

# THE PLATFORM FOR EVALUATION AND LEARNING OF THE GRADUATION PROGRAM IN LATIN AMERICA

## *Evaluation and Learning Platform: Methodological strategies*

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To evaluate the graduation program implemented in Latin America carries a number of methodological challenges. The purpose of this note is to explain the methodological evaluation strategy being used for the Evaluation and Learning Platform in the Latin American countries in which the graduation program has been implemented.

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The Center for Studies on Economic Development (CEDE) at Universidad de los Andes coordinates the Evaluation and Learning Platform for the Graduation Program in Latin America. The platform serves to analyze and generate evidence of the effect of graduation-type programs on the beneficiaries' state of vulnerability and poverty. It also serves to identify opportunities and limitations in terms of the implementation of this new phase of the development of the program in which governments are the executors (Maldonado et al., 2016).

As its name suggests, the platform seeks not only to develop the evaluation exercises for the program but also to foster reflection and learning regarding the pertinence and applicability of the proposed methodologies. To fulfill these aims, we proposed a combination of methodologies for the outcome evaluation and the evaluation of processes as a way to understand the different dimensions of program implementation, and to be able to contribute to the improvement of the design and the impacts generated by them. On the one hand, given the relevance of the implementation process in this scenario where governments, for the first time, have adapted and implemented the graduation type program, it is necessary to evaluate the implementation of these interventions.

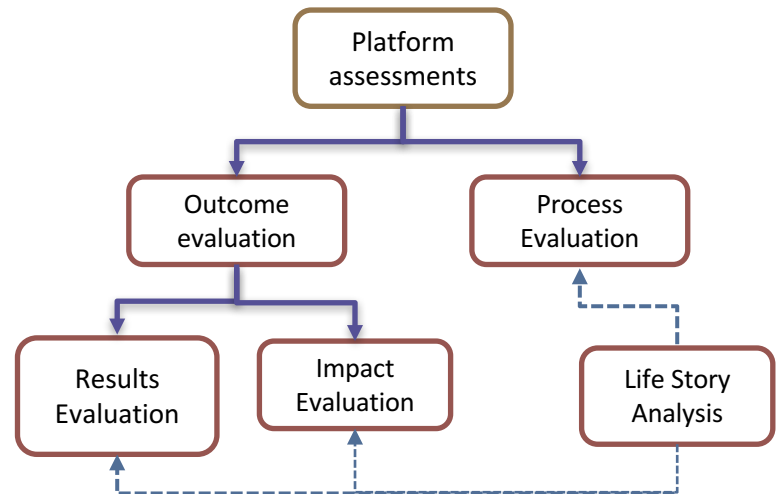
These being the basic evaluation methodologies and in order to consider the majority of the particularities of each evaluated program –political will, operational advantages and disadvantages, and time available for

the evaluations- the methodologies were adapted and combined. As such the strategy used for the platform was based on the adaption of the two General methods, implying the combination and inclusion of different analyses in order to obtain more useful information given the imitations and/or opportunities to implement a different evaluation designed to each case.

In a more detailed, the evaluation of processes, through the systematic analysis of the operation of the program, allows us to identify how the processes and activities can lead to the achievement of the outcomes defined in the design (Mendoza et al., 2015). The outcome evaluation is understood as that which allows us to identify the existence and magnitude of the changes brought about among the beneficiary population. As part of the outcome evaluation, we can distinguish two types of evaluation: results evaluation and impact evaluation. The difference between these is that impact evaluation, in contrast to outcome evaluation, allows the direct identification of the changes that can be attributed to the intervention, by comparing one group of participants recipients of the program with a control group. The decision as to which of the approaches to use depends on the particular conditions of each program, on the political will, and the state of consolidation of the implementing entities.

One of the innovations developed for the platform has been that it includes a quantitative research technique known as *Life Stories*, which has two objectives: to gain an in-depth understanding of how the different components of the graduation program affect decision-making in the participants and, as such, to try to identify the channels through which these effects are fostered; and to support the evaluation of the implementation of the program. Thus, the construction of the life stories through a series of semi structured interviews, which provide information that can enrich the evaluation of outcomes and processes (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Evaluations implemented by the platform**



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The platform has been implemented in three countries: Colombia, Mexico, and Paraguay, and it is in the design phase for the evaluation of implementation in Honduras. In response to the methodological evaluation strategy of the program, for each case there is a combination of different analyses (see Table 1). In Colombia, two programs are analyzed: Transformando mi Futuro and Produciendo por mi Futuro. While the latter is a conventional program with the graduation approach, the former is aimed specifically at the individuals that have been the victims of violence and does not include a transfer of assets. As such, two different evaluation packages were designed. The evaluation of the Transformando mi Futuro program includes and outcomes evaluation focusing on the psycho-emotional aspects of the beneficiary, accompanied by a life stories analysis and a process of evaluation. For the Produciendo por mi Futuro program, on the other hand, a process evaluation and a life stories analysis is being carried out.

In Mexico and Paraguay, outcome and process evaluations are being implemented. In particular, for these two interventions, the effects analysis includes two additional aspects, related to food safety and the participants' ownership of domestic and productive assets. The analysis in Mexico is carried out through an output evaluation, while the analysis in Paraguay has been redesigned to generate an impact evaluation. For the case of Honduras, which is still in the design phase, a process evaluation and impact evaluation are foreseen. Specifically, it has been planned to implement an experimental evaluation design called the Randomized Controlled Trial or RCT to identify the program impacts. The RCT is the most precise way in which the exclusive effects of a program can be determined. In this evaluation, the program treatment is assigned randomly so as to form two identical groups, where one receives the intervention and the other does not (Bernal and Peña, 2011). The comparison of the socio economic conditions of the two groups at the beginning and at the end of the program allows the identification of impacts that can be attributed to the intervention.



**Table 1. Types of evaluation and implementing countries**

Country/ program	Outcome evaluation		Process evaluation	Life stories analysis
	Results	Impact		
Colombia: Transformando Mi Futuro	✓		✓	✓
Colombia: Produciendo por mi Futuro			✓	✓
Honduras: Emprendiendo una vida mejor		✓	✓	
México: De la mano con Prospera	✓		✓	
Paraguay: Sembrando Oportunidades		✓	✓	

Once the evaluation methodologies in each program are established, the next step was to define the specific indicators to be evaluated. At this moment an operational process began which included the design of information gathering tools (quantitative and qualitative), and the sample design for all the types of analysis. The information gathering phase and the filtering and analysis of the information were the final steps to follow.

As mentioned above, although these exercises were aimed at fulfilling the evaluation objectives of the platform, they also contributed an essential component, which was conceived from their design: Learning. All knowledge generated in the platform research and evaluation processes is accompanied, simultaneously, by open discussion involving the academic, political and technical communities. In particular, a science committee is created as well as a space for platform researchers, forensic research institutions (peers), and policymakers to discuss, propose, innovate, and learn from the different evaluation exercises applicable to this type of program. This discussion constitutes a fundamental asset from which to apprehend and improve the platform's evaluation designs throughout the process.

In later posts, we will be sharing more information about the evaluation process.

## Referencias

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