Dear Reader: We are honored and privileged to recommend Trickle Up. ImpactMatters is now in beta as we gather feedback on the impact audit process and outputs: **impactm.org/feedback**

impact audit

give feedback: impactm.org/feedback
download data: impactm.org/data

trickle up

im Trickle Up
impact audit certified
through 2017 ImpactMatters impactm.org/a/3

MISSION

Trickle Up inspires and supports the poorest and most vulnerable to build sustainable livelihoods and take their first transformative steps out of ultra-poverty.

PROBLEM

People living in conditions of extreme poverty face social exclusion and reinforcing deprivations, and are underserved by economic development programs.

INTERVENTION

Participants build sustainable livelihoods through a process facilitated by Trickle Up that includes grants, training, mentoring and group savings support.

What is an impact audit?

MOTIVATION

1. **Give the nonprofit feedback** on how to use and produce appropriate evidence.
2. **Certify to donors** that the nonprofit is appropriately evidence-based.

PROCESS

Evidence review • Document review • Staff Interviews
More: impactm.org/standard

Audit Results

Trickle Up delivered a **high-quality program** to **7,195 vulnerable people** living in extreme poverty in 2015 that **increases income**, **food consumption**, and **savings**, and continues reaching vulnerable groups at the **approximate marginal cost of $340**.

Impact assessment

Does the nonprofit change the world?

Trickle Up improves the lives of women and other vulnerable groups living in ultra-poverty, increasing **income**, **food consumption**, and **savings**.

This conclusion is reached by mapping lessons from similar programs implemented in similar settings for similar groups to the program Trickle Up runs.

Outcomes and cost

The **evidence for Trickle Up's impact**, is based on rigorous, counterfactual evidence of the impact of similar programs. This evidence has the drawback of being from a similar program, and not from Trickle Up's specific work, which does not yet have high-quality counterfactual evidence available. However, the evaluations of these other programs are methodologically strong and similar enough to Trickle Up's program (in terms of intervention design, intervention fidelity, setting, and population reached) to conclude Trickle Up's program very likely has large positive impact for women and other vulnerable groups living in ultra-poverty.

similar program

Banerjee et al. (*Science* 2015)
5% increase in consumption (vs. control)
96% increase in savings
High internal validity
High external validity

similar program

Bandiera et al. (*STICERD* 2013)
38% increase in annual earnings
866% increase in savings
High internal validity
High external validity

Operations assessment

Does the nonprofit do what it says it does?

Trickle Up has directly delivered its program to **7,195 vulnerable people** last year at **high quality** and is a **learning organization** and a **transparent organization**.

This conclusion is based on Trickle Up's internal monitoring data, monitoring systems, and quality assurance protocols, which are credible and strong.

Activities and outputs: Quantity

The **evidence for quantity** is based on internal processed data.

- Since 1979: over 200,000 participants directly
- Since 2013: 6,600 households through technical assistance

All as of November 2015

Activities and outputs: Quality

The **evidence for quality** is based on internal protocols and program/ monitoring documents.

- Internal monitoring staff: Yes
- Routine staff training: Yes
- Strong partner supervision: Yes
- Responsive to data: Yes
- Quality improvement: Yes

Learning organization

This is based on information obtained from interviews with Trickle Up's president and senior staff.

Transparent organization

This is based on the breadth and depth of Trickle Up's published reports, activity data, and organization data.

Table of Contents

License

Feedback

We welcome your feedback at impactm.org/feedback.

impact audit

give feedback: impactm.org/feedback
download data: impactm.org/data

We recommend you view this page side by side with the previous summary page.

Impact audit standard

Version 0.1
December 11, 2015 • Public beta release

ANALYTICAL QUESTIONS

1. Does the nonprofit use and produce appropriate evidence of impact?
2. Does the nonprofit produce evidence of quantity and quality of operations?

What is an impact audit?

MOTIVATION

1. **Give the nonprofit feedback** on how to use and produce appropriate evidence.
2. **Certify to donors** that the nonprofit is appropriately evidence-based.

PROCESS

Evidence review • Document review • Staff Interviews
More: Page 3 of this report or impactm.org/standard.

Audit Results

This section describes our overall conclusion, including our summary of the impact and marginal cost of the program, as well as the quantity and quality of the nonprofit's operations. Wherever possible, we try to provide context for what the nonprofit's impact means in terms of people's lives.

Impact assessment

Does the nonprofit change the world?

This section summarizes the impact of the program, in terms of change in outcomes for people reached.

Information used to make this determination.

Outcomes and cost

This section summarizes the mechanism used to substantiate the impact of the program. Program impact can be assessed in different ways, and this section provides the summary of the analytical approach and findings of the ImpactMatters audit team. More information on the analytical method and evidence used to reach this finding is available in the full audit report.

