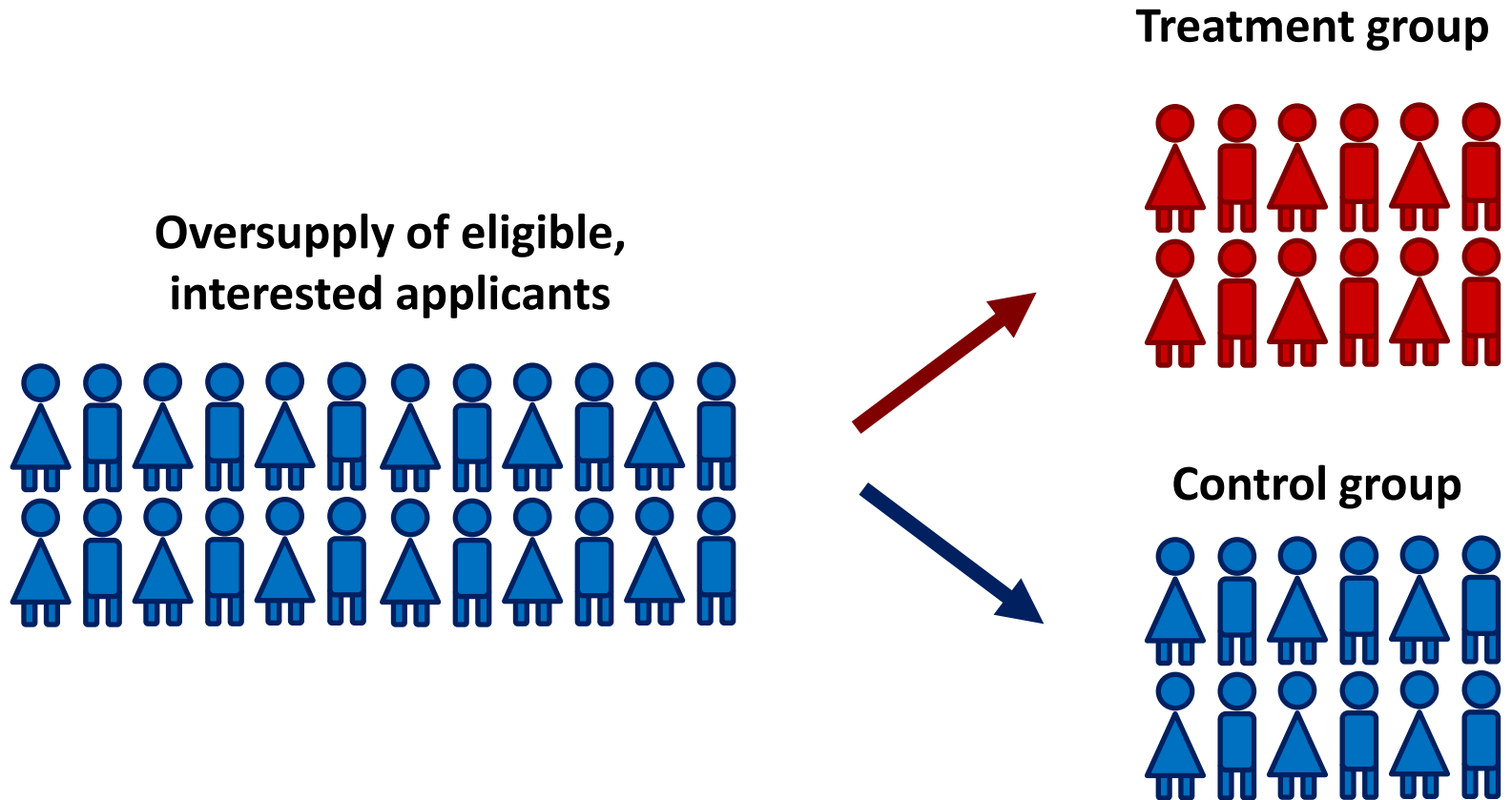


Impact evaluation 2.0

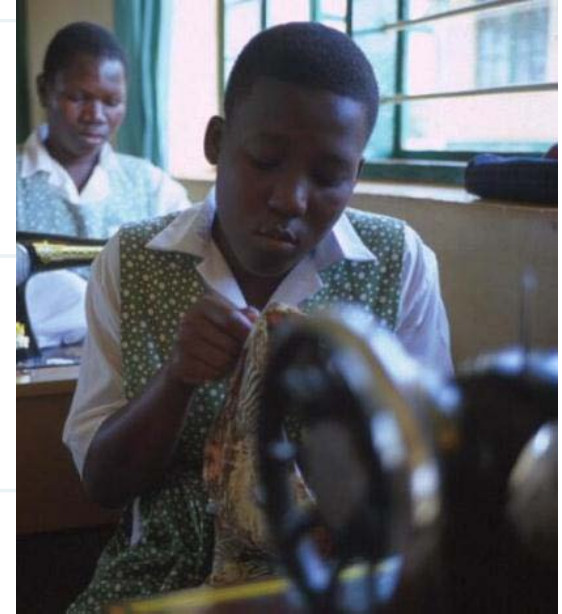
