

# CRITICAL INSIGHTS FROM A VET-IMPACT STUDY IN COLOMBIA

Enhance your understanding of impact evaluations and the randomised controlled trial (RCT) method

**22 June 2023**

3:00pm to 5:00pm CET

OROS  
Online RECI  
Open Space



**Online**



Interactive  
**webinar**



**In English**  
with Spanish subtitles  
(and other languages)





# RCT Impact Evaluation on Vocational Education Training & Youth Empowerment

Colombia 2018-2022

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Better living conditions for Latin America

# Bridge to working life program

**Approach Vivamos Mejor**  
Vocational Education Training +  
Youth Empowerment\*  
for vulnerable youth



**\*Youth Empowerment =**

Soft Skills Training  
Psychosocial Support  
Peace-building Activities  
Labour Market Placement

... Sensitization of employers

... Sensitization of parents

....mitigation of individual barriers



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## Why a RCT – Organizational perspective

- Knowledge gap
- Contribute to internal learning (partner and VMS): validation of approach, proof of impact
- Impact Study vs. project evaluation
- Formulate evidence-based policy recommendations
- Fundraising, donor-attractive
- Strengthen North-South Research partnerships
- Feasible match for RCT: study design and project

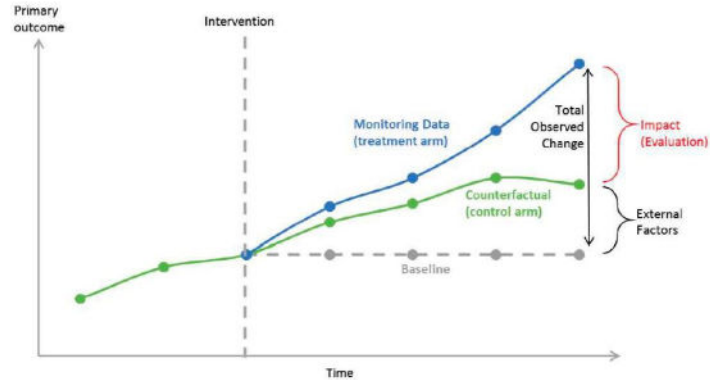


# Why a RCT – Scientific perspective

## Measuring Impact - Does our approach work for the target group?

We want to know the **counterfactual** – the state of the world that program participants would have experienced in the absence of the program

- Real world: no observation of the counterfactual
- We need to “mimic” the counterfactual, run experiments -> randomize!



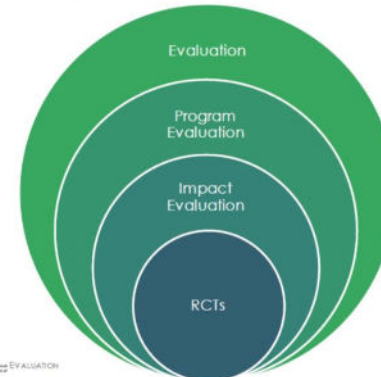
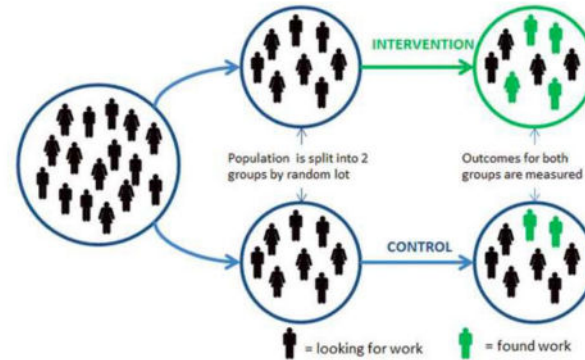
# Why a RCT – Scientific perspective

## Randomization

Because of randomization there is **no difference between the two groups** except the program. Any difference that subsequently arises can **be attributed to the program** (rather than other factors)