Study Authors (Publisher, year published)
Effect: How did the intervention improve lives?
Internal validity: How well was the study was done?
External validity: Is the study comparable to the nonprofit's program?

Operations assessment

Does the nonprofit do what it says it does?

This section summarizes whether the nonprofit does what it says, considering quantity and quality of activities.

Information used to make this determination.

Activities and outputs: Quantity

Information used to make this determination.	*People reached or other relevant metrics of activity and output.*

Activities and outputs: Quality

Information used to make this determination.	*List of quality assurance and improvement criteria the organization meets.*

Learning organization

Information used to make this determination.

Transparent organization

Information used to make this determination.

1 Trickle Up

Mission

Trickle Up inspires and supports the poorest and most vulnerable to build sustainable livelihoods and take their first transformative steps out of ultra-poverty.

Problem

People living in conditions of extreme poverty face social exclusion and reinforcing deprivations, and are underserved by economic development programs.

Women entering the India program in 2012 had an average monthly household income of approximately $91 PPP. Participants are in ultra-poverty, living on approximately $0.60 PPP (2012) per person per day for a family of five, well below the World Bank international poverty line of $1.90 PPP (2011).

Intervention

Participants build sustainable livelihoods through a process facilitated by Trickle Up that includes grants, training, mentoring and group savings support.

Direct delivery. Trickle Up first selects a local partner to execute the Trickle Up program. Program participants are targeted first at the macro level, typically through government data, and then at the community level through participatory wealth ranking, followed by household-level wealth verification. The partner then forms groups of 10-25 participants who are trained and encouraged to form a mutual support and savings group (Village Savings and Loan Associations in Burkina Faso and Guatemala, Self-Help Groups in India). Program participants then develop individual income-generating plans with support from field agents, coaching them to adopt activities based on local market research. Program staff provide training on how to manage the income-generating activity. The local implementing partner then distributes a grant to start that income-generating activity (average value as of 2015: $110 per participant). Trickle Up mentors then provide ongoing training (~80-100 hours per participant in India, based on "packets of practice" developed by Trickle Up) and coaching (~60-80 hours per participant in India, including life skills mentoring), as well as other supportive services, such as facilitating participant enrollment in government programs.

Trickle Up directly delivers its program through local partners in Burkina Faso, India, Guatemala, and Nicaragua.

Important note: Trickle Up directly delivers its intervention to women and vulnerable populations in four countries. However, Trickle Up is increasingly seeking to achieve impact through advocating and supporting governments to scale up similar programs (generally termed "graduation" or "targeting the ultrapoor" programs) as well as providing technical assistance to organizations working to implement graduation-style interventions. ImpactMatters has not yet set a standard for assessing this type of work, but is planning to release a beta standard soon.

ImpactMatters believes this work is very important, and we are excited to learn more.

This work is summarized below, but this audit does not cover these activities.

Advocacy and support for government scale up. Trickle Up is currently working in joint partnership with the Jharkhand and Odisha state branches of the Indian government's National Rural Livelihood Mission to incorporate components from the Graduation approach (i.e. a program that provides a productive asset to the ultra-poor and supportive services, such as training and coaching, to enable the ultra-poor to use that asset) into their existing poverty alleviation programs in order to reach poorer and more marginalized populations. In these partnerships, Trickle Up contributes to program design (including analysis of existing policy and resources and incorporation of Graduation components and appropriate indicators), assists in the selection and training of local government field staff, monitors the implementation of the program, and support the agency in plans for further scaling of the Graduation intervention.

Technical assistance. Trickle Up has a contract with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to provide technical assistance to UNHCR pilot programs in five countries that are testing the implementation of "graduation style" initiatives. Trickle Up's has a two-level service relationship. At the institutional level, Trickle Up works to build support in UNHCR for graduation style initiatives, through workshops, visits and secondment of staff. At the country office level, Trickle Up conducts week-long design missions to provide assistance and guidance on how to implement graduation.

Trickle Up advocates for government scale up in India. Trickle Up provides technical assistance to UNHCR, which implements graduation-style programs in Egypt, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Burkina Faso, and Zambia.

2 Impact

Question	Does the nonprofit change the world?
Conclusion	Trickle Up delivered a high-quality program to 7,195 vulnerable people living in extreme poverty in 2015 that increases income, food consumption, and savings, and continues reaching vulnerable groups at the approximate marginal cost of $340.
Mechanism for certifying of impact	Well-conducted, rigorous counterfactual evidence that maps closely to Trickle Up's program.

Outcomes and cost: Evidence from Trickle Up

Trickle Up's cost of outcomes

We report two cost figures: what's the difference?

