



Mastercard Foundation Savings Learning Lab

SAVINGS EVIDENCE MAP: PART I SYNTHESIS REPORT

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Table of contents

Executive Summary	1
Introduction	2
Step 1: Setting objectives and scope	3
Step 2: Inclusion and quality criteria	3
Step 3: Search and screening process	5
Step 4: Evidence characterisation	6
Step 5: Evidence Gap Map	8
Step 6: Additional Synthesis of Evidence	13
1.1. By the three primary result levels	13
1.2. By types of evidence	13
1.3. By methods	14
1.4. By sign of result	15
1.5. By geography	15
1.6. By quality	16

Executive summary

The overall goal of the evidence map is to provide consolidated access to relevant evidence related to savings-focused financial inclusion and enable users to navigate and find existing evidence as well as identify existing gaps.

The map organises the evidence into a matrix structure – by **type of results** grouped into client, institutions and ecosystem level results and by the **type of savings intervention** documented in the evidence – interventions focused on product type, product design, product distribution channels and target markets.

This report represents Part 1 of a two-part process. **Part 1** presents a comprehensive **description of our approach, synthesises the evidence** using a set of pre-defined categories, and provides an **initial analysis** of where the evidence is clustered and where there are gaps. It is intended for **practitioners** looking for evidence of what works to inform decisions on savings programming and policies, for **donors** and **investors** interested in making evidence-based, strategic investments in this area and for **researchers** interested in filling evidence gaps.

Key findings

- Client-level results dominate the map while the least amount of evidence is found at the ecosystem level
- Client ‘usage’ is documented more frequently than client ‘access’ as the industry is increasingly looking beyond access to finance towards measures of usage and value derived by clients
- A good amount of studies document alternative delivery channels which is not surprising as providers are increasingly looking at these to solve proximity, cost and scale challenges
- Significantly fewer documents evidence institution level results, mostly examining the sustainability and replicability of savings group initiatives, as well as the effectiveness of their business model. However, many evidence gaps exist at the institution level, implying we have a limited understanding of the link between savings initiatives and the outcomes on the institutions which provide them
- Except for a small number of studies documenting results related to policy and regulation, reliable evidence is almost non-existent at ecosystem level, which presents a clear opportunity for further research
- More than half the studies adopt a quantitative approach
- The geographic focus of the research is in Sub-Saharan Africa
- Moving through client to institution and ecosystem level results, the proportion of studies that fully meet all quality criteria reduces, while the proportion of relatively low-quality studies increases.

Methodology:

Step 1 Define the objectives and scope of the evidence map

Step 2. Design the protocol for the literature review, inclusion and quality control and evidence categorisation

Step 3. Run searches to estimate the number of documents in our scope

Step 4. Classify/tag the evidence

Step 5. Develop a comprehensive evidence map

Step 6. Synthesise selected evidence presented in our map

Future plans: To build on this initial analysis we have several outputs in the pipeline. Firstly, we will develop our understanding of what types of savings intervention works best and for whom through more in-depth research into specific areas of the map. There will be examples to others of ways to use the map, and our initial piece will look in to youth-focused savings. Secondly, we will develop an online, searchable version of the evidence map to help users navigate the range of studies, quickly locate information, understand the quality of the evidence and identify gaps. We will continue to search for newly available evidence and will update the map annually.

Introduction

Itad has developed the evidence map presented in this document as part of the [Mastercard Foundation Savings Learning Lab](#).

The overall goals of the evidence map are to provide consolidated access to relevant evidence relating to savings-focused financial inclusion, enable a comprehensive synthesis of types of available evidence, and accurately identify existing gaps. The evidence map aims to help inform evidence-based decisions on savings programming and policies as well as strategic approaches to funding and conducting additional research in this area. It builds on a pilot evidence map developed earlier in the project; this was reviewed with target users to gather critical input on how to maximise its relevance and usability.

This report is Part 1 of a two-part process. In **Part 1** we provide a comprehensive description of our approach. This is primarily designed for researchers and academic stakeholders seeking to understand the methodology we adopted for developing the evidence map (Steps 1 – 4 below). Part 1 also presents the results of our evidence mapping aimed at financial inclusion practitioners, donors and investors seeking to understand where the evidence is clustered and where there are gaps (Steps 4 – 6). We will follow this with a **Part 2** report, which will include in-depth analysis and synthesis of evidence relating to specific topics; our initial piece will be about savings initiatives focused on youth. This is an area of increased prioritisation in the industry and where existing evidence is least analysed relative to the other areas in our map. It will therefore, serve the needs of stakeholders seeking to learn about this topic. We will also develop an online version of the Part 1 evidence map with a range of search functionalities to maximise the utility for users. We will continue to search for newly available evidence and will update the map annually.

We adopted the [3ie Evidence Gap Map approach](#), similar to that used by Itad for the [BEAM Exchange Evidence Gap Map](#). Evidence gap maps systematically scope out available evidence within a given sector through the application of search protocols and rigorous selection and quality assurance criteria. Evidence is then mapped onto a matrix structure, providing a visual representation to help users quickly locate information and identify gaps in available evidence. Gap maps can help navigate the huge range of information available, understand the quality of evidence and identify potential gaps. The savings evidence map is a valuable resource for key stakeholders. Based on an initial consultation¹ the table below illustrates key ways practitioners, donor, investors, policy makers and researchers could find it useful. We have kept these uses at the forefront of our mind as we developed the map and set out plans to take this forward.

Table 1: Potential report uses by stakeholder groups

Practitioners who are:	Donors, investors, policy makers who are:	Researchers who are:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Looking for evidence of what works to inform savings programming in specific areas Advocating and fundraising for new approaches in areas where there is little evidence or fewer interventions Looking to develop guidelines for practice in areas where there is substantial evidence of what works 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interested in making evidence-based, strategic investments and policies in areas where there is sufficient, high-confidence evidence of what works Donors looking to identify and support the development of a body of practice in little explored areas by funding programmes and research where there is little evidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interested in identifying gaps in evidence and filling them Interested in conducting systematic reviews of evidence in areas that are not sufficiently or recently synthesised

¹ Itad undertook a consultation of key stakeholders and potential users of the evidence map in late 2017. This included representatives from project implementation, academia and donors. In addition it included discussions with those who had and hadn't used an Evidence Map
Itad in association with **the Mastercard Foundation**
February 2018

The report is organised in six sections, mirroring the main steps of our methodology. These include:

- Step 1. Objectives and scope of the evidence map
- Step 2. Protocol for the literature review, inclusion and quality control
- Step 3. Search and screening process
- Step 4. Evidence categorisation criteria
- Step 5. Evidence map
- Step 6. Additional synthesis of evidence

The Mastercard Foundation Savings Learning Lab

The Mastercard Foundation Savings Learning Lab is a six-year initiative implemented by Itad, in partnership with the [SEEP Network](#). The Lab's aim is to support learning among the Foundation's savings sector portfolio programmes through increased alignment and effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation, and through the generation, synthesis, curation and dissemination of knowledge. Itad, as the Learning Partner, works across and with the Foundation's partners, Foundation staff and with the wider Savings Sector to support actionable learning by synthesising and aggregating learning across the portfolio and sector, conducting complementary research and facilitating learning and knowledge sharing with key audiences.

Step 1: Setting objectives and scope

The consultation process with key target users revealed an interest in accessing relevant and reliable evidence on a broad range of savings initiatives including those related to savings groups, individual savings, formal and informal savings. There was also interest for the evidence to be categorised by type of results achieved, type of savings intervention, research methods and level of results achieved.

Within this broad scope, the evidence map builds on the four learning questions of the Mastercard Foundation Savings Learning Lab:

1. Impact: does financial access substantially improve the wellbeing of customers?
2. Client: which financial services and channels are most valued by the financially disadvantaged?
3. Institutions: what drives the business case for providers to serve the financially disadvantaged?
4. Ecosystem: what does an enabling environment look like and what is the appropriate role for funders to play in supporting it?

