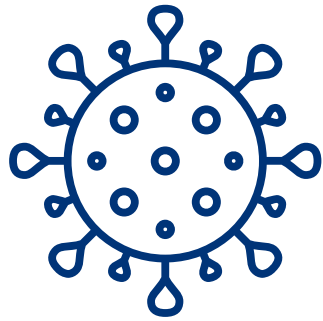# Why I'm not the best person for my job

Influencing decision making for a better and more equal world

A roundtable discussion on engaging young local evaluators

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Background

Why aren't there more young local evaluators on my projects?

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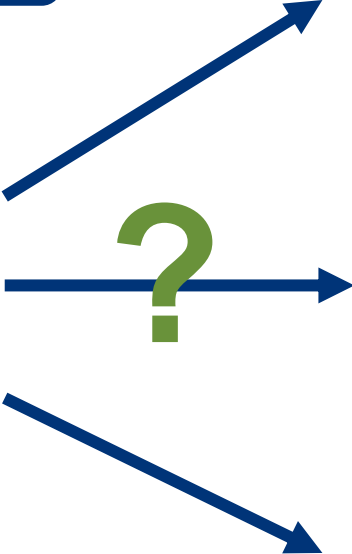
This session

- Why work with young, local evaluators?

- Why are there so few local evaluators working on evaluation projects?

- How to make a case for engaging young local talent working on evaluation projects?

- How and where to find young, local evaluators for my projects?

- How do I integrate young local talent into evaluation projects in a way that is meaningful and transformative?

Why work with young, local evaluators?

1) Because it benefits the project!

- Young, local evaluators:
  - Know the context
  - Ask the right questions
  - Use the right language

- Having young local evaluators on your team opens up new methodologies, many of which can offer rich story-telling data

- New, fresh perspectives think outside the box. Ask more and different questions.

- Tech savvy

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2) Because it benefits the sector

- Investing in local expertise helps safeguard the future of localised evaluation

- Maintain and protect data collection and research capacity and standards

3) Benefits for young local talent and their communities

- Job opportunity and employability benefits

- Deepens connection between evaluation and communities

- Important especially in conflict settings

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Why are there so few local young evaluators working on evaluation projects?

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Why are there so few local young evaluators working on evaluation projects?

Commissioners don't prioritise young local talent, and so we don't either.

- *"We build networks that help us win bids. If commissioners are only interested in local talent being represented in the core team, then that is where we focus our efforts in building our networks. Realistically that means prioritizing networks of more senior people that have winning CVs"*

Recruitment is resource intensive.

- *"it is difficult to find and recruit junior positions locally. The few times we have done this we have had so many applicants and it takes a lot of time and energy to sift through and recruit. Realistically we don't usually have the time or resources to do so"*

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Training is expensive and we are not incentivized to do it.

From a local partner "A lot of funded work is cyclical. Experts may be available for one project and not the next. This means that there is a loss of "institutional memory" and expertise. Training efficiencies are lost as we are constantly training new people and retraining old people.

From a UK perspective: "When young local people are working on many projects with us, there is a return on investment in training them and that makes it cost-effective for us as they then do a lot of work with us. But when we only have one or two small projects in a country it is difficult provide the training and mentoring support needed within the budget of the programme, especially because we cannot charge donors for training and development."

From UK perspective: "You also find that people do not develop in the same way from disjointed short-term opportunities as they do from full time exposure to projects and senior colleagues. So, the reality is that you have to repeatedly invest in the same people – which compounds the expense."

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- In some countries there are cultural barriers especially around respect and age can make including and integrating younger team members difficult, or limit the tasks that they can do – for example conducting interviews with people that are older than them

- **Sometimes we are all also guilty of just not stopping to think…**

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How to make a case for engaging young local talent working on evaluation projects?

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How to make a case for engaging young local talent working on evaluation projects?

- Pair up less with more experienced researchers

- Encourage usual contacts to bring on board someone with less experience

- Review your recruitment processes

- Find ways to factor this into your budget

- Convince clients of the social, technical and commercial benefits and value

- Incentivize (commissioners). E.g., reconsider scoring criteria

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How and where to find young local evaluators for my projects?

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How and where to find young local evaluators for my projects?

- Partner up with graduate programmes at local universities

- Set up a university network in countries of operation

- Leverage the UK university diaspora

- Establish a community of practice

- Consider youth training NGOs

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How do I integrate young local talent into evaluation in a way that is meaningful and transformative?

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How do I integrate young local talent into evaluation in a way that is meaningful and transformative?

- Stay away from a 'top-down approach, be more participatory, avoid being extractive

- Create the space to challenge approach and thinking. *'Our more experienced people were more likely to interpret and follow the ToR as is, whereas our younger and less experienced people were more likely to propose changes that added more value to the assignment'.*

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How do I integrate young local talent into evaluation in a way that is meaningful and transformative?