"Cost of outcomes" compares the cost to deliver the program to the benefits of the program, both adjusted for the purchasing power of a dollar in that particular country. This makes these cost and benefit figures comparable across countries. In contrast, "cost of service delivery" captures the actual amount of money (reported in U.S. dollars, at the average exchange rate for the year) to deliver the program to one more vulnerable person.

How we calculate	Trickle Up recently completed a high quality estimate on the cost of delivery, prepared on Trickle Up's India program. Trickle Up routinely recalculates these numbers, and this figure is substantiated by raw budgets, memorandums of understanding, and completed project reports. Costs include local Kenya costs, and exclude global costs as we consider these largely fixed. This figure is adjusted to PPP using World Bank figures.
Cost	$1,324 PPP
Outcome	Substantially increased income, food consumption, and savings for women living in ultra-poverty and other vulnerable groups

Trickle Up's marginal cost of service delivery

How we calculate	India figures as above, unadjusted for purchasing power parity.
2015 marginal cost	$340 (non PPP)

Displacement

What we consider displacement

"Displacement" occurs when philanthropic dollars crowd out other dollars that would have delivered the same service (often, though not always, without philanthropic dollars). A classic example is a healthcare clinic funded by donors: that clinic may simply be replacing an existing clinic, perhaps private, that served roughly the same population with roughly the same quality of services. The "impact" of those donor dollars is then roughly zero (those patients would have gotten the same quality of care anyway.)

Displacement can be negative or positive. Negative displacement reduces the impact of the donor dollars, as the outcome would have happened anyway. Positive displacement increases the impact of the donor dollars, by displacing programs that are having little impact or doing harm (such as a clinic that is actually performing dangerous services.)

How we analyze

Displacement can be estimated through rigorous studies, but these studies are very seldom done on any social sector programs anywhere in the world. In the absence of rigorous data, we instead make our best guess on a particular's organization's displacement, basing that guess on anecdotal information, non-counterfactual data from studies, and general knowledge. We emphasize these conclusions are judgments only, but we believe that displacement (and externalities below) are often relatively apparent when they are significant enough to be of concern.

Our conclusion

Very low chance of negative displacement. **Some chance of positive displacement.** The chance of negative displacement is very low, and any displacement that does occur is likely positive. Trickle Up's model explicitly addresses market failures that are well documented, making the potential for the market to solve the failures Trickle Up is addressing largely moot. Similarly, the chance of nonprofit displacement is very low. Trickle Up is working with states, multilaterals and others to incorporate elements of the "graduation" model (i.e. what Trickle Up implements) into social safety net schemes, livelihoods programs, and other initiatives targeting the poor and vulnerable. While this is a form of "displacement," it is positive displacement, often shifting programs toward interventions that have a stronger evidence-base substantiating their impact.

Externalities

What we consider externalities

Externalities are any effects that Trickle Up's work has on third parties; in other words, anyone other than Trickle Up or the women, vulnerable people, and their families with whom Trickle Up works (note: we include families as Trickle Up specifically intends to improve living standards for other family members). We include price effects in the category of externalities.

As with displacement, externalities can be either positive (such as local economic growth) or negative (community ill-will). Externalities also vary in importance: some externalities may be so insignificant as to not merit much concern.

How we analyze

We analyze externalities in a similar manner to displacement. For programs like Trickle Up there is somewhat more evidence available, which we summarize as well. However, the final conclusion is our best judgment based on the available information. As with displacement, we believe externalities are often relatively apparent when they are significant enough to be of concern.

Our conclusion

Very low chance of significant negative externalities. Some chance of significant positive externalities. There are two possible negative externalities: unfair competition and community ill-will, further summarized below. Both are likely of low significance. There are two important positive externalities: local economic growth and lower prices. Both are somewhat likely and significantly positive.

Unfair competition (negative, insignificant)

Trickle Up participants (at an advantage because of their free capital) produce or sell goods, which may drive other sellers or producers out of the market and potentially reduce those producers' or sellers' incomes. The likelihood and significance of this is very low. Some sellers in the market before Trickle Up arrives may be extracting rents due to their pseudo-monopolistic position in the market, and they may be harmed, but increased competition in this scenario benefits the larger community. Given the generally shallow markets in these types of communities, these risks are minimal.

Community ill-will (negative, insignificant)

Community members who do not receive the program may feel ill-will. Trickle Up has observed the most negative reaction to its programs for people with disabilities. Trickle Up also observed that the introduction of participatory wealth ranking appeared to reduce community ill-will by creating a transparent process for selecting participants. Trickle Up's program likely generates some amount of community or individual ill-will. However, the concern compared to improving living standards for ultra-poor women and other vulnerable populations, such as those with disabilities, is low.