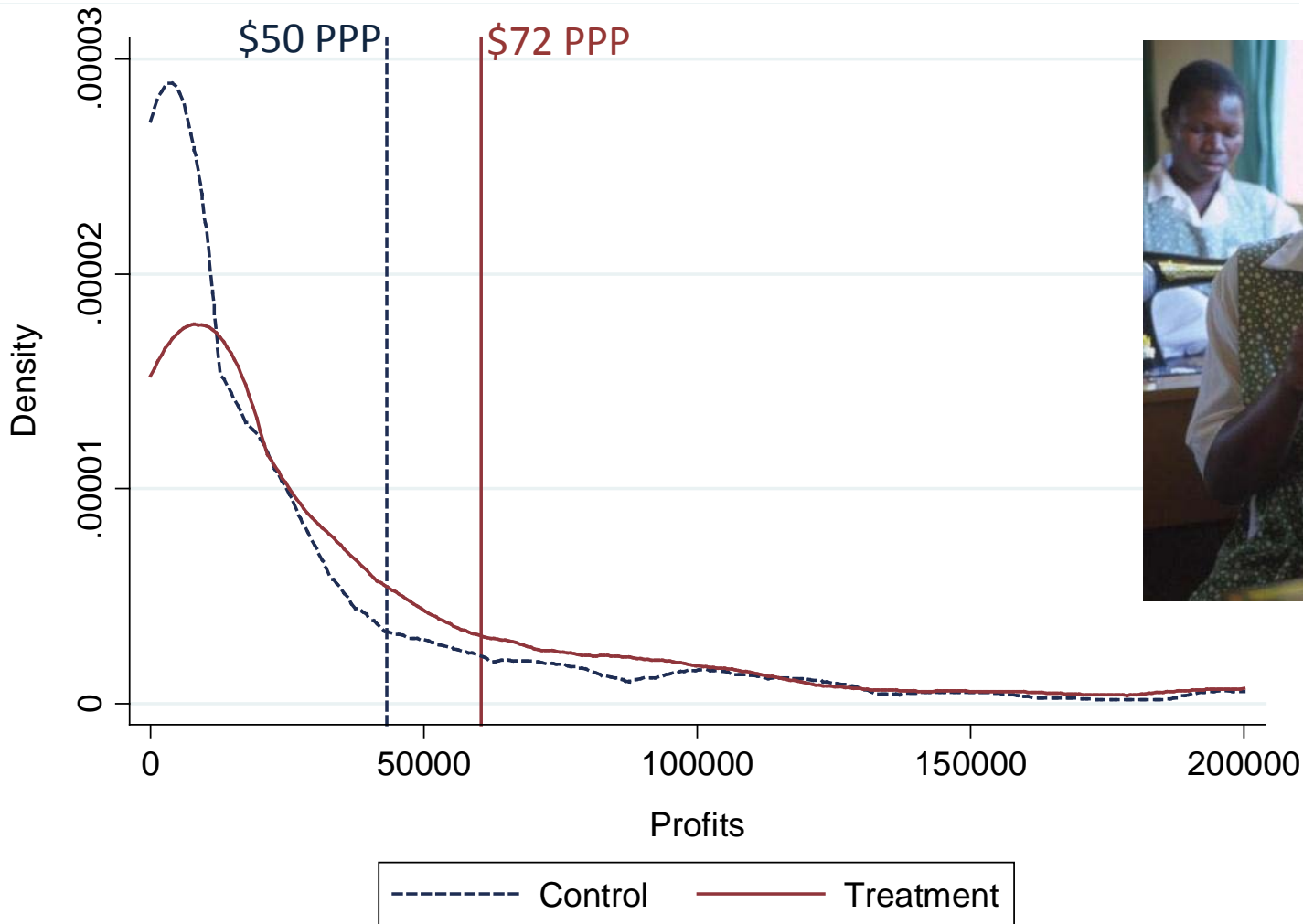
Chris Blattman, Yale University