Step 2: Inclusion and quality criteria

Evidence identified through our comprehensive search process needs to fulfil a number of inclusion and quality criteria in order to be included in the evidence database. The purpose of setting inclusion criteria is to enhance transparency and rigour of the review as this then guides the subsequent screening process.

Table 2a and 2b summarise the primary and quality inclusion criteria. For further details, including definitions and examples, please refer to Appendix 1.

Table 2a: Primary inclusion criteria

Criteria	Description
Relevance:	The evidence addresses one of the types of results on clients, institutions and/or ecosystems. The evidence also needs to encompass a 'substantial' savings component. 'Substantial' implies that the evidence explicitly addresses results related to savings initiatives.
Geographical focus:	All regions
Time cut-off:	Evidence from 2007 onwards only is considered.
Accessibility:	For evidence to be included in the evidence gap map, it needs to be available either through academic or institutional databases. Relevant grey literature is also captured ² .
Language:	English and French

Historically, quality assessments have been designed to assess quantitative evidence. However, we increasingly encounter qualitative evidence in the policy realm and as a result, a wealth of qualitative quality assessment tools based on checklists approaches have been developed. However, these are often subjective and resource-intensive. We, therefore, used the quality assessment criteria developed for the BEAM Evidence Gap Map outlined in Table 2b, as this provides a common framework to assess both quantitative and qualitative studies.

Additional analysis was conducted on the quantitative evidence in our final sample to assess the potential risk of bias. (See Appendix 4 and 5 for more details.)

Table 2b: Quality assessment criteria for quantitative and qualitative evidence

Criteria	Description	Coding
Transparency:	The evidence is transparent about the methodology.	YES – all three aspects are described in the document PARTIALLY – some methodological aspects are described NO – methodology is not described at all
Credibility:	The methodology to collect results is not only transparent but also credible by applying good measurement practices.	YES – all three aspects are appropriate ³ PARTIALLY – some of the aspects are appropriate, some not NO – none of the aspects are done appropriately
Cogency:	The argument built by the methodology delivers a coherent and convincing story of results achieved.	YES – the argument made is cogent PARTIALLY – there are some gaps in the logic but the story is still generally convincing NO – there are major gaps in the logic and the story is not convincing
Inclusion decisions for all evidence:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Included: Studies that meet <u>all</u> criteria in Table 1a <u>and</u> fully meet or at least partially meet the criteria in Table 1b. • Not included: any of the criteria in Table 1a is not met <u>or</u> at least one criteria/aspect in Table 1b are coded as NO. 		

² We should note that most of the academic databases we searched required subscriptions. Some of the grey literature databases required payments too.

³ An aspect can be deemed appropriate if it is in line with good measurement practice, supports answering the research questions and is able to handle scope and scale of the research.

Step 3: Search and screening process

The first step in the search process included reviewing a total of 27 academic and institutional databases using pre-defined search strings which we refined for each of the databases (the databases and particular search strings we used are outlined in more depth in appendix 2).

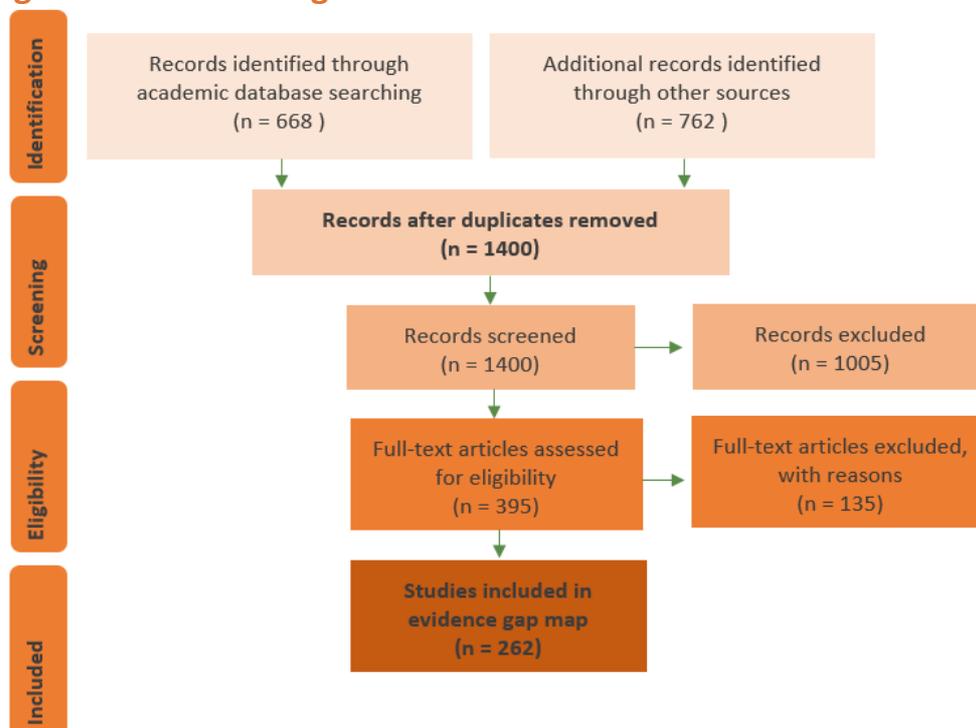
To identify the wealth of relevant systematic reviews we searched the following specialist databases:

- Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Co-ordinating Centre (EPPI-Centre)
- DFID Database for Systematic Reviews⁴
- 3IE Systematic Reviews Database

We identified 13 systematic reviews (see appendix 3) and only the systematic reviews with a substantial section on savings were considered (four in total). In a second step, 'snowballing' was used to gather material from the references listed in the documents shared by MCF, for example the studies from the OPM literature review. All the studies identified through the search process were screened by title and abstract relative to the inclusion criteria defined above.

For those studies where insufficient information was available in the title and abstract to assess relevance the full text was downloaded and then assessed using the same inclusion criteria (see figure 1 below for a summary of the search and screening process). One researcher did the initial screening and two independent reviewers double-checked the screening decisions of the first researcher for a sample of 50 studies. The research team discussed the results of the screening process and agreed on a final decision through discussions when there were disagreements. We should also note that 26 studies failed to meet one or more of our quality inclusion criteria and were screened out due to having a 'no' in transparency, credibility and cogency, which indicated that they were not of sufficient quality. **A total of 262 studies (see Appendix 6) were included in the evidence map.**

Figure 1: PRISMA diagramme



⁴ <http://r4d.dfid.gov.uk/SystematicReviews.aspx>

Step 4: Evidence characterisation

Once a piece of evidence met the inclusion criteria, it was classified/tagged according to the criteria presented in the table below. Decisions about categorisation was based on a combination of input from industry experts (during our consultation process) and established industry classification. This ensures the classification/tagging is tailored to the information needs of our stakeholders and conforms with best practices. We decided to allow for multiple tagging for types of results if evidence included a range of results, as well as for multiple tagging for types of initiative if studies focused on more than one intervention.

