (related results for other outcomes, including pre- and postnatal care, teenage pregnancy, and household expenditures, are also briefly discussed).

I start out by examining the evaluation of social programs more generally, the role of the World Bank in development, and the World Bank's particular approach to the evaluation of programs, coupled also with my own experiences working for the World Bank—including visiting adult literacy programs in rural villages in Ghana.

I then examine the NFLP for Ghana as a vehicle to decrease child mortality as a special case study to illustrate these issues. And, while the main emphasis is on policy related issues, I also address some of the more thorny econometric issues related to self-selection into program participation, as well as possible non-random program placement which are important issues to address in order to obtain the best advice for policymakers. A simple cost-benefit analysis is also presented, further supporting the cost-effectiveness of these programs for the case of child mortality in Ghana.