Impact evaluation 1.0

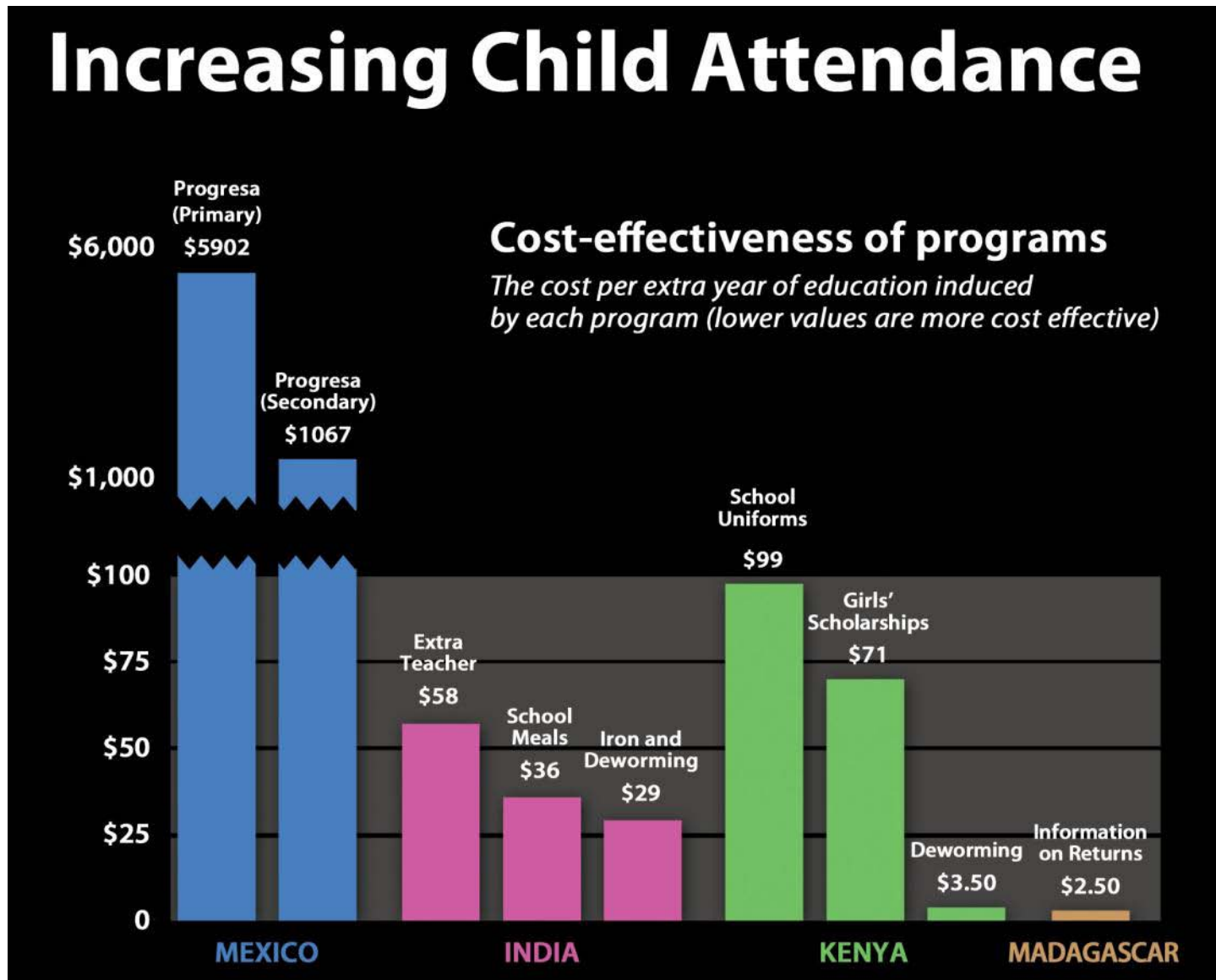
The simple treatment-control comparison



Evaluation 1.0 yields useful information e.g. High returns to cash transfers

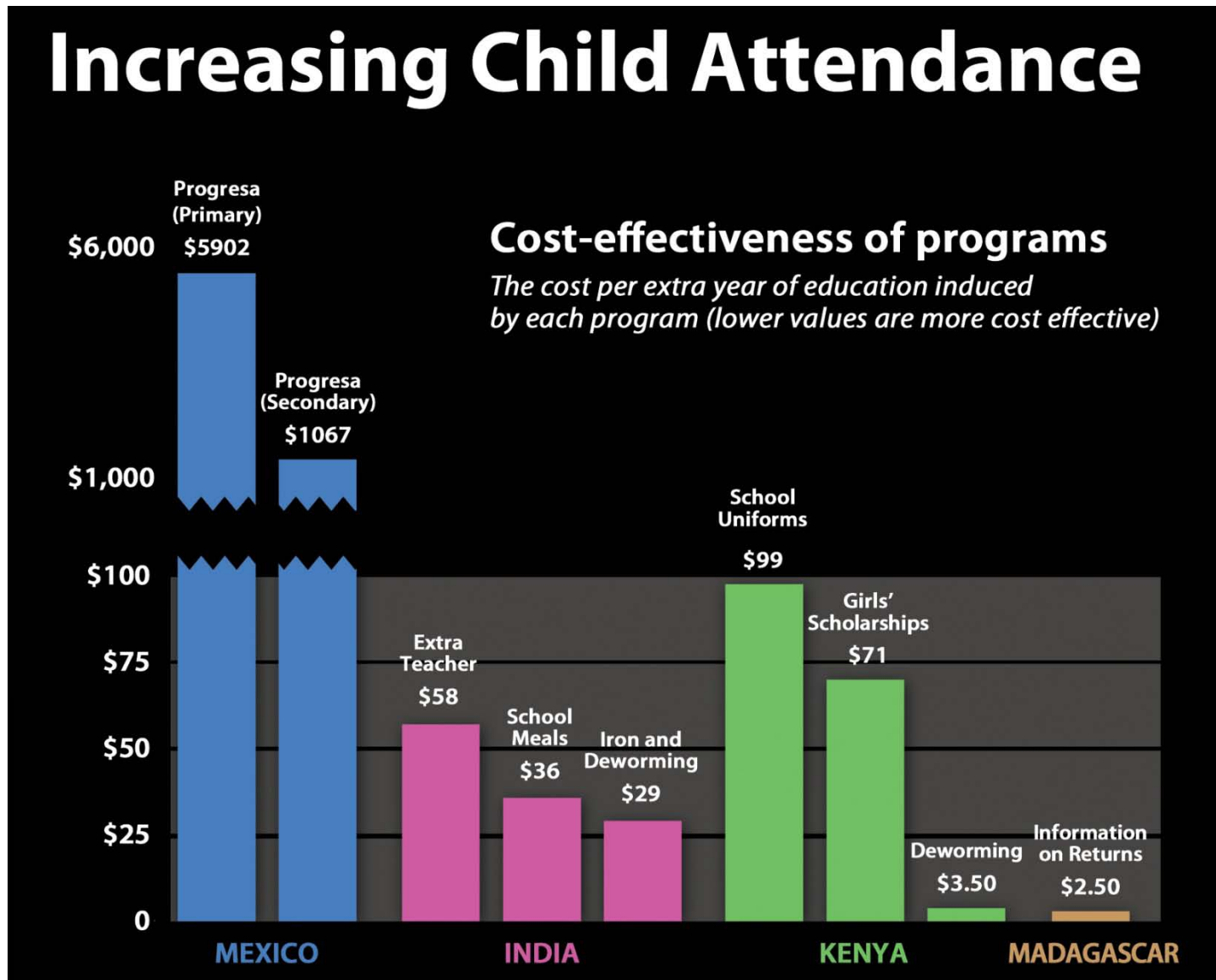