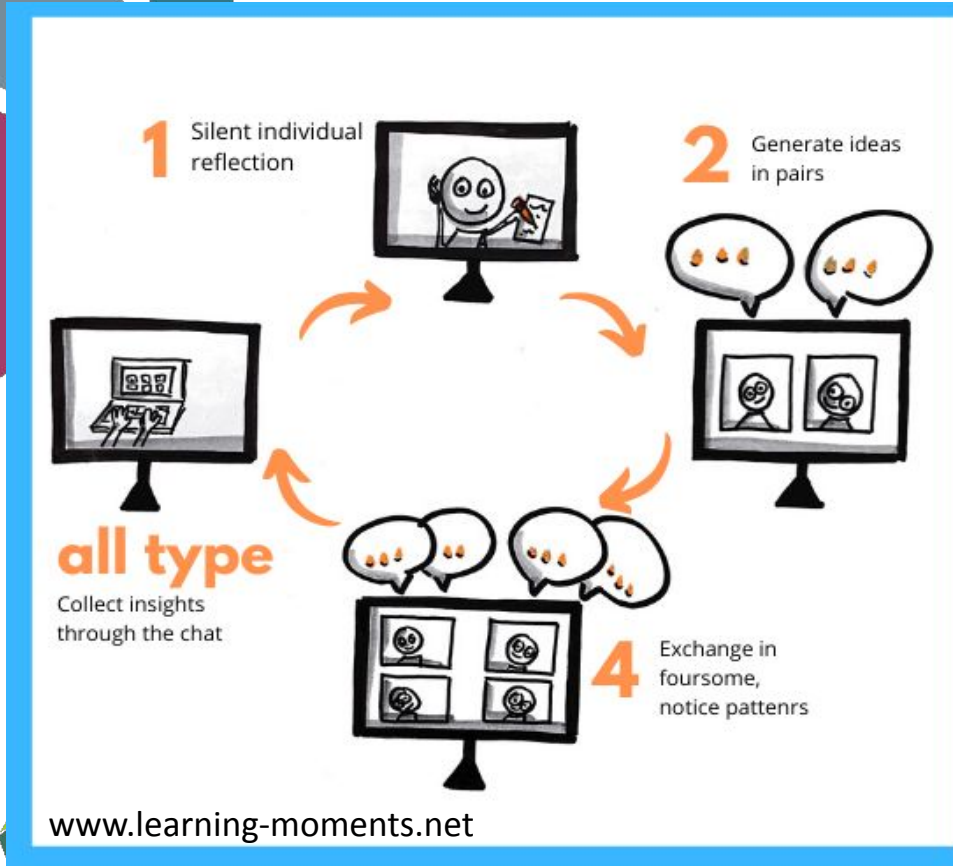
## Randomized Control Trials

Ability to compare the effectiveness of new interventions against what would happen if nothing had changed - **most credible method to estimate the impact of a program.**



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# 1-2-4-All — Group discussions



→ Can you share your experience with or questions on evaluations, impact evaluations and/or RCTs, highlighting their strengths and weaknesses ?

# Timeline & Setting

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[Policy Brief](#)  
[\(download\)](#)



## Policy Brief

Promoting Opportunities for Vulnerable Youth in Colombia: Evidence from a Randomized Controlled Trial Evaluating Combining Job Training with a Youth Empowerment Program

An Impact Study of Vivamos Mejor in Colombia

Funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) in collaboration with the University of Lausanne<sup>1</sup>, the Universidad de los Andes, ETH NADEL - Center for Development and Cooperation, Vivamos Mejor and Medicor Foundation

### Researchers<sup>2</sup>

Alice Antunes, Elena Exposita, Rafael Lalive, Andrés Meya

With the support of

Vivamos Mejor Foundation and Fundación Apoyar

November 2022

### Strengthening Latin American communities with knowledge

Vivamos Mejor is a Swiss, self-help oriented and organization, which supports poverty affected communities in Latin America in strengthening their capacities as well as exercising their civil rights and claims, to break the spiral of poverty. Against this backdrop, we focus on fundamental issues of education, water and nutrition. Thus, we engage in early childhood development for a successful entry into primary school as well as provide training and skills to vulnerable young adults for their first entry into the labor market within our programs, alongside into school and professional life. In our programme water and nutrition we support formal and informal professional authorities to manage their natural resources such as water, soil and forests sustainably in order to improve their food security and thus their livelihoods.

### Local embeddedness

Vivamos Mejor realises all its projects in close cooperation with professional local partner organisations that exclusively employ local personnel. Through training and capacity building, we share our knowledge with local communities and authorities who take complete ownership of their responsibilities and are accountable for results. As an organisation committed to continuous learning we closely monitor and assess the results of our work in cooperation with Swiss and international universities.

### Vivamos Mejor

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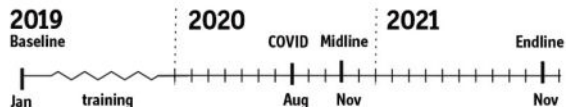
Info@vivamosmejor.ch  
Phone: +41 (0)31 331 39 29  
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certified by the ZEWG Foundation since 1992.