Table 3: Classification criteria

	Criteria	Classification
1	<p>Intervention type</p> <p>Multiple tagging in this category</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Interventions that focused on product: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Individual savings ○ Savings groups ○ Other (studies that mixed individual and group accounts, other types of savings such as gold, studies that looked at joint accounts) 2. Interventions that focused on product design: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Voluntary savings ○ Compulsory savings ○ Commitment based savings ○ Savings embedded with other services ○ Other (other designs including complex RCTs that mixed different product designs) 3. Interventions that focused on delivery channel: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Physical branches ○ Alternative delivery channels (ATM, internet banking, Mobile banking, roving staff, agent banking) ○ Other (studies where physical branches, mobile banking and other channels were not clearly disaggregated and other channels such as lockboxes) 4. Interventions that focused on a specific target market/client group: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Youth ○ Women ○ Ultra-Poor⁵ ○ Rural ○ Urban ○ Other (Include various types of target clients, including faith based groups (e.g. Islamic banking), pensioners and old age clients, disabled people and informal labourers) 5. Interventions that focused on a specific provider/business model: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Bank-led ○ NGO-led ○ MNO-led

⁵ There are many definitions of 'ultra-poor' within the evidence in our map. This includes absolute measures of income such as living below the international poverty line or relative measures of poverty, such as those within the poorest quintile of the local population. Other definitions include asset ownership, those 'least likely' to make a sustained trajectory out of poverty and food security status. We have therefore adopted a broad definition of 'ultra-poor' and studies that identify this as a focus of the study have been tagged accordingly.

	Criteria	Classification
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Partnerships ○ Other
2	<p>Types of Results</p> <p>Multiple tagging in this category</p>	<p>Client level outcomes related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Access ● Usage ● Income ● Consumption ● Assets (asset building, creation and accumulation, including housing) ● Business outcomes (home business outcome, level of business investment, business development) ● Resilience and food security ● Empowerment (including women’s empowerment) ● Health and nutrition ● Education ● Other social outcomes (social cohesion, social status, social capital) <p>Institution level</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Outreach ● Sustainability and replicability (sustainability of the intervention and the extent to which the interventions can be replicated) ● Effectiveness of business model ● Institutional capacity ● Partnership models <p>Ecosystem</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Policy and regulation ● Supporting functions (infrastructure, skills and technology, information, related services) ● Market coordination ● Informal rules and norms
3	Sign of results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Positive ● Negative ● Mixed ● No result
4	Level of significance of results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Statistically significant ● Statistically not significant (‘no results’) ● Statistically significant and statistically not significant (‘no result’)
5	Types of Evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Systematic reviews ● Research syntheses, EGMs and literature reviews ● Impact evaluations ● Project monitoring reports ● Peer reviewed articles ● Case studies <p>We exclude opinion pieces, training manuals, state of the sector type reports, and any other documents that are not based on either primary or secondary data or do not discuss results.</p>

	Criteria	Classification
6	<p>Research Method</p> <p>Information required for quantitative quality scoring scheme.</p> <p>Multiple tagging in this category</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Quantitative 2. Qualitative 3. Mixed methods <p>Subcategory for quantitative designs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experimental/RCTs • Longitudinal studies: panel or before/after and with/without • Cross-section studies: either before/after or with/without • Basic Surveys <p>Subcategory for qualitative designs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethnographic • Semi-structured interviews • Focus group discussions
7	<p>Method of Analysis</p> <p>Information required for quantitative quality scoring scheme.</p> <p>Multiple tagging in this category</p>	<p>For quantitative evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Econometric techniques such as IV, PSM, 2SLS, difference in difference, regression discontinuity • Multivariate analysis (OLS/regression based approaches) • Tabulation/basic descriptive statistics <p>For qualitative evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content or framework analysis • Grounded theory • Discourse analysis • Narrative analysis
8	<p>Data Source</p> <p>Multiple tagging</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring Data • Primary surveys • Secondary data • Qualitative narratives/data
9	<p>Disaggregated results</p> <p>Multiple tagging</p>	<p>Does the disaggregate data and analyse differences in results for different population segments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender • Youth • Rural • Urban • Poverty level (ultra-poor)
10	<p>Geography</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Countries and continents

Step 5: Evidence Gap Map

After we categorised the evidence by all the criteria described above in Table 3 we built the evidence map. The map organises the evidence into a matrix structure. On the horizontal axis (columns) the evidence is organised by **type of results** grouped into client, institutions and ecosystem level results. On the vertical axis (rows) the evidence is organised by the **type of savings intervention** documented in the evidence; interventions focused on product type, product design, product distribution channels and target markets. Each cell indicates the

actual number of studies documenting a specific type of intervention and its associated type of result. It is important to mention that resources appear multiple times in the map, where they contain evidence for multiple types of results and therefore adding up the figures across cells will exceed the total number of studies included in the map.

In this document, we present the map in four layers: a first, high-level map, which aggregates the evidence by the primary categories of results (Figure 2). We then follow with three additional maps that further unpack the results level: clients (Figure 3), institutions (Figure 4) and ecosystem (Figure 5).

Figure 2: Savings Evidence Map – high-level/aggregate results

Intervention Type		Clients	Institutions	Ecosystem
Product type	Individual savings	52	11	3
	Savings groups	81	34	5
	Other	16	1	2
Product design	Voluntary	10	2	1
	Commitment based	14	1	
	Compulsory	4	1	
	Embedded with other services	12	4	
	Other	20	7	
Delivery	Physical branches	3	1	
	Alternative delivery channels	23	5	2
	Other	4	5	
Target market/Clients	Youth	19	4	
	Ultra-Poor	11	3	2
	Women	23	3	1
	Rural	39	6	
	Urban	3		
	Other	6	1	

The figures in the map above indicate the number of studies that document evidence at client, institution and ecosystem level by type of intervention. Client level results by far dominate across the studies included in the map. For example, the map shows 81 studies looking at savings groups include evidence on client outcomes, and 52 studies focusing on individual savings initiatives document evidence on clients, and so on. The least amount of evidence is found at the ecosystem level. The map also shows that interventions focused on product types are the most documented, especially those on savings groups. The following three maps further unpack these figures and discuss how the evidence is clustered and where there are gaps.

Part 2 of our evidence map (upcoming) will include an in-depth analysis and synthesis of findings of youth-focused savings initiatives. Understanding the evidence on financial inclusion initiatives with a focus on savings and youth is an area of increased priority in the sector, especially for implementing partners in the Savings Learning Lab such as WSBI and CARE. This is also an area where existing evidence is least synthesised, relative to other areas in our map such as overall client impact and savings groups (SEEP, SatF), alternative delivery channels/digital finance (Caribou Digital), gender (CGAP and upcoming SEEP) and rural/small holder (RAFL).

Figure 3: Evidence Gap Map – client level results

Intervention Type		Access	Usage	Income	Asset	Consumption	Business outcomes	Resilience & Food Security	Empowerment	Health & Nutrition	Education	Social outcomes
Product type	Individual savings	23	42	9	4	7	2	5	4	2	2	1
	Savings groups	27	35	23	11	13	7	20	19	19	14	15
	Other	6	12	4	3	1	1	1	3	1	3	4
Product design	Voluntary	6	8			1	1		1		1	1
	Commitment based	6	12	1					3		1	1
	Compulsory	1	3			1	1				1	2
	Embedded with other services	2	5	3	2			3	4	3	1	2
	Other	5	13	5	2	1		2	3	7	3	1
Delivery	Physical branches	2	2	1				1				
	Alternative delivery channels	12	20	6	2	1		3	1	1	1	
	Other		4	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1
Target market/Clients	Youth	8	14	2	3			4	1	1	3	1
	Ultra-Poor	6	8	7	3	1		5	2	3	2	3
	Women	9	13	8	4	2	2	6	7	4	4	4
	Rural	12	24	11	3	6	1	7	2	5	2	5
	Urban				1			1	1			
	Other	3	3	1								

Figure 3 (above) presents a more detailed look at the client-level results. **The map shows that the most substantial evidence is on access and usage across all intervention types**, and especially for interventions that focus on individual savings and those focused on savings groups. It is encouraging to note that usage is documented more frequently than access as the industry is increasingly looking beyond access to finance towards measures of usage and value derived by clients. Changes in income, resilience and food security, and

empowerment are documented to a lesser extent but still in a number of studies. **The least amount of evidence appears to be on business outcomes.**

The map shows that of all intervention types, savings groups are the most heavily documented with results in each of the categories included in the map. A relatively high amount of studies document alternative delivery channels which is not surprising as providers are increasingly looking to solve proximity, cost and scale challenges. The map also presents initiatives focused on the target market with a large proportion of the documents presenting evidence on savings initiatives that target rural clients and women, followed by ones that target youth and the ultra-poor.