Economic growth (positive, significant)	Participant businesses likely increase local economic growth, which benefits the broader community. Bandiera et al. (2013) find evidence to support this. Trickle Up has also observed that community members often replicate improved business practices, particularly agricultural practices. In addition, savings groups are open to the broader public. Trickle Up has observed that other community members tend to join or form their own groups, and there may be additional positive effects in terms of community organizing leading to greater government service provision, though these effects have not been substantiated with counterfactual evidence. Trickle Up also has an objective of displacing moneylenders, which they have observed through internal evaluations, although again it unclear that the effect of such displacement would be positive to the broader community.
Price effects (positive, insignificant; negative, insignificant)	By supporting the creation of several new income-generating activities, such as livestock rearing or small shops, Trickle Up may increase market competition, potentially leading to a drop in price for (mostly poor) consumers in the area. However, as participants tend to select income generating activities that produce goods (as opposed to selling or trading goods), Trickle Up participants may not have a significant economic effect on basic consumer good prices, as they likely represent a small portion of the market. On the other hand, Trickle Up, by increasing the availability of capital to purchase or lease land, may be increasing land prices in the areas in which they work. There is not enough information to assess the relative likelihood of these two events; however, these concerns are likely not significant enough compared to Trickle Up's program impact to affect donor decisions.

Outcomes and Cost: Evidence from similar programs

Banerjee et al. (Science 2015)

Summary	*Timeframe*	2007-2014
	Intervention	Graduation Program
	Method	Six sites Three cluster-randomized controlled trials Three randomized controlled trials
	Sample	21,063 adults in 10,495 households
	Geography	Ethiopia, Ghana, Honduras, India, Pakistan, and Peru
	Investigators	Abhijit Banerjee, Esther Duflo, Nathanael Goldberg, Dean Karlan,* Robert Osei, William Parienté, Jeremy Shapiro, Bram Thuysbaert, Christopher Udry
	Status	Published. Banerjee, Abhijit et al. A multifaceted program causes lasting progress for the very poor: Evidence from six countries. Science 15 May 2015: Vol. 348 no. 6236 DOI: 10.1126/science.1260799

Findings

Results at three year endline

Banerjee et al. finds large, statistically shifts in incomes and asset values, as well as statistically significant effects on food security, financial inclusion, time use, perception of health status, and mental health. The findings for consumption and savings are summarized below.

5% increase in per capita consumption***
(control baseline mean: $69.13 PPP per month, or $2.27 PPP per day)

6% increase in per capita food consumption***
(control endline mean: $41.20 PPP per month, or $1.35 PPP per day)

96% increase in household savings***
(control endline mean: $78.40 PPP)

*** (**) (*) Significant at 1% (5%) (10%) level. All changes compared to control means at endline. Estimates are ITT.

Internal validity **High.** No major threats identified.

External validity **Medium.** The graduation program includes targeting and six components. Trickle Up implements targeting and all six of those components, with notable differences in five of those components. The common components are: **consumption support** and **other services**. There are differences in implementation of these common components:

- **Consumption support**: Trickle Up provides consumption support during the lean season in India. Consumption support varied in Banerjee et al., from no additional consumption support (compared to control) to more consumption support. The evidence from the Ethiopian implementation suggests consumption support may not be a critical component of the graduation program.

- **Other services**: Trickle Up implements various other services depending on similarity. Similarly, Banerjee et al. included variation in other services.

Trickle Up implements in Burkina Faso (low-income country, by World Bank classifications) and Guatemala, Nicaragua and India (lower-middle income countries). Four Banerjee et al. countries (Ghana, Honduras, India, Pakistan) are lower-middle income countries. The variations in the six Banerjee et al. study settings and populations cover much of the variation in the settings and populations Trickle Up implements in.

Cost Varies by country from $1,455 PPP to $5,962 PPP.

Rate of return Varies from -198% to 433% by country. Five of the six countries (all excluding Honduras) have benefits/costs ratio >100%.

Bandiera et al. (STICERD 2013)

Summary

Timeframe	2007-2011
Intervention	BRAC TUP Program
Method	Cluster-randomized controlled trial; one country
Sample	1,309 village clusters randomly assigned to treatment/control Intervention group: 4,045 women Control group: 2,687 women
Geography	Bangladesh
Investigators	Oriana Bandiera, Robin Burgess, Narayan Das, Selim Gulesci, Imran Rasul, Munshi Sulaiman
Status	Discussion paper

Findings

Results at four year endline

38% increase in participant annual earnings**
(treatment baseline mean: $241.93 PPP per year, or $0.66 PPP per day)

4% increase in household per-capita food expenditures*
(treatment baseline mean: $465.26 PPP per year, or $1.27 PPP per day)

866% increase in household savings**
(treatment baseline mean: $6.37 PPP)

Additional economically and statistically significant effects on asset ownership, food security, non food per-capita expenditures, and well-being

***** (*) Significant at 1% (10%) level.*** *Note: no control baseline mean data for selected outcomes provided for comparison.*

Baseline treatment mean inflated at 5% annual social discount rate.

