



## Honduras

### MCC Learning from

### Farmer Training and Development Assistance (FTDA)

NORC, May 2014

MCC released impact evaluations from farmer training activities in five countries in October 2012. Looking across these five and informed by lessons about impact evaluations in agriculture more broadly, MCC identified a set of common lessons<sup>1</sup>. The specific lessons illustrated by the Honduras FTDA Activity are:

#### SHARED PROGRAMMATIC AND EVALUATION LESSONS

- *MCC must develop program logics early and revise as necessary.* MCC now requires the formulation and revision of program logics from the concept note stage and throughout implementation. The program logic approach has been applied in the most recent cohort of compacts in development (Benin, Niger and Sierra Leone). In addition, the agenda of MCC's Ag College in September 2012 included a day devoted to review of program logics for all active agriculture projects in the portfolio by MCC and MCA counterparts together. This was followed up with a series of peer review discussions for each of the program logics to confirm links to on-going evaluations.
- *MCC should integrate implementers and evaluators early.* One key lesson is MCC brought in the independent evaluator after key program design and implementation actions had been taken which affected the feasibility of a rigorous impact evaluation. Since 2011, MCC has worked to integrate evaluators as early in the project development as possible (El Salvador II, Georgia II, Indonesia, Malawi).
- *MCC must align incentives for implementers and evaluators.* It is almost impossible to have a successful evaluation if program implementers and evaluators are not working in lock-step. This requires not only early integration, but also aligning incentives between the two. There must be clear understanding and commitment by the implementing entity to cooperate with the evaluator and vice versa. In Honduras, the implementer was contracted two years before the evaluator, which resulted in the implementer's contract not including specific responsibilities regarding collaboration with the evaluator. In addition, the implementer was committed to delivering training to 6,000 farmers and increasing average income by \$2,000. Therefore, the implementer's incentive was to find successful program participants that were selected in part based on difficult to replicate criteria, which did not align with the evaluation design. For the new cohort of compacts, MCC it is ensuring that contractual requirements of implementers include the right incentives in terms of results for the intervention but also collaboration with and facilitation of impact evaluations.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://assets.mcc.gov/content/uploads/2017/05/issuebrief-2012002119501-ag-impact-evals.pdf>

## PROGRAMMATIC LESSONS

- *MCC programs must clearly define program participants.* For any intervention, MCC and country counterparts must work toward having clearly defined program participants and eligibility criteria when necessary. In Honduras, there was a mix of broad selection criteria from MCA-Honduras and more specific selection criteria by the implementer to target farmers in the field. These two criteria although somewhat complementary, still resulted in challenges for replicating farmer selection for the purpose of a rigorous impact evaluation.
- *MCC Agriculture Practice Group must assess training and technical assistance programs critically.* Mixed results on adoption have led the MCC's Agriculture Practice group to re-examine the focus on farmer training as a main part of the solution to low productivity of the agriculture sector and has resulted in more concerted efforts to identify interventions across the value chain. If farmer training is considered, the duration, intensity and content of the training are more carefully examined and the benefits and challenges of reaching large numbers of beneficiaries are fully assessed. Equally important the use of grants and starter kits has led to a review of practices across all compacts and to the development of new guidance.

As a result of these lessons, MCC evaluation practices changed in the following ways:

- *MC institutionalized a formal review process for evaluations.* The Monitoring and Evaluation unit is pilot testing a formal review process that defines critical milestones in the evaluation cycle that require substantive review and clearance by key internal stakeholders. This review process also requires local stakeholder review of key evaluation documents in consultation with the evaluator prior to submission to MCC to provide feedback on feasibility of proposed evaluation, as well as technical, and factual accuracy of evaluation documents. The formal review process is intended to ensure that evaluations are designed with stakeholder buy-in, are designed using the program logic, use appropriate methodologies for the timeframe of the expected results, and are flexible enough to adjust to changes in implementation.
- *MCC institutionalized continuous evaluation risk assessment.* An Evaluation Risk Assessment Checklist has been developed and institutionalized by the Monitoring and Evaluation unit. The risk assessment checklist is reviewed by the M&E lead with M&E management. The risk assessment is intended to inform decision making and identify necessary course correction for more timely response to risk identification.
- *MCC institutionalized use of standardized evaluation templates.* The Monitoring and Evaluation unit has developed standardized templates to provide guidance internally and to independent evaluators on expectations related to evaluation activities and products. These templates are intended to clarify and raise standards for evaluations by influencing the daily work of M&E staff and evaluators.