We also categorised evidence by whether client level results are disaggregated by different client groups (youth, gender, poverty level, rural/urban) but found a very small number of studies that did that. We have not included this categorisation in the map in order to keep it manageable but want to highlight this point as it is somewhat surprising, given the increased focus on customer segmentation to help design and deliver products that better meet their needs and preferences.

Figure 4: Evidence Gap Map – institution level results

Intervention Type		Outreach	Sustainability & Replicability	Effectiveness of Business Model	Institutional capacity and governance	Partnership models
Product type	Individual savings	5	1	6		
	Savings groups	8	10	19	1	3
	Other			1		
Product design	Voluntary	2		1		
	Commitment based			1		
	Compulsory			1		
	Embedded with other services	1	1	1		1
	Other	3	1	3		
Delivery	Physical branches	1				
	Alternative delivery channels - Mobile	3		2		
	Other	2	3	2		
Target market/Clients	Youth	3		1		
	Ultra-Poor	2		1		1
	Gender	1	1	1	1	
	Rural	2	1	2		1
	Urban					
	Other	1				

Figure 4 shows a more detailed look at institution-level results by the same types of interventions. The evidence base is significantly scarcer in this case compared to client-level results with a high proportion of evidence examining savings group interventions and their sustainability and replicability, as well as the effectiveness of their business model. Otherwise, **many evidence gaps exist implying we have a limited understanding of the link between savings initiatives and the outcomes on the institutions which provide them.** It is especially surprising that, given the keen interest in the sector on understanding the sustainability and replicability of various financial inclusion initiatives, we find very little reliable evidence on this topic.

Related to institutions, but from the starting point of the interventions' main focus, we have also set out to identify studies that document evidence of interventions focused on the types of providers (banks, MNOs, partnerships) who offer savings services (as indicated in Table 2). We found a very small number of studies documenting such interventions and we have therefore not presented this data on the map. However, given the industry's keen interest on commercial viability, scale and innovative implementation models **these gaps highlight the need for more research to help increase our understanding of what approaches are needed for providers to be able to build, deliver and maintain savings products and we will continue to track these trends.**

Figure 5: Evidence Gap Map – ecosystem level results

Intervention Type		Policy & Regulation	Supporting functions	Market coordination	Informal rules and norms
Product	Individual savings	3			
	Savings groups	4	1		
	Other	1			1
Product design	Voluntary	1			
	Commitment based				
	Compulsory				
	Embedded with other services				
	Other				
Delivery	Physical branches				
	Alternative delivery channels - Mobile	1		1	
	Other				
Target market/Clients	Youth				
	Ultra-Poor	2			
	Gender		1		
	Rural				
	Urban				
	Other				

This figure outlines the evidence gap map for ecosystem level results. The map shows that the evidence base, in this case, is even scarcer, certainly compared to client level results but also compared to institution level results. **Except for a small number of studies documenting results related to policy and regulation, reliable evidence is almost non-existent at this level, which presents a clear opportunity for further research.**

Step 6: Additional synthesis of evidence

We synthesised selected evidence in our map using some of the additional evidence characterisation classification criteria in Table 3 and quality assessment criteria in Tables 2a and 2b.

1.1. Classification by the three primary result levels

Figure 6: Number of studies by aggregate types of results

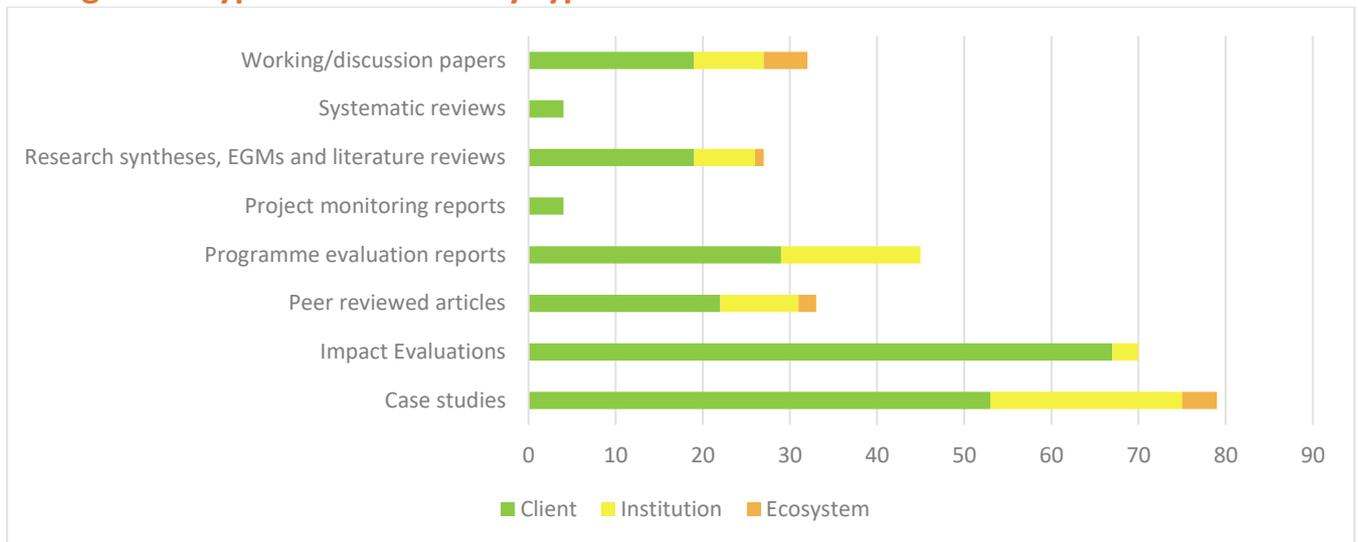
s

This diagramme reiterates that client -level results seem to dominate across the studies included in the map. They are mentioned in 217 cases, which is 82% of the total sample of studies. Also as shown in this figure, it is important to emphasise that resources appear multiple times in the map, where they contain evidence for multiple types of results, with four studies including evidence at all three levels.

1.2. By types of evidence

When we disaggregate the information on types of results by types of evidence (see Figure 7), we find that impact evaluations dominate client-level results, followed by case studies and programme evaluation reports. Figure 7 shows that the majority of research syntheses and literature reviews present evidence at the client level. Case studies and programme evaluation reports dominate institution level results. Evidence about ecosystem-level results is dominated by case studies and working papers or discussion papers.

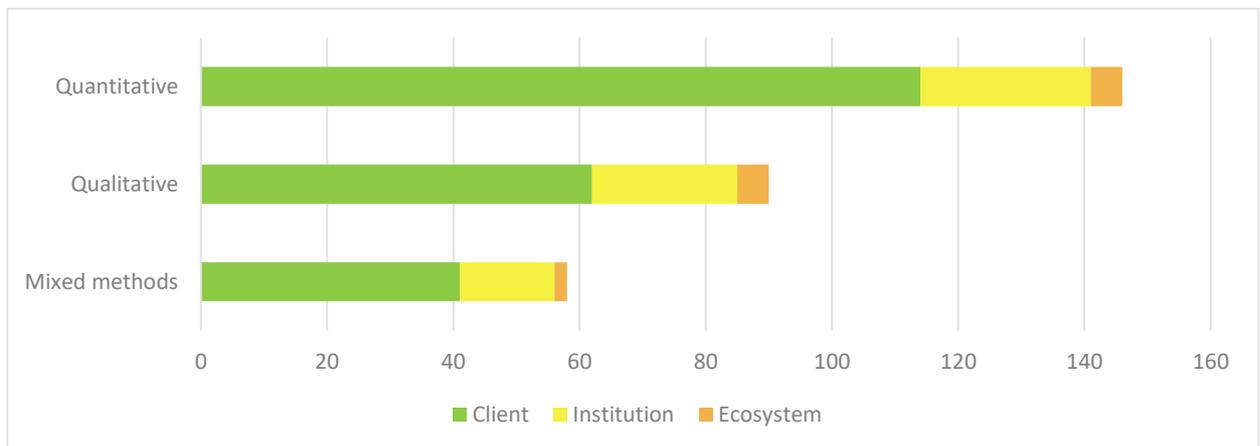
Figure 7: Types of evidence by types of results