Internal validity **High.** No major threats identified.

External validity **Medium.** The BRAC TUP Program includes targeting and two components. Trickle Up implements similar targeting and both components, with notable differences in both components. The common components are: **productive asset transfer** and **technical skills training**. There are differences in implementation of these common components:

- **Productive asset transfer**: Bandiera et al. transferred livestock, based on an assessment of the local market context. Trickle Up transfers different productive assets, depending on the different local market contexts in which it operates.
- **Technical skills training**: skills training is described in Bandiera et al. as "intensive training in running [the participant's] chosen business [over two years]." We are unable to directly compare this to Trickle Up's program, in which staff develop individual income-generating plans for participants and then provide ongoing training and mentoring over three years.

Trickle Up implements three additional components not included in Bandiera et al.: **high-frequency business visits**, **savings group formation**, **consumption support**, and some **other services**, such as health linkages. These additional components increase the treatment intensity, and so likely do not reduce the effect size.

Our conclusion

The evidence for Trickle Up's impact, is based on rigorous, counterfactual evidence of the impact of similar programs. This evidence has the drawback of being from a similar program, and not from Trickle Up's specific work, which does not yet have high-quality counterfactual evidence available. However, the evaluations of these other programs are methodologically strong and similar enough to Trickle Up's program (in terms of intervention design, intervention fidelity, setting, and population reached) to conclude Trickle Up's program very likely has large positive impact for women and other vulnerable groups living in ultra-poverty.

3 Operations

Question

Does the nonprofit do what it says it does?

Conclusion

Trickle Up has directly delivered its program to 7,195 vulnerable people last year at high quality and is a learning organization and a transparent organization.

How we reached this conclusion

To assess quantity of activities and outputs, we received and reviewed internal monitoring data (raw and processed) from Trickle Up. We also collected and reviewed public reports.

To assess quality of activities and outputs, we reviewed systems, protocols, and other documents on Trickle Up's quality assurance and quality improvement activities.

To assess whether Trickle Up is a learning organization, we considered Trickle Up's statements regarding how it views evidence and research, as well as Trickle Up's evolving research work and future research plans.

To assess whether Trickle Up is a transparent organization, we considered the nature, quantity and frequency with which Trickle Up publishes information on both its activities and its organization on its website and through other media.

Activities and outputs: quantity

What is quantity

Quantity is relatively straightforward: can we substantiate that the organization has actually performed the activities, resulting in measurable outputs, it says it has? While a straightforward concept, quantity can be difficult to establish without sufficient internal monitoring data.

How we analyze quantity

To estimate quantity, we triangulate data, analysis, and claims from public sources with internal data and documents provided by the nonprofit and in-depth interviews with nonprofit staff. To watch every activity be delivered would be far too costly; we believe that this method provides a high degree of confidence that an organization is delivering as stated.

Information collected and provided

We collected reports, blog posts, news reports, and other information from Trickle Up's website. We requested and received the following information from Trickle Up:

- **Participant targeting:** Internal guidelines and protocols on participant wealth ranking, details of requirements of partners for PWR, original project proposals for funding partners with reports specifying participant wealth. Original participant data to demonstrate data on wealth was collected.

- **Activities:** Training and staff manuals; internal spreadsheets tracking implementation by different partners; program protocols and similar documentation; a full project list.

- **Outputs (without counterfactual):** Some original survey data; reports from partners on participant outcomes (without counterfactual); a range of similar data substantiating outputs (reports, memorandums of understanding, etc.)

  While this data lacks a counterfactual, and therefore cannot substantiate Trickle Up's impact, it provides further evidence of Trickle Up's activities and outputs.

Our conclusion

Trickle Up has delivered the following services:

- Over 200,000 participants reached since 1979
- 6,600 households reached since 2013 through Trickle Up's technical assistance work

All figures as of November 2015.

Activities and outputs: quality

What is quality

Quality captures how well a particular intervention has been carried out. An intervention when implemented at a particular quality may have a strong effect, but may have a weaker effect at a lower quality. As nonprofits should not have control group for every participant (too costly), understanding the ongoing quality of implementation is important. Quality can be broken down in to two different activities:

Quality assurance. Are the standard procedures followed well for implementing that intervention? For instance, if the best guidelines call for giving a particular medicine rapidly to treat a severely ill patient, quality assurance is assuring each staff member consistently follows those guidelines for all of those patients.

