

What is impact evaluation, and who should do it?

Impact evaluation

- Impact evaluation: An evaluation of changes (positive or negative, intended or not) caused by an intervention.

(Briefing note from Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research)

- The central impact evaluation question is what would have happened to those receiving the intervention if they had not in fact received the program.

(From World Bank definition)

Causality and effect-size

- We would like to know:
 - Is the programme (intervention) having the anticipated effect?
 - If so, how *big* is the effect (impact)?
- With what level of confidence we can answer these questions depends on the methods we use

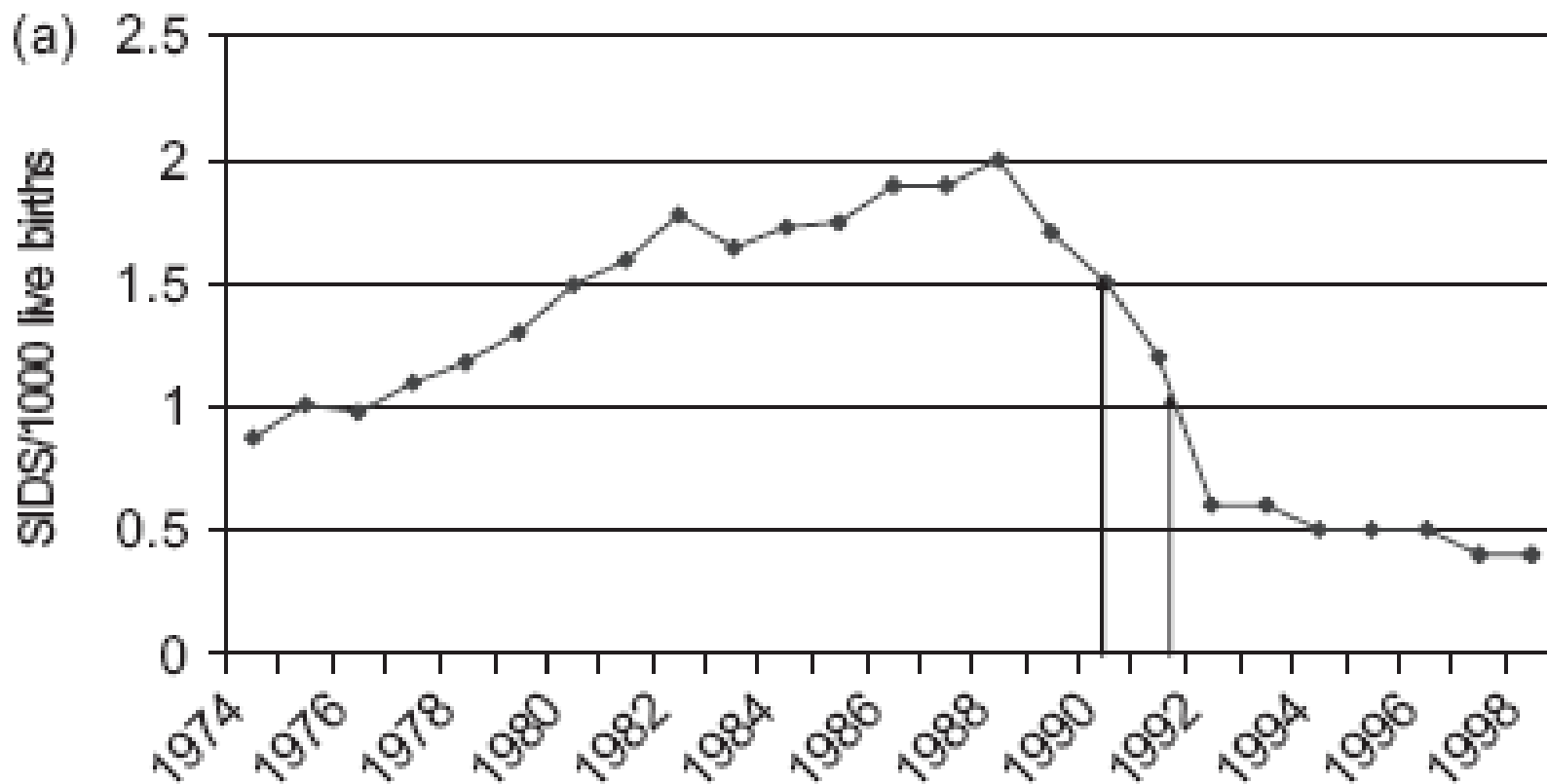
The Gold Standard "study-design"

- Randomised controlled trial
 - Health centres, districts or other natural units randomly allocated to the program/intervention, or not

RCTs are not always feasible

- May be practically difficult to do (e.g. mass media interventions)
- Can be hard to conduct due to ethical concerns, political and ideological barriers etc.
- Reasonably sound alternatives when randomisation is not possible:
 - Time-series analyses
 - Controlled before-after analyses

One alternative approach: Time-series analysis



A couple of quotes on evaluation-design

”One of the most common ways to estimate the impact of a program is to compare outcomes before and after a program is implemented.”.....”without further information, it is not correct to assume that observed outcomes are due to the project.”

(”When will we ever learn?”-report from Centre for Global Development)

”Non-experimental designs may use existing program or secondary data, or collect supplementary data. They provide the weakest evidence of impact”

(Briefing note from Alliance from Health Policy and Systems Research)

The impact of programmes to achieve MDGs 4&5: A recent Lancet-study

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- Method:
 - I read through The Lancet "Countdown-issue" on the plane to Cape Town

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- Preliminary results 1:
 - I identified 8 "effect-estimates" of health system strategies/policies to improve MNCH (available on request)

There is work to be done!