1.3. By methods

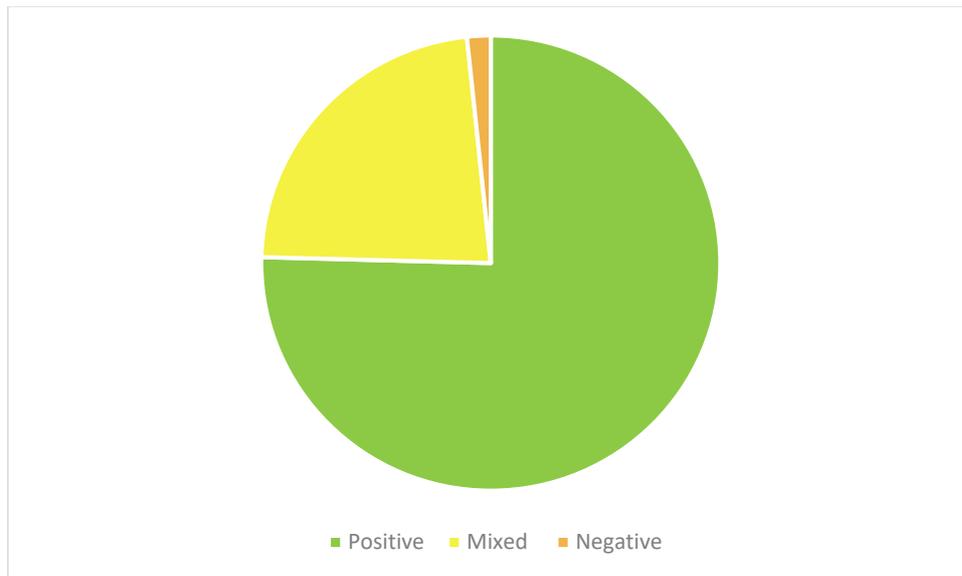
Examining our sample of studies in terms of their methodological choices (figure 8); we find that more than half the studies adopted a quantitative approach (52% of the total sample of included studies); this holds true especially for client- and institution-level results. Given the large number of impact evaluations we identified in the sample of client-level studies, the dominance of quantitative methods is not surprising. Recent impact evaluations have largely used RCTs to measure impact. This is reflected in the quality assessment where the majority of studies with a low risk of bias score are RCT-driven impact evaluations looking at the impact of micro-savings on the client. Given the recent rise in popularity of mixed methods studies, it is interesting to see that mixed methods approaches are surpassed by qualitative approaches. In 29% of all included studies, qualitative methods were adopted. Only 19% of all included studies pursued a mixed methods approach.

Figure 8: Broad methodological choices by types of results



1.4. By sign of result

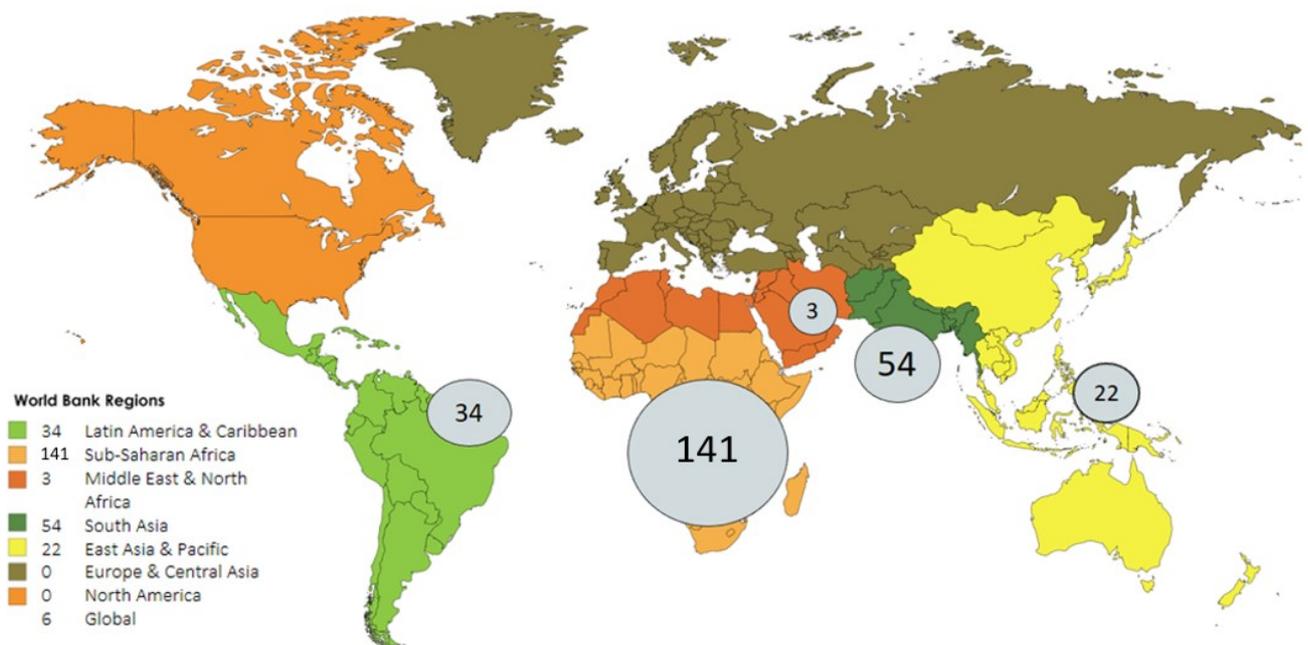
Figure 9: By sign of result



Examining our sample of studies in terms of the sign of results, we find the majority of studies find positive results on outcomes. Only four studies in our sample found only negative results however 55 studies report mixed results on respective client, institution and ecosystem level outcomes. Further assessment is required to understand the reasons for this as it may be due to assessment design.

1.5. By geography

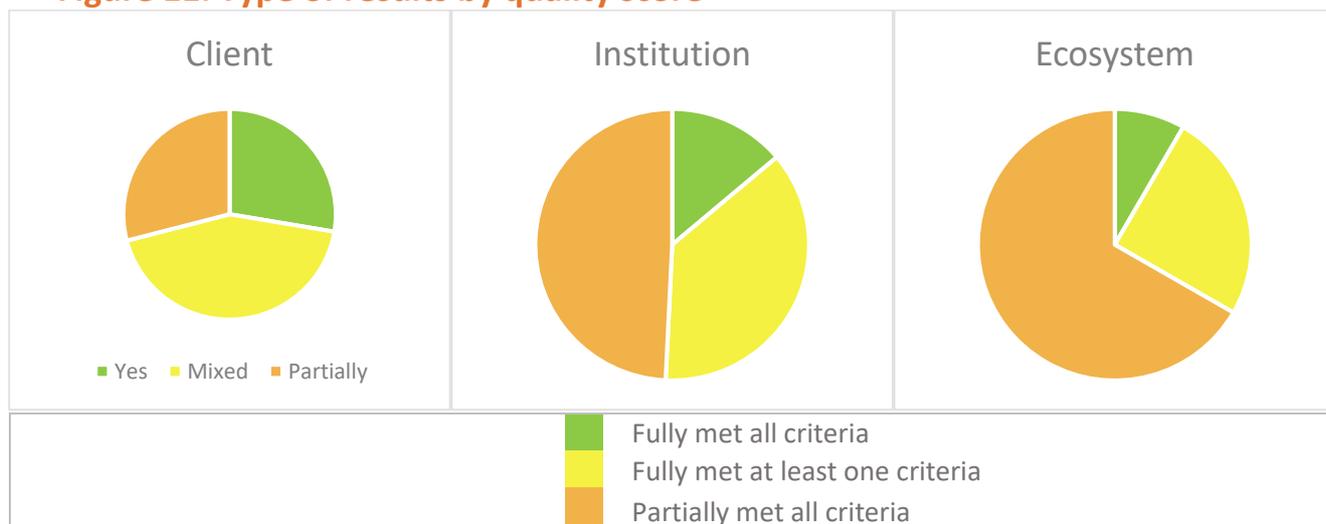
Figure 10: Geographic distribution, by World Bank regions