Quality improvement. Can we improve the standard procedures to deliver the intervention better? For instance, if giving a particular medicine rapidly is important, can we reduce the average time to give patients that medicine from 30 minutes to 20 minutes? Quality improvement is working to improve how the intervention is delivered.

How we analyze quality

To assess **quality assurance**, we consider the existence (and quality!) of some important quality assurance mechanisms:

- **Internal monitoring staff**: Does the organization have designated staff monitoring activities and outputs?

- **Routine staff training**: Does the nonprofit routinely train its own staff or otherwise teach its own staff to consistently implement standard protocols?

- **Management control or strong partner supervision**: Does the organization have management control (i.e. the chief executive indirectly supervises all staff)? If the organization partners for part of its implementation, what is the nonprofit's mechanisms for ensuring the quality of the implementing partner? We look for some key things: formal memorandums of understanding or contracts, advance planning, organization training and knowledge transfer, routine site visits and meetings, audit checks if appropriate, availability of and access to staff from the parent nonprofit, activity, output, and financial data reporting.

- **Regular monitoring data review and response**: Does the organization regularly collect data on activities and outputs, and do organization staff actually review and respond to that data?

Quality improvement can take two forms. Some organizations implement plan-do-study-act (PDSA) cycles or similar formal, iterative quality improvement mechanisms in to their operations. Others improve quality on an ad-hoc basis. While there are benefits from the former, this is not always feasible or necessary. To assess quality improvement, we place less weight on mechanisms and more on past performance, looking for specific instances where the nonprofit has adjusted standard operating procedures based on recognized areas for improvement and making a judgment as to whether that is sufficient.

Information provided

Quality assurance: Trickle Up has provided substantial documentation, on the basis of which we have concluded they are implementing strong quality assurance measures. This documentation has led us to conclude Trickle Up has:

- Sufficient internal monitoring staff
- Routine staff training
- Strong partner supervision, including MOUs, advance planning, organization training and knowledge transfer, routine site visits and meeting, audit checks, availability of staff, and appropriate activity, output and financial data reporting.
- Monthly monitoring dashboard, which staff review and respond to.

Quality improvement: Trickle Up does not implement a formal internal quality improvement mechanism. However, Trickle Up has demonstrated a past commitment to improving its quality of implementation, including participating in an international best practices group and adopting recommendations (CGAP-Ford Foundation Graduation Program) and adjusting specific components of its intervention. Trickle Up has been working to improve the economic lives of women for more than thirty years, but made substantial program changes in the mid-2000s, and has been incrementally improving, as new research and other information comes out. On the basis of this. Therefore, we believe Trickle Up has a strong commitment to improving the quality of its work.

Our conclusion

Trickle Up is implementing its program at a high level of quality.

Learning organization

What is a learning organization

We define a learning organization as any group that has demonstrated a strong commitment to expand its own knowledge base, and share that knowledge with the world. Such organizations have a strong internal consensus on what qualifies as rigorous evidence. Learning organizations do not necessarily have to be running their own studies, but they must demonstrate a commitment to understanding the knowledge base around the program they implement.

Learning organizations can include those where generating counterfactual evidence is particularly difficult or even impossible, such as some forms of advocacy groups.

How we judge learning organizations

We pass learning organizations based on a two-pronged test:

1) If the organization has implemented or otherwise participated in a counterfactual study in the past five years, the organization passes.

2) If not, we conduct interviews with senior staff to gauge whether they understand the justification for and importance of counterfactual evidence.

ImpactMatters note: We recognize this decision is a judgment, and reflects a preference on our part for learning organizations. We are particularly keen on feedback on this component of the audit.

Information used to reach this conclusion

Trickle Up has not conducted any rigorous counterfactual studies. However, Trickle Up recently completed a study with a control group that we believe is more rigorous than pre-post control. The control group consisted of the ultra-poor who were identified through participatory wealth ranking but then excluded from participating during the household verification process. Trickle Up used a regression discontinuity design to exploit the wealth ranking of the two groups and difference-in-difference to assess changes in outcomes between the participant and comparison groups over time. The research was advised by an outside expert consultant.

Interviews with senior staff demonstrate that Trickle Up internally has a strong understanding of evidence and how to understand the rigor of that evidence. Trickle Up has a stated commitment to expanding their evidence base, and generating rigorous evidence when feasible and beneficial.

Our conclusion

Trickle Up is a learning organization.

Future learning

Trickle Up is committed to improving both their monitoring and their evaluation, and is in exploratory phase for incorporating randomized trials into one or more of their programs to learn more about their impact and how to improve their model.