Especially when we can compare alternative approaches

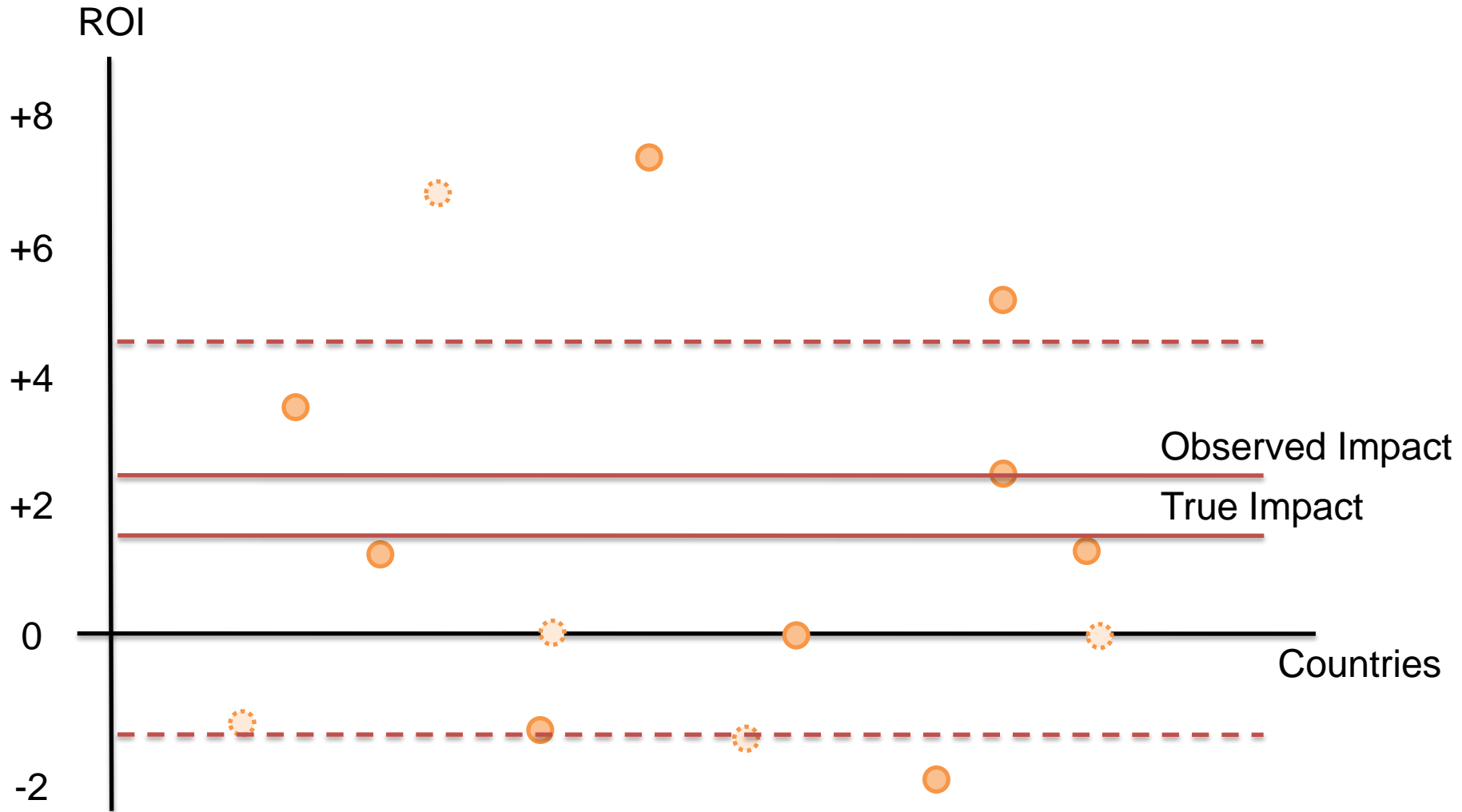


How generalizable are these lessons?

9 estimates of 9 different programs



What if we replicated one of these?