- Be prepared for ideas for change

- Factor in more training and engagement (initially)

- Consider the team composition

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SPRING

UKaid | USAID FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE | Australian Aid

Lessons from the SPRING evaluation

Highlighting the need for localising evaluation

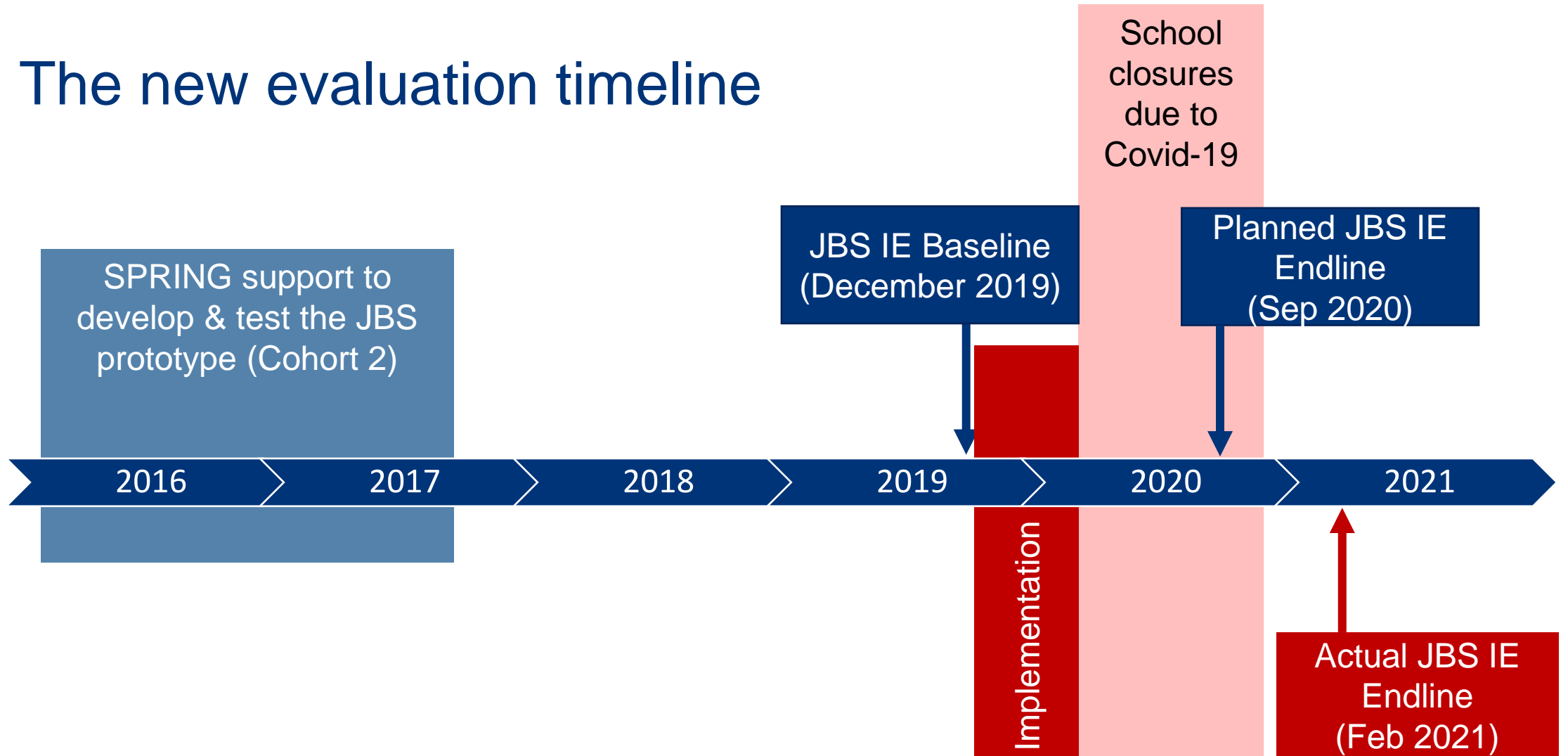Tt **TETRA TECH** International Development

Jeevan Bikas Samaj (JBS) Impact Evaluation

- Youth microfinance initiative

- Sets up savings groups for girls, aged 10-15, in government schools in Nepal

- Impact evaluation assessed how savings groups and trainings affected girls' **savings** and their **earning potential**

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The new evaluation timeline

SPRING support to develop & test the JBS prototype (Cohort 2)

School closures due to Covid-19

JBS IE Baseline (December 2019)

Planned JBS IE Endline (Sep 2020)

| 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |

Implementation

Actual JBS IE Endline (Feb 2021)

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What were the challenges and how did we mitigate them?

- Inability to experience the country context – rely on local partner, institutional memory and previous experiences

- Remote management of the endline data collection – daily check-ins and close monitoring

- Inability to "read between the lines" – held a workshop with researchers to share their impressions

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What lessons can we take away for post-pandemic times?

- Splitting local insights and evaluation management can lead to inefficiencies
  - Managing data collection remotely takes more time than in person, e.g. for virtual training, piloting and adjusting tools if necessary
  - Requires a very good relationship with the local partner and frequent communication

- Evaluation team needs to know the project and context well
  - Allow for development of appropriate tools
  - Awareness of local logistical challenges
  - Helps to contextualise findings

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Local knowledge and personal experience are essential for an evaluation.

Thank you