

2020 UPDATE



SAVINGS EVIDENCE MAP SYNTHESIS REPORT SUMMARY

Mastercard Foundation Savings Learning Lab



The evidence map presented in this document is developed by Itad as part of the Mastercard Foundation Savings Learning Lab.



Savings Learning Lab

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The overall goal of the evidence map is to provide consolidated access to relevant evidence related to savings-focused financial inclusion and enable users to navigate and find existing evidence as well as identify existing gaps. It is intended for practitioners looking for evidence of what works to inform decisions on savings programming and policies, for donors and investors interested in making evidence-based, strategic investments in this area, and for researchers interested in filling the evidence gaps.

We have developed a searchable, interactive online evidence map to help users navigate the range of studies, quickly locate information, understand the quality of the evidence and identify gaps to enable others to explore the evidence base. This document as well as the full report are designed to accompany this resource and support others in understanding and using this.

The full report presents a comprehensive description of our approach, synthesizes the evidence using a set of pre-defined categories, and provides an initial analysis of where the evidence is clustered and where there are gaps.

We adopted the 3ie Evidence Gap Map approach, similar to that used by Itad for the BEAM Exchange Evidence Gap Map. Evidence gap maps systematically scope out available evidence within a given sector through the application of search protocols and rigorous selection and quality assurance criteria. Evidence is then mapped onto a matrix structure providing a visual representation to help users quickly locate information and identify gaps in available evidence. The savings evidence map is organized by type of results grouped into client, institutions and ecosystem level results and by the type of savings intervention documented in the evidence – interventions focused on product type, product design, product distribution channels and target markets.

This first mapping was conducted in 2018. It has been updated annually (twice) with newly available evidence that meets the inclusion criteria.

KEY FINDINGS

The overall distribution and characteristics of the evidence have not significantly changed from the first map update:

- Client level results continue to dominate the map while the least amount of evidence is still found at the ecosystem level.
- Client ‘usage’ is documented more frequently than ‘access’, a reflection of the sector’s shift from a focus on access alone towards measures of usage and value derived by clients.
- A good amount of studies document alternative delivery channels which is not surprising as providers continue to invest in these to solve proximity, cost and scale challenges.
- For institution level results, most studies examine the sustainability and replicability of savings groups initiatives, as well as the effectiveness of their business model. However, many evidence gaps continue to exist at the institution level, implying we have a limited understanding of the link between savings initiatives and the outcomes on the institutions who provide them.
- Except for a small number of studies documenting results related to policy and regulation, reliable evidence is almost non-existent at ecosystem level, which continues to present a clear opportunity for further research.
- More than half the studies adopted a quantitative approach.
- The geographic focus of the research continues to be in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- Moving from client through institution and ecosystem level results, the proportion of studies that fully met all quality criteria reduces while the proportion of relatively low-quality studies increase.

Online map:

<https://mangotree.org/Evidence-Map>

Full report:

https://mangotree.org/files/galleries/MCF_Evidence_Map_Y3_Update_Synthesis_FINAL.pdf

PRACTITIONERS USE THE MAP TO

Inform savings programming based on evidence of what works.

Advocate and fundraise for new approaches in areas where there is little evidence or fewer interventions.

Develop guidelines for practice in areas where there is substantial evidence of what works.

RESEARCHERS USE THE MAP TO

Identify and fill gaps in available evidence.

Conduct systematic reviews of evidence in areas that are not sufficiently or recently synthesized.

EVIDENCE GAP MAP - INSTITUTION LEVEL RESULTS

The map below shows a more detailed look at institution level results by the same types of interventions. The evidence base is significantly scarcer in this case compared to client level results with a high proportion of evidence examining the effectiveness of business models for savings groups interventions and their sustainability and replicability. Otherwise, many evidence gaps exist implying we have a limited understanding of the link between savings initiatives and the outcomes on the institutions who provide them. It is especially surprising that, given the keen interest in the sector on understanding the sustainability and replicability of various financial inclusion initiatives, we continue to have very little reliable evidence on this topic.

		0	1-5	6-10	11+					
						OUTREACH	SUSTAINABILITY & REPLICABILITY	EFFECTIVENESS OF BUSINESS MODEL	INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY & GOVERNANCE	PARTNERSHIP MODELS
PRODUCT TYPE	Individual savings					11	1	14		2
	Savings groups					13	12	30	7	7
	Other						1	1		
PRODUCT DESIGN	Voluntary					2		1		
	Commitment based							2		
	Compulsory							2		
	Embedded with other services					2	1	2		1
	Other					3	1	3		
DELIVERY CHANNEL	Physical branches					3		1		
	Alternative - mobile					7		2		
	Other					4	3	2		
TARGET MARKET/CLIENTS	Youth					5		1		
	Ultra poor					3	1	1		1
	Gender					2	1	1	1	
	Rural					3	1	2		1
	Urban									
	Other					1				

EVIDENCE GAP MAP - ECOSYSTEM LEVEL RESULTS

This figure outlines the evidence gap map for ecosystem level results. The map shows that the evidence base, in this case, is even scarcer, certainly compared to client level results but also compared to institution level results. Except for a small number of studies documenting results related to policy and regulation, reliable evidence is almost non-existent at this level, which presents a clear opportunity for further research.

		0	1-5	6-10	11+					
						POLICY & REGULATION	SUPPORTING FUNCTIONS	MARKET COORDINATION	INFORMAL RULES & NORMS	
PRODUCT TYPE	Individual savings					5	1	2		
	Savings groups					8	1		1	
	Other					1			1	
PRODUCT DESIGN	Voluntary					1				
	Commitment based									
	Compulsory									
	Embedded with other services									
	Other									
DELIVERY CHANNEL	Physical branches									
	Alternative - mobile					1		1		
	Other									
TARGET MARKET/CLIENTS	Youth									
	Ultra poor					2				
	Gender						1			
	Rural									
	Urban									
	Other									