Context matters. And varies.

What does this mean for evaluation?

Worry less about “Whether and how much?” and worry more about “Why?”

Example: The strategies underlying the “inputs” approach to employment programs

1. Inputs will not be wasted
2. The poor have high returns to inputs
3. An absence of inputs is holding them back



Evaluate things you can generalize.

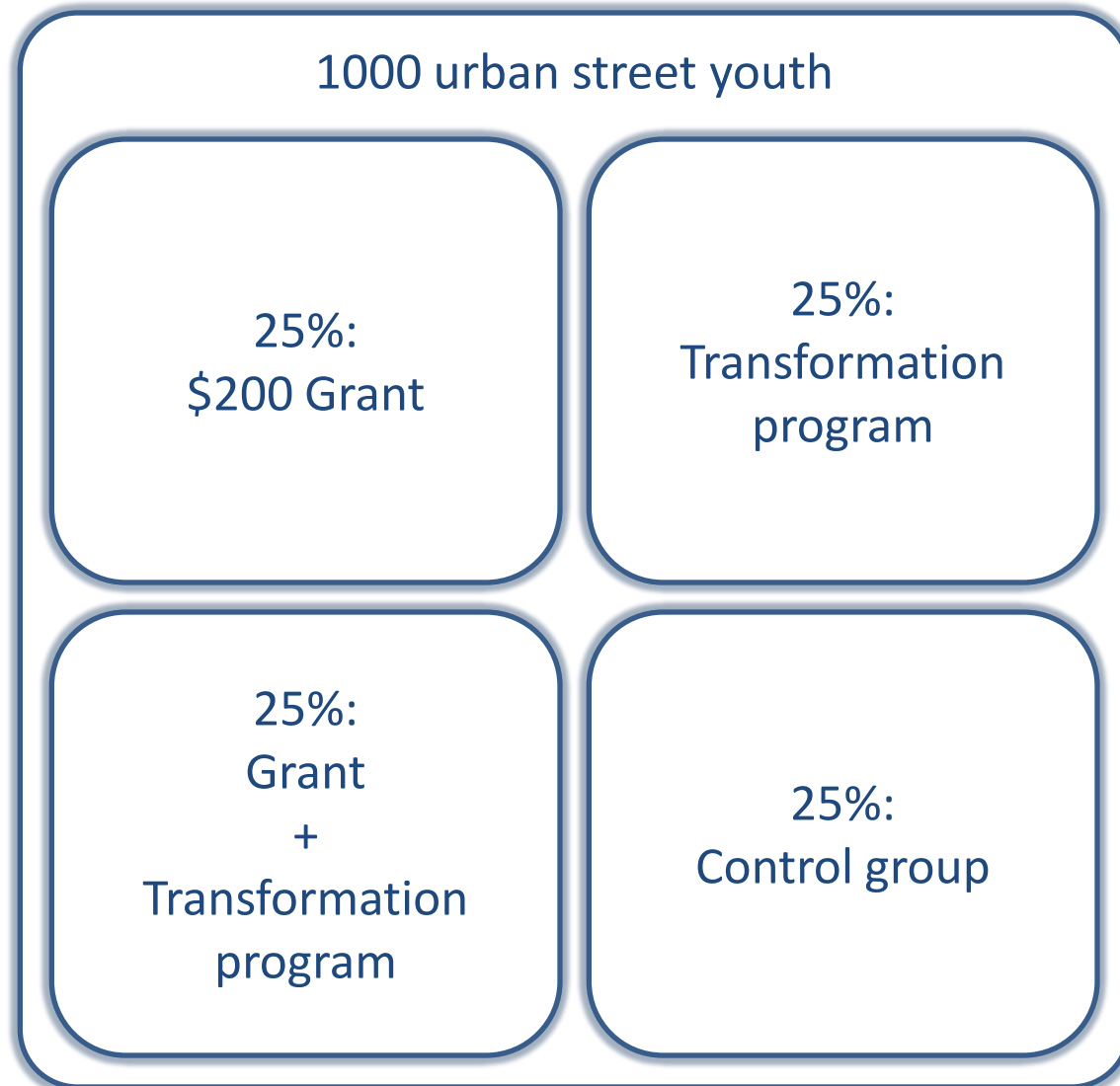
RCTs are tremendously expensive and
lengthy