Examining our sample of studies (excluding systematic reviews, research syntheses, EGMs and literature reviews) by geographic focus, we find the majority of studies focus on Sub-Saharan Africa (141), followed by South Asia (54) and Latin America and the Caribbean (34). While some studies in this sub-sample had a global scope, there are no studies that focus exclusively on either North America or Europe and Central Asia. Given the regional trends in access to and use of savings products and services, it is not surprising that research is focussed in less developed regions where a higher proportion of the population are excluded from savings products.

1.6. By quality

Figure 11: Type of results by quality score



The three charts shown in Figure 11 show the percentage of studies within each type of result according to the quality ratings assigned to each study. Only studies that fully met or partially met all three quality assessment criteria (outlined in Table 1b) were included in the map, therefore studies that ‘partially met all criteria’ are considered to be the lowest quality in the map and those that ‘fully met all criteria’ received the highest quality rating. The Figure shows that as you move from client- to institution- to ecosystem-level result, the proportion of studies that fully met all quality criteria reduces and the proportion of relatively low-quality studies increases. It is interesting to note that not only are there more studies focussing on client level results, these studies are also of a higher quality than those which assess institution- and ecosystem-level results.

Conclusion and next steps

Part 1 of our Savings Evidence Map describes our approach and initial analysis of where the evidence is clustered and where there are gaps. Through our search process we identified 1400 studies, which were screened using our inclusion criteria. After the screening process we were left with 262 studies that met our inclusion criteria. These 262 studies were subjected to a quality assessment and collated into an evidence gap map.

The results of the mapping exercise show that client-level studies clearly dominate. Within these studies, there is a large amount of evidence focused on access and usage of individual savings and savings groups. The map also shows that, with the exception of savings group initiatives we have significant evidence gaps for institution-level results especially in the areas of sustainability and replicability. In other words, very little is documented about the motivations and outcomes of savings providers to serve the financially disadvantaged. **These gaps highlight the need for more research to help increase our understanding of what approaches are needed for providers to be able to build, deliver and maintain savings products sustainably.** Moreover, the map shows an extremely thin evidence base for ecosystem level results. It reveals that we do not have solid evidence about

the enabling factors that need to be in place to generate an environment that could best facilitate the use of savings products. This presents another opportunity for further research.

Additional synthesis of evidence type reveals that impact evaluations dominate, and are mainly driven by quantitative approaches. These are often considered to be superior (from a risk of bias perspective) to qualitative and or mixed methods approaches as indicated by the quality assessment scoring. Lastly, the geographical distribution of evidence shows that the majority of evidence focuses on Sub-Saharan Africa.

To further understand what types of savings interventions work best and for whom this evidence mapping will be followed by a more in-depth analysis of what the evidence is saying. This will be presented in our Part 2 report as an in-depth analysis and synthesis of findings on youth-focused savings initiatives. It is an area of increased prioritisation in the industry and where existing evidence is least analysed relative to the other areas in our map. We will also develop an on-line, searchable version of the evidence map to help users navigate the range of studies, quickly locate information, understand the quality of the evidence and identify gaps. We will continue to search for newly-available evidence and will update the map annually.

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Appendix 1: Inclusion and quality criteria

In Step 2 we identified a number of inclusion and quality criteria to enhance transparency and rigour of the review as they then guided the subsequent screening process. The following tables build on the information presented in Table 2a and 2b in the main body of the report, providing more detail on the definitions used for the primary and quality inclusion criteria.

Table A1a: Primary Inclusion Criteria

Criteria	Description	Examples
<p>Relevance:</p> <p>The evidence addresses one of the types of results on clients, institutions and/or ecosystems</p>	<p>The evidence needs to engage with one of the types of results on clients, institutions and/or ecosystems. The evidence also needs to encompass a 'substantial' savings component. 'Substantial' implies that the evidence explicitly addresses results related to savings initiatives. These may include savings products tied to access to credit, insurance and other financial services. Credit only, insurance only, mobile money only evidence will not be included. General microfinance evidence, without an explicit focus on savings, will not be included.</p> <p>The focus should be on practical and empirical aspects rather than on theoretical considerations. Systematic review evidence is considered to be relevant.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The systematic review evidence linked to microfinance impact evidence. • Empirical primary studies, etc.
<p>Geographical focus:</p> <p>All regions</p>	<p>We consider evidence from all geographical regions as learning can be generated beyond the Sub-Saharan African literature, which is the Savings Learning Lab's focus.</p>	
<p>Time cut-off: Evidence from 2007 onwards only are considered</p>	<p>To capture the latest evidence of savings initiatives.</p>	
<p>Accessibility:</p> <p>The evidence is accessible through academic or institutional databases</p>	<p>For evidence to be included in the evidence gap map, it needs to be available either through academic or institutional databases. Relevant grey literature is also captured⁶.</p>	<p>The large body of systematic review evidence is a good starting point.</p>
<p>Language: English and French evidence only</p>	<p>We have the capacity to review evidence in English and French.</p>	

⁶ We should note that most of the academic databases we searched require subscriptions. Some of the grey literature databases require payments too.

Table A1b: Quality assessment criteria for quantitative and qualitative evidence

Criteria	Description	Coding
<p>Transparency: The evidence is transparent about the methodology used</p>	<p>The methodology that was used to collect and analyse the data, and the sample frame used to select data sources (including size and composition) to evidence results has to be described in the document. If the document is based on secondary sources, the methodology to select, assess and compile these sources needs to be explained.</p> <p>Aspects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data collection methodology • Sampling (intended and actual sample) • Data analysis methodology 	<p>YES – all three aspects are described in the document</p> <p>PARTIALLY – some methodological aspects are described</p> <p>NO – methodology is not described at all</p>
<p>Credibility: The data collection method generates credible data</p>	<p>The methodology to collect results is not only transparent but also credible by applying good measurement practices. The aim here is to exclude evidence that would undermine the credibility of the whole database.</p> <p>Aspects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Methodology • Sampling • Triangulation 	<p>YES – all three aspects are appropriate⁷</p> <p>PARTIALLY – some of the aspects are appropriate, some not</p> <p>NO – none of the aspects are done appropriately</p>
<p>Cogency: The report presents a convincing argument</p>	<p>The argument built by the steps in the report's design and methodology (from data collection to conclusions) delivers a coherent and convincing story of results achieved.</p> <p>Aspects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design/approach reflects the research questions/intent • Data collection and analysis appropriate for the chosen design • The conclusions accurately reflect the analysis findings 	<p>YES – the argument made is cogent</p> <p>PARTIALLY – there are some gaps in the logic but the story is still generally convincing</p> <p>NO – there are major gaps in the logic and the story is not convincing</p>
<p>Inclusion decisions for all evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Included: Studies that met <u>all</u> criteria in Table 1a <u>and</u> fully met or at least partially met each criterion in Table 1b. • Not included: any of the criteria in Table 1a is not met <u>or</u> at least one criteria/aspect in Table 1b are coded as NO. 		