Transparent organization

What is a transparent organization	We define a transparent organization as any group that publishes enough information for a reasonable person to understand the following: • The mission of the organization • The activities of the organization • The intended impact of the organization • The organizational status and history of the organization • Recent program accomplishments In addition, we consider the "culture of transparency": does the organization state a commitment to transparency, and is that commitment substantiated in its actions? This is a judgment.
How we judge learning organizations	We consider widely circulated public information sources (primarily the organization's website) to see if a reasonable person could understand the basic program and operations of the organization. We also considered information from interviews with senior staff, on current and future transparency initiatives.
Information used to reach this conclusion	Trickle Up's website, blog posts, news articles.
Our conclusion	Trickle Up is a transparent organization.

4 Our conclusion

Impact analysis

Mechanism for certifying Trickle Up's impact: well-conducted, rigorous counterfactual evidence that maps closely to Trickle Up's program.

Outcomes and cost

In assessing the evidence for Trickle Up's impact, we considered rigorous, counterfactual evidence of the impact of similar programs. This evidence has the drawback of being from a similar program, and not from Trickle Up's specific work, which does not yet have high-quality counterfactual evidence available. However, we find that the evaluations of these other programs to be methodologically strong and similar enough to Trickle Up's program (in terms of intervention design, intervention fidelity, setting, and population reached) to conclude Trickle Up's program very likely has large positive impact for women and other vulnerable groups living in ultra-poverty.

Banerjee et al. (Science 2015)

Banerjee et al. finds large, statistically shifts in incomes and asset values, as well as statistically significant effects on food security, financial inclusion, time use, perception of health status, and mental health. In addition, Banerjee et al. found 5% increase in consumption (vs. control) and 96% increase in savings.

High internal validity

High external validity

Bandiera et al. (STICERD 2013)

151% increase in cash earnings (vs. control)

31% increase in non-durable consumption

High internal validity

Medium external validity

Operations analysis

Operations: Trickle Up has directly delivered its program to 7,195 vulnerable people last year at high quality and is a learning organization and a transparent organization. This conclusion is based on Trickle Up's internal monitoring data, monitoring systems, and quality assurance protocols, which are credible and strong.

Activities and outputs: Quantity

- Over 200,000 participants reached since 1979
- 6,600 households reached since 2013 through Trickle Up's technical assistance work

All as of November 2015

Activities and outputs: Quality

- Internal monitoring staff
- Routine staff training
- Strong partner supervision
- Responds to monitoring data
- Quality improvement activities

Learning organization

This is based on information obtained from interviews with Trickle Up's president and senior staff.

Transparent organization

This is based on the breadth and depth of Trickle Up's published reports, activity data, and organization data.

Conclusion and certification

Trickle Up delivered a high-quality program to 7,195 vulnerable people living in extreme poverty in 2015 that increases income, food consumption, and savings, and continues reaching vulnerable groups at the approximate marginal cost of $340.

Trickle Up
impact audit certified
through 2017 ImpactMatters impactm.org/a/3

Expansion plans

An ImpactMatters certification is a statement that we believe this nonprofit deserves donor funding. This is based on a holistic appraisal to assess past and future potential impact.

However, we understand that donors often wonder what their specific dollar will do. This question is not necessarily difficult to answer, but it is costly to answer. Tracking individual donor dollars with that precision (rather than within a pool of unrestricted revenue, as is standard accounting practice) takes staff time, and that staff time costs money.

That being said, below we provide an overview of where Trickle Up is planning to spend discretionary money (i.e. money that is not restricted by specific donor requests) over the next several years. This overview is based on statements from Trickle Up, and Trickle Up may shift based on changing circumstances (something we encourage, as nonprofits have much more information about the specifics of their work). While we cannot guarantee where your dollar will be spent, we believe it will advance Trickle Up's mission of improving the lives of ultra-poor women and other vulnerable populations.

Funding priorities

Direct delivery. In 2016, Trickle Up plans to put about half of discretionary funds toward adding additional participants in Guatemala, Nicaragua and India.

Leveraged opportunities. Trickle Up funds its technical assistance work through restricted grants. However, to build the capacity necessary to pursue and execute on these opportunities, Trickle Up requires additional staff capacity, and Trickle Up will direct some discretionary funds here.

Quality assurance/Quality improvement/Research. Trickle Up has identified priorities, including expanding its monitoring, improving its IT infrastructure, training, and discrete research projects that will improve Trickle Up's quality of implementation, and expand Trickle Up's knowledge base.

Geographic areas of future expansion	India, West Africa (leveraged opportunity; first priority) Burkina Faso, Guatemala, India, and Nicaragua (direct delivery; first priority) Other developing countries (leveraged opportunities; first priority)
Capacity to absorb additional funds	**High.** Trickle Up has clear paths for expansion of its program.

