cedilprogramme.org

CEDIL's research programme: a retrospective review

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#CEDIL23

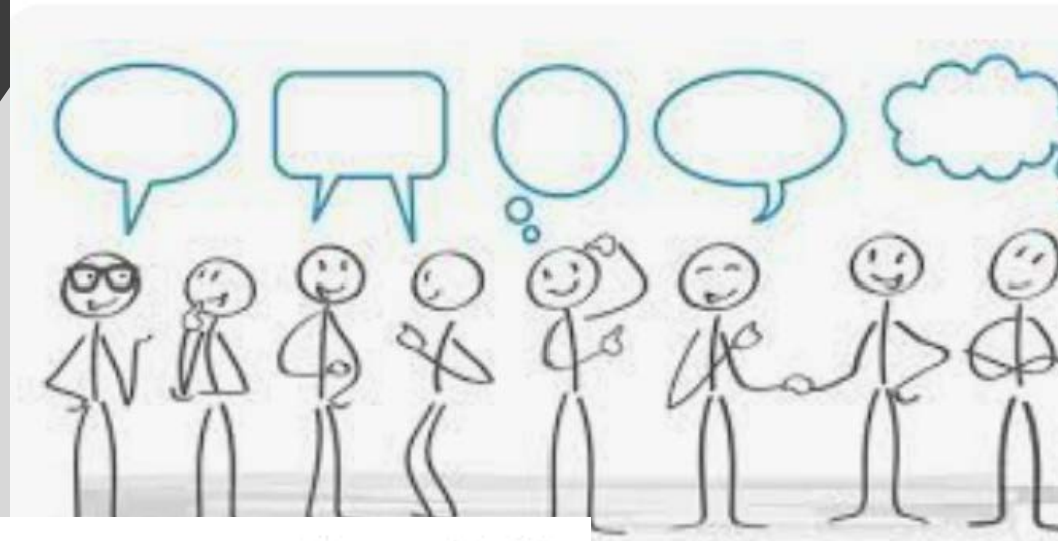
UKaid from the British people

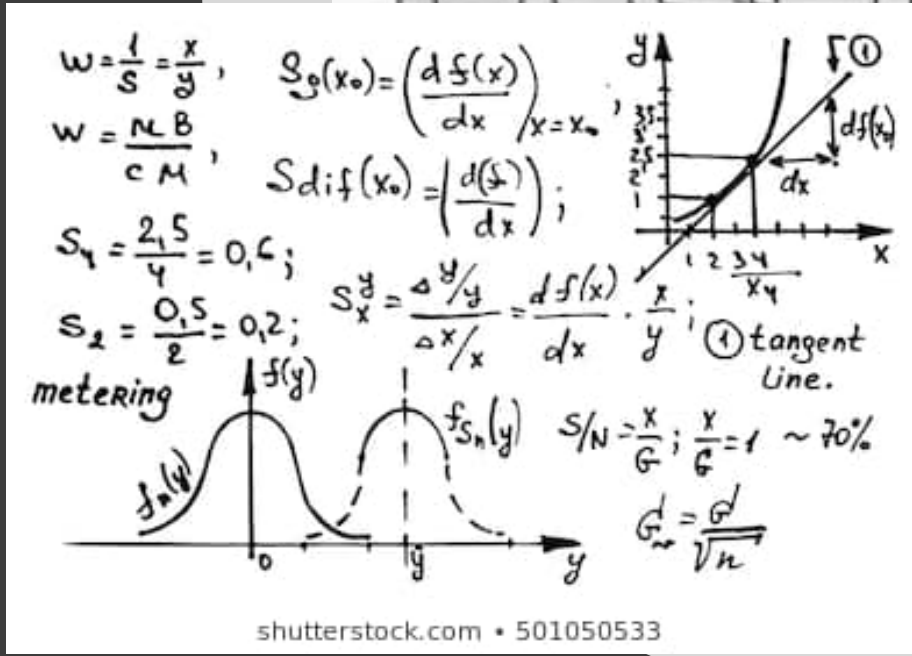
London International Development Centre

Oxford Policy Management

CEDIL's goals

- Develop and test new methods of evaluation and synthesis of effectiveness
- Fill evidence gaps in neglected thematic and geographic areas
- Promote the use of evidence by FCDO and other agencies