You need to be able to learn something
more than impact of program X in place Y
at time Z

Street youth in Liberia?



What do we learn that affects our approach to programs in general?



How do cognitive skills and time preferences affect performance? Can they be changed in adults?



Test ideas not programs

Why matters more than whether it works

Test your assumptions about the way the world or
people work.

This will generalize more than program X in place Y at
time Z



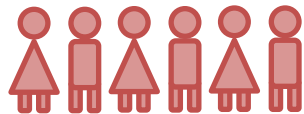
Remember: 265 groups received program
Why not use this chance to innovate?



Test the marginal returns to credit and capital



Standard program



Additional access to credit



Additional access to capital



Test targeting strategies



Community-based targeting



Survey-based targeting



Self-nomination



Test mode of delivery & decentralization



Individual assistance



Group-based disbursement assistance



Community-based disbursement



Test decision-making approaches



Participatory decision (consensus)



Elected committee decides



Central authority decides



Test decision-making approaches



Standard program (cash transfers)



Pay into individual savings accounts



Match savings



Do R&D, not M&E

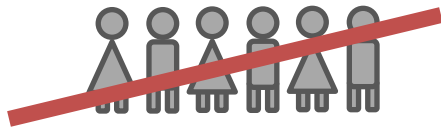
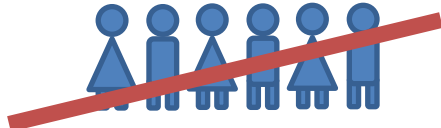
Really experiment: Test, learn, tinker

Do not evaluate everything

And do not go to scale right away!

What could a five year program do?

Year 0 – 1: Piloting & Experimentation



Year 2-5: Scale up what works



Each year, try adding new components to improve impact



Example: How to improve cash-for-work?

- Combine with a transformation program?
- Pay into no-fee checking accounts?
- ▶ Match investments?
- ▶ Link to small firm?
- ▶ Experiment and evaluate!

What do we actually do?

- Take off-the-shelf, unproven solutions
- Forget to make the assumptions explicit
- Write full program manual in advance
- Pre-specify a specific set of programs
- Launch the programs without a framework for impact evaluation
- By year 4, if it's not working, tweak the program as best you can

Conclusion

Impact evaluation 2.0 is not about
choosing a methodology.

It's a means to innovate, learn and
improve programs.