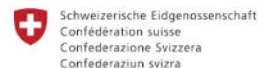


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Swiss Agency for Development  
and Cooperation SDC



NADEL  
ETH zürich

<sup>1</sup> With the financial support from HEC Research Fund 2019, the Programme Fondation Philanthropique Famille Sardes - Meritum de Meuron pour la Releve Universitaire, and the Entreprise for Society (EAS) COVID-19 Fund 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Alice Antunes and Rafael Lalive: Department of Economics, University of Lausanne; Elena Exposita: Colegio Carlo Alberto, Turin; Andrés Meya: Universidad de los Andes.

# Study Design & Research Question

**Does combining vocational education with soft skills training lead to better quality jobs than traditional vocational education for marginalized youth?**

- Random allocation of 300 (n=100/group) young adults:
  - Treatment group receiving vocational education and youth empowerment training (VET&YE)
  - Treatment group receiving vocational education only (Only VET)
  - Untreated control group
- Three-year period to measure medium-term effects of the program
- Randomization via public lottery
- Data collected:
  - Administrative: internally displaced status, socio-economic status, formal/informal wages
  - Surveys to measure mental health and wage development
- Attrition: below 4%



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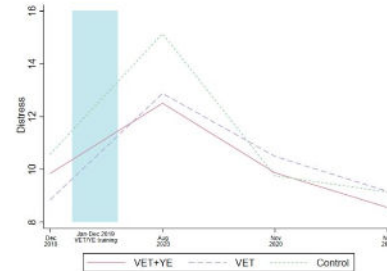
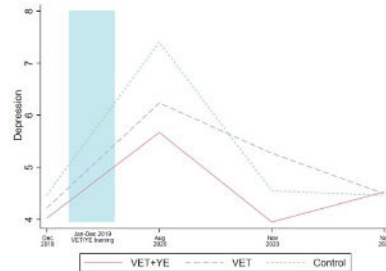
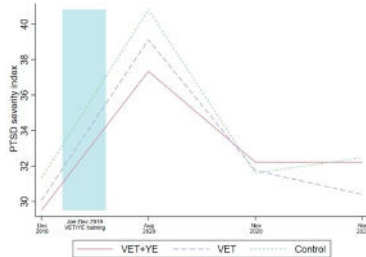


# Study Results I

## 1. Mental Health

Participants of the combined vocational training approach, showed

- **more mental resilience during extreme stress** caused by Covid19, than the participants who only did the vocational training and the control group.



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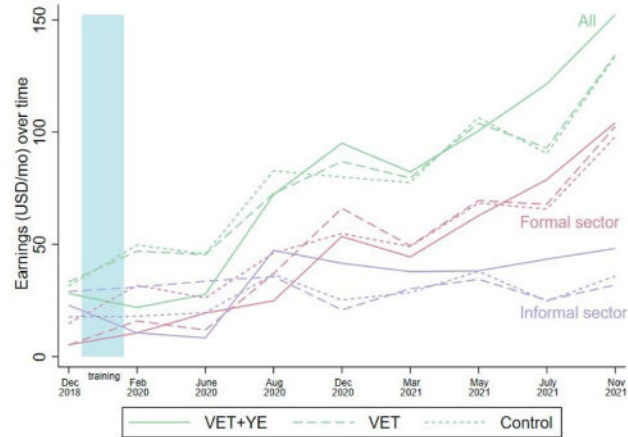
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# Study Results II

## 2. Earnings and Labour Market Participation

The Youth Empowerment program has

- a **positive effect on formal and informal earnings** and labor market participation
- **VET+YE make more money**, irrespective of the fact whether in the informal or formal labor market.
- VET vs. Control: **only VET has no effect on earnings**



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# Study Results III

## 3. Cost Benefit Analysis

The Youth Empowerment program provides

- a **high return on earnings over ten years**
- and the cost vs. **benefits are ten times higher compared to group "only" VET.**



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# Study Results Use

## **Evidence based organization – Knowledge gain and internal learning**

- On program level: validation and adjustment of approach, proof of impact
- On institutional level: RCT/Impact expertise

## **Close study gap – provides basis to use in other contexts**

- Study results show options to increase effectiveness through the inclusion of youth empowerment programs
- Scaling to other contexts and projects

## **Policy Incidence and Networking**

- Established research cooperation
- Policy brief dissemination with relevant stakeholders



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# Challenges & Learnings

## Challenges

- Fairness of selection
- Tracking and monitoring of young people
- Young people's lack of interest in participating in long-term processes
- Working hours of young employees
- Paper survey vs. digital

## Learnings

- Coordination person partner is key
- Budget planning for control group in future project
- Sufficient budget for raffle (incentive)
- Anticipate time load (partner, PHD, VMS)



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Gracias!  
Danke!

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