⁷ An aspect can be deemed appropriate if it is in line with good measurement practice, supports answering the research questions and is able to handle scope and scale of the research.

Appendix 2: Databases and search strings

In Step 3 (search and screening process) of the evidence map methodology we reviewed total of 27 academic and institutional databases, as outlined in Table A2 below. We defined separate search strings, as outlined in table A3, for each of the learning questions to be able to capture the most appropriate evidence.

Table A2: Databases

Academic	Institutional
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Google Scholar • Science Direct • Web of Science • IDEAS/ Research Papers in Economics • Jstor • Scopus • Social Science Research Network (SSRN) • The United Nations University World Institute for Development Economics Research • Institute of Economic Growth • Institute of Development Studies • The Financial Access Initiative, New York University Wagner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accion Center for Financial Inclusion • Consultative Group to Assist the Poor (CGAP) • Innovations for Poverty Action • MicroSave • Overseas Development Institute • SEEP Network • World Bank eLibrary • Department for International Development (DFID) • Donor Committee for Enterprise Development • 3ie Impact Evaluation repository & 3ie Registry for International Development Impact Evaluations • World Bank Impact Evaluation Working Paper Series • Research4Development (DFID) • African Development Bank Evaluation Reports: • Agence Française de Développement: Impact Evaluations • Asian Development Bank Evaluation Resources • Inter-American Development Bank Evaluations

Table A3: Search strings

General		
“Individual savings”	“Savings groups”	Micro-savings OR microsavings
“Self-help groups”	“Financial inclusion”	ROSCA
Savings	Microfinance	“Financial services”
AND product	AND product	AND product
AND design	AND design	AND design
AND voluntary	AND voluntary	AND voluntary
AND compulsory	AND compulsory	AND compulsory
AND Commitment	AND Commitment	AND Commitment
AND Services	AND Services	AND branch
AND branch	AND branch	AND mobile
AND mobile	AND mobile	AND delivery
AND delivery	AND delivery	AND agent
AND agent	AND agent	AND business model
AND business model	AND business model	AND “financial services providers”

AND "financial services providers"	AND "financial services providers"	AND Bank
AND Bank	AND Bank	AND NGO
AND NGO	AND NGO	AND Partnership
AND Partnership	AND Partnership	AND Client
AND Client	AND Client	AND Market
AND Market	AND Market	AND Youth
AND Youth	AND Youth	AND Poor
AND Poor	AND Poor	AND Disability
AND Disability	AND Disability	AND Gender
AND Gender	AND Gender	AND Women
AND Women	AND Women	AND Access
AND Access	AND Access	AND Usage
AND Usage	AND Usage	AND Income
AND Income	AND Income	AND Consumption
AND Consumption	AND Consumption	AND Resilience
AND Resilience	AND Resilience	AND Finance
Savings	Microfinance	"Financial services"
AND Finance	AND Finance	AND Social
AND Social	AND Social	AND Empowerment
AND Empowerment	AND Empowerment	AND Participation
AND Participation	AND Participation	AND Health
AND Health	AND Health	AND Education
AND Education	AND Education	AND Institution
AND Institution	AND Institution	MAND School
MAND School	MAND School	AND Sustainability
AND Sustainability	AND Sustainability	AND Efficiency
AND Efficiency	AND Efficiency	AND Scale
AND Scale	AND Scale	And Policy
And Policy	And Policy	AND Ecosystem
AND Ecosystem	AND Ecosystem	AND Regulation
AND Regulation	AND Regulation	AND funder
AND funder	AND funder	AND donor
AND donor	AND donor	AND formal
AND formal	AND formal	AND informal
AND informal	AND informal	

Appendix 3: Chronological overview of microfinance systematic reviews and meta-analyses

The following 13 systematic reviews were identified in Step 3 (search and screening process) of the evidence map methodology from the following specialist databases:

- Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Co-ordinating Centre (EPPI-Centre)
- DFID Database for Systematic Reviews
- 3IE Systematic Reviews Database

Authors	Details	Geographical focus	Funder
Odell, 2010	Research synthesis	Worldwide	Grameen Foundation
Stewart et al, 2010	SR; quantitative evidence only	Sub-Saharan Africa	DFID
Duvendack et al, 2011	SR; quantitative evidence only	Worldwide	DFID
Bauchet, et al, 2011	RCT evidence only – not a SR	Worldwide	CGAP
Stewart et al, 2012	SR; includes micro-leasing, quantitative evidence only	Worldwide	DFID
Maitrot and Niño-Zarazúa, 2013	SR; quantitative evidence only	Worldwide	Unclear
Cole et al, 2012	SR, micro-insurance focus, quantitative only	Worldwide	DFID
Yang and Stanley, 2013	Meta-analysis only, focus on income	Worldwide	Self-funded
Vaessen et al, 2014	SR including meta-analysis; empowerment focus	Worldwide	3ie
Awaworyi, 2014	Meta-analysis only	Worldwide	Self-funded
Arrivillaga and Salcedo, 2014	SR, focus on HIV/AIDS prevention	Worldwide	Unclear
Madhani, Tompkins, Jack and Fisher, 2015	Modified SR, focus on women's mental health	Worldwide	Unclear
Gopalswamy et al, 2016	SR; quantitative evidence only	South Asia	DFID

Appendix 4: Quantitative quality assessment approach

This appendix outlines the available tools and methodology we adopted to assess the risk of bias in our final sample of studies. The results of the analysis are presented in appendix 4.

Many of the available tools focus on assessing the validity of experimental designs (e.g. Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy, 2010 for social experiments, Higgins and Green, 2011 for medical experiments) but increasingly tools for assessing quasi-experimental evidence have been developed (e.g. see EPHPP (n.d.), EPOC (n.d.), NICE (2009), Petticrew and Roberts (2006:135), also Deeks et al (2003) for an in-depth list and Valentine and Cooper (2008)).

A popular scale often used to assess quantitative evidence is the Maryland Scale of Scientific Methods (see table A4) which categorises the characteristics of research approaches and corresponding evidence.

Table A4: Maryland Scale of Scientific Methods (MSSM)

0 = Descriptive statistics with no control group
1 = Observed correlation between an intervention and outcomes at a single point in time. A study that only measured the impact of the service using a questionnaire at the end of the intervention would fall into this level.
2 = Temporal sequence between the intervention and the outcome clearly observed; or the presence of a comparison group that cannot be demonstrated to be comparable. A study that measured the outcomes of people who used a service before it was set up and after it finished would fit into this level.
3 = A comparison between two or more comparable units of analysis, one with and one without the intervention. A matched-area design using two locations in a country would fit into this category if the individuals in the research and the areas themselves were comparable.
4 = Comparison between multiple units with and without the intervention, controlling for other factors or using comparison units that evidence only minor differences. A method such as propensity score matching, that used statistical techniques to ensure that the programme and comparison groups were similar would fall into this category.
5 = Random assignment and analysis of comparable units to intervention and control groups. A well conducted RCT fits into this category.

Source: Adapted from NAO, 2013, Carpenter et al, 2011.

However, the Cochrane Collaboration explicitly discourages the application of scales in quality appraisal as these have shown to be empirically weak (Higgins and Green, 2011, chapter 8.5). This view is mirrored by Deeks et al (2003). Hence, a scoring scheme by Duvendack et al (2011, 2012) was developed. This scheme categorises each study by scoring their reported research design and analytical method (see table A5); these scores are then combined into an index. A cut-off point of 2 is applied, e.g. a study with a score of 2 and above is considered to have high threats to validity. Studies with scores of less than 2 have lower threats to validity. Studies with high threats to validity would be excluded from further analysis and synthesis and thus reduce the number of studies for synthesis to a manageable amount.

Given resource constraints and the scope of this study, we propose to use the tool developed by Duvendack et al (2012) outlined in Table A5 to get an estimate for the quality of the quantitative evidence we have included.