5 Metadata

Download structured data: impactm.org/data

About Trickle Up

Legal name	Trickle Up
EIN	06-1043042
Founded	Started operations in 1979. IRS nonprofit determination received in 1981.
Website	trickleup.org
President	Bill Abrams
Revenue	$3,290,911 as of 2014
Contact email	info@trickleup.org
Addresses	**Mailing and physical:** 104 West 27th Street, 12th Floor New York, NY 10001
Note from Trickle Up to potential donors:	To donate to Trickle Up, please visit http://trickleup.org/donate/. For additional information, please contact Rhonda Zapatka, Vice President of Development and Communications at rzapatka@trickleup.org.

Our review

Review activities conducted	Evidence review, document review, senior management interviews
Completed	December 11, 2015
Released	December 11, 2015
Valid through	December 31, 2017
Audit team	Elijah Goldberg, Dean Karlan
Conflict disclosures	Dean Karlan (President of ImpactMatters): Dean Karlan plans to conduct research with Trickle Up in the future. Dean Karlan taught a class that Elijah Goldberg (Operations Director, ImpactMatters) attended that directed a $50,000 grant to Trickle Up in 2014.

Glossary

Cluster-randomized

Randomization done at the group (or cluster) level. Types of clusters include but are not limited to villages, schools and districts.

Economic significance

"Economically significant" results means the study found an effect of an intervention (say increased literacy) that is not only statistically significant (i.e. unlikely to arise by chance), but also is of a size that is "meaningful". For instance, a 1% change in income may not be meaningful enough to invest in the program, but a 1% change in temperature may be. Economic significance combines the effect size, the statistical significance, and the context to make a statement about whether that particular intervention achieves something that is "worth it".

Effect size

How big was the measured effect of the intervention in the group that received the intervention, compared to a similar group that did not receive the intervention?

External validity

External validity has two meanings. In the more general sense, it means, how sensitive is this program to context? In other words, if we tried the same thing elsewhere, how confident are we that we would find the same results?

Within the context of this impact audit, we use a more narrow definition: "external validity" compares the findings of a particular study to the nonprofit's program to determine whether the conditions under which that study were implemented are similar enough to believe they would hold for the nonprofit's program instead.

In general, we consider four dimensions of comparability:

- Intervention design: What components were included in the intervention? No two interventions will be exactly the same, and here theory places a valuable role in understanding whether any differences in design are likely change the "mechanism" through which the program works.
- Intervention fidelity: How "well" was the intervention implemented? The same design can be carried out well or poorly. If you held a training on the exact same material, but one was carried out by a native speaker and the other by only a proficient speaker, we would consider the latter to potentially have lower "intervention fidelity".
- Setting: How similar are the geographic areas, and the accompanying social, cultural, and political structures of those areas? This is challenging

to assess, given the complexity of human nature. One approach here is to replicate across different settings, and examine differences in effect size. Another is to look at the mechanism through which a program works – for instance, providing a woman with a grant to start small shops – and see if the market failure (credit constraints) applies elsewhere. If it does, an intervention adjusted for that context that does a similar thing – for instance, providing a woman with a grant to purchase livestock – is likely to work as well.

- Population: Does the intervention target generally the same group of people? This is challenging as well. However, looking for similarities in economic situation (such as credit constraints) or in other concrete similarities that motivate a program (such as too poor to afford health care services) is one approach to mapping population external validity.

Internal validity	Internal validity is the extent to which we are able to say that no other variables except the one under study caused the result. In other words, high internal validity denotes a degree of confidence that we can attribute causation (in some ways, another way of saying "impact") to the intervention.
Intervention	An "intervention" is what researchers study and nonprofits do. An intervention includes anything from a medical procedure to a conditional cash grant. ImpactMatters studies the intervention that a nonprofit implements, mapping that intervention to the evidence base out there on that particular intervention.
Randomized controlled trial	A randomized control trial is an evaluation design by which individuals (or groups) are randomly allocated into treatment and control groups, where the treatment group receives the program. The outcomes of the two groups are then compared in order to estimate effect size (see above).
Rate of return	Rate of return has specific finance connotations. In an impact audit, we use this term more loosely, essentially, how much will you get for your dollar? Sometimes this takes a strict cost-benefit ratio form ($x leads to $y future income for the ultra-poor). Other times we think assigning a dollar value misses the point somewhat: what is the value of a student reading one grade level higher than otherwise? We could study their 10-year income, but we could never hope to adequately capture the positive general equilibrium effects of a more educated population.
Statistical significance	A statistically significant result (often a difference of means of the main outcome of interest) is a result that is unlikely to arise as a result of chance. This doesn't mean the finding cannot be due to chance – just that it is very unlikely.