Table A5: Potential risk of bias in quasi-experimental designs

Research design	Statistical methods of analysis		
	DID, PSM, IV, RDD	Multivariate (or bivariate with covariate means tests)	Tabulation
RCT	Low	Low	Low–Medium
Natural experiment	Low	Low	Low–Medium
Pipeline	Low–Medium	Medium-high	High
Panel	Low–Medium	N/A	High
Cross section	Low–Medium	High	High

Source: Duvendack et al. (2012).

However, this tool has shortcomings and therefore it is now often combined with an approach developed by Hombrados and Waddington (2012) as outlined in table A6 (for an application of combining these two tools see Duvendack et al, 2014).

Table A6: Internal validity appraisal categories for social experiments and quasi-experiments

Evaluation criteria	Category of bias	Example evaluation questions
1. Mechanism of assignment or identification	Selection bias and confounding	– Does the allocation mechanism generate equivalent groups? – Does the model of participation capture all relevant observable and unobservable differences in covariates between the groups?
2. Group equivalence in implementation of the methodology	Selection bias and confounding	– Is the method of analysis adequately executed? – Are the groups balanced on observables, and all relevant confounders taken into account in the analysis? – Is non-random attrition a threat to validity?
3. Hawthorne effects	Motivation bias	–Are differences in outcomes across the groups influenced by participant motivation as a result of programme implementation and, or monitoring?
4. Spill-overs and cross-overs	Performance bias	Is the programme influencing the outcome of the individuals in the comparison group (including compensating investments for the comparison groups)?
5. File-drawer effects	Outcome reporting bias	Is there evidence that results have been reported selectively?
6. Selective methods of analysis	Analysis reporting bias	Is the analysis convincingly reported and justified?
7. Other	Other biases	Are the results of the study subject to other threats to validity (for example, placebo effects, courtesy bias, inadequate survey instrument and so on)?

Evaluation criteria	Category of bias	Example evaluation questions
8. Statistical significance	Biases leading to type I and type II errors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Is the study subject to a unit of analysis error? – Does the study take into account effect heterogeneity between sub-groups? – Is insignificance due to lack of power? –For regression-based studies, is heteroschedasticity accounted for?

Source: Hombrados and Waddington (2012).

Appendix 5: Quantitative and quality assessment results

Figure A1 and A2 outline the quality assessment (transparency, credibility and cogency outlined in Table 2b) for the included studies and the findings from the risk of bias analysis for the quantitative studies respectively.

Figure A1: Transparency, credibility and cogency coding for the included studies

		Transparency	Credibility	Cogency
Qualitative	Fully Met	28	25	20
	Partially met	47	50	55
Mixed Methods	Fully Met	33	29	18
	Partially met	17	21	32
Quantitative	Fully Met	103	92	43
	Partially met	34	45	94
All	Fully Met	162	144	79
	Partially met	98	116	181
	TOTAL	262	262	262

Figure A2: Risk of bias in the included quantitative studies

Research design	Statistical methods of analysis		
	DID, PSM, IV, RDD	Multivariate (or bivariate with covariate means tests)	Tabulation
Experiments/RCTs	8	48	1
Longitudinal studies: Panel or before/after & with/without	5	18	0
Cross-section studies: Either before/after or with/without	4	2	2
Basic Surveys	0	17	17
Other	0	3	11

Source: Adaptation from Table A2, based on Duvendack et al. (2012).

Legend for Figure 9:

Low score	83	High score	30
Medium score	23		

There were no natural experiments or pipeline designs present in our sample and we have therefore removed these research designs. Also, some categories in Figure A2 indicate low-medium, but based on the actual scores we calculated for each of our studies we made a clear decision on either low or medium rather than sit on the fence between two categories.

Figure A2 indicates that in our sample of 136 quantitative studies, 83 have a low score indicating a low risk of bias, 23 have a medium score indicating a medium risk of bias and 30 studies have a high score meaning they have a high risk of bias. High risk of bias does not mean that studies do not contribute in significant ways either substantively or methodologically, only that they may not have the qualities required for meaningful inclusion in the evidence gap maps or further in depth synthesis. However, for the time being, we include even the high risk of bias studies in our evidence gap map and then provide further analysis to explore what we can potentially learn from the high risk of bias studies.

Appendix 6: List of included studies

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2. Afrane, S. and M. Adusei (2014). "Promoting Micro-Savings through the NGO Model: The Success Story of Sinapi Aba Trust." *International Review of Management and Business Research* 3(1): 485-492.
3. Ahmed, A. D. (2007). "Potential impact of financial reforms on savings in Botswana: an empirical analysis using a VECM approach." *The Journal of Developing Areas*: 203-219.
4. Aker, J. C. and M. Sawyer (2016) *Get Your Goat: Planning, Saving, and Ceremonial Spending*.
5. Alam, P. and S. Nizamuddin (2013) *Role of Micro Finance & Self Help Groups in Women Empowerment: A Case Study of District Mewat*.
6. Allen, H. (2009). Impact and Programme Evaluation of Plan and UHIKI's joint VSL Programme in Tanzania., *Plan Tanzania*.
7. Allen, H. (2010). Programme Evaluation of Plan and Reseau Marp_s VSL Programme in Burkina Faso, *Plan International*.
8. Allen, H. (2010). Programme evaluation report - Shigikirana: Burundi.
9. Allen, H. and D. Panetta (2010) *Savings Groups What Are They?*
10. Allen, H., et al. (2010). Impact Evaluation Report of Shigikirana - Savings for Life.
11. Anderson, J., et al. (2016). "National Survey and Segmentation of Smallholder Households in Uganda." *Understanding Their Demand for Financial, Agricultural and Digital Solutions*.
12. Anderson, S., et al. (2009). "Enforcement in informal saving groups." *Journal of Development Economics* 90(1): 14-23.
13. Angelow, W., et al. (2012). "Mass retail banking: how savings banks in Africa, Asia and Latin America can provide usable services to the poor." *Asia and Latin America Can Provide Usable Services to the Poor*.
14. Angelow, W. and I. Radcliffe (2015) *WSBI's journey in making small-scale savings work - WSBI Doubling Savings Accounts Program 2008-2015 - Final Program Report*.
15. Annan, J., Bundervoet, T., Seban, J., and J. Costigan (2013) *A Randomized Impact Evaluation of Village Savings and Loans Associations and Family-Based Interventions in Burundi*. Seep Network
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17. Anyango, E., et al. (2007). "Village savings and loan associations: Experience from Zanzibar." *Small Enterprise Development* 18(1): 11-24.
18. Asamoah, M. and F. M. Amoah (2015). "Microcredit Schemes: A Tool for Promoting Rural Savings Capacity among Poor Farm Families: A Case Study in the Eastern Region of Ghana." *Open Journal of Social Sciences* 03(01): 24-30.
19. Ashraf, N., et al. (2010). "Female Empowerment: Impact of a Commitment Savings Product in the Philippines." *World Development* 38(3): 333-344.

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21. Asombobillah, R. (2011). "Harnessing the power of savings and lending communities to drive agro-enterprise development in Ghana: Cracking the Nut Conference, Overcoming Obstacles to Rural and Agricultural Finance."
22. Atkinson, J., et al. (2010). "Creating incentives to save among microfinance borrowers: A behavioral experiment from Guatemala." University of California at Berkeley, mimeo.
23. Atkinson, J., et al. (2013). "Prompting microfinance borrowers to save: A field experiment from Guatemala." *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 62(1): 21-64.
24. Babajide, A. A., et al. (2015). "microsavings mobilization innovations and poverty alleviation in Nigeria." *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 6(4): 375.
25. Ballem, A., Mohammad, G. & Venkata, N.A. (2012) "Why Do People Not Join or Drop Out of SHGs?" MicroSave.
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