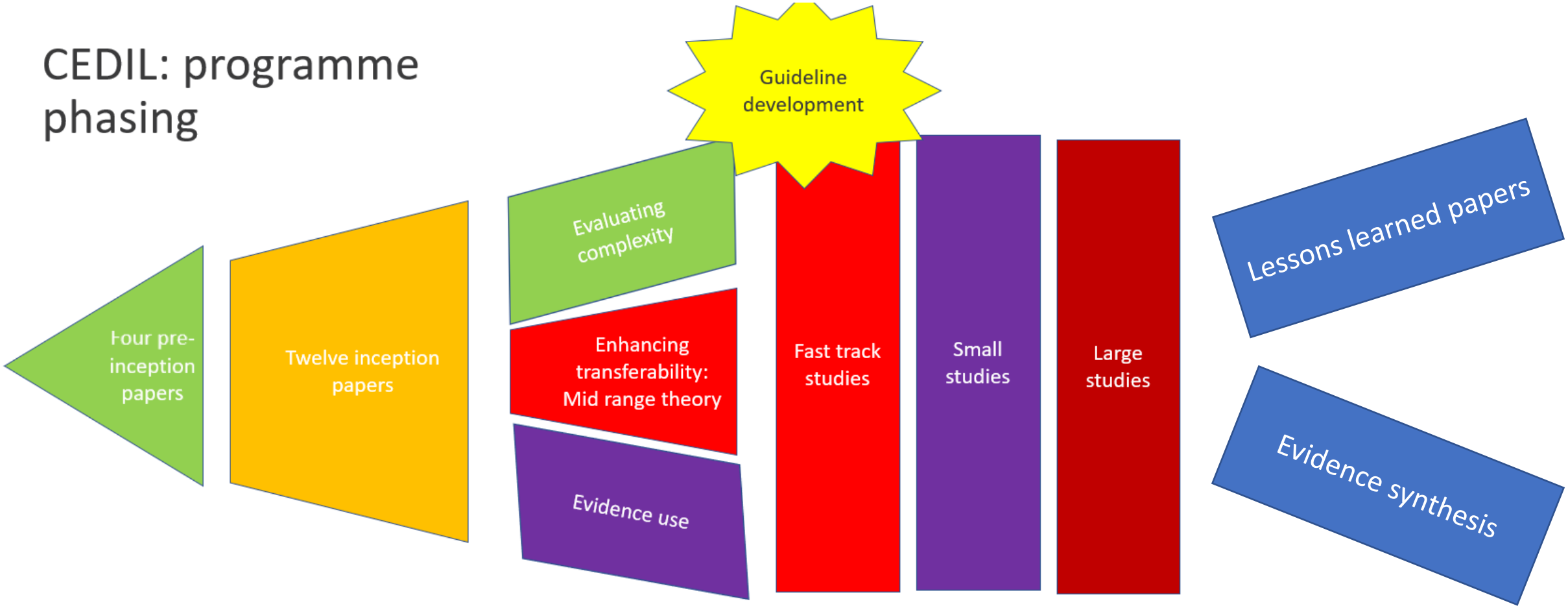


CEDIL was intended to fill four gaps

In our proposal

- Geographic and sector gaps
- Impact evaluation methods gaps
- Evidence synthesis methods gaps
- Knowledge translation gaps

CEDIL: programme phasing



Programmes of work

Fourth proposed programme on timely evaluation rejected by DFID

Machine learning emerged as cross cutting theme

Evaluating complexity

Enhancing transferability: mid range theory

Use of evidence

2017 – 2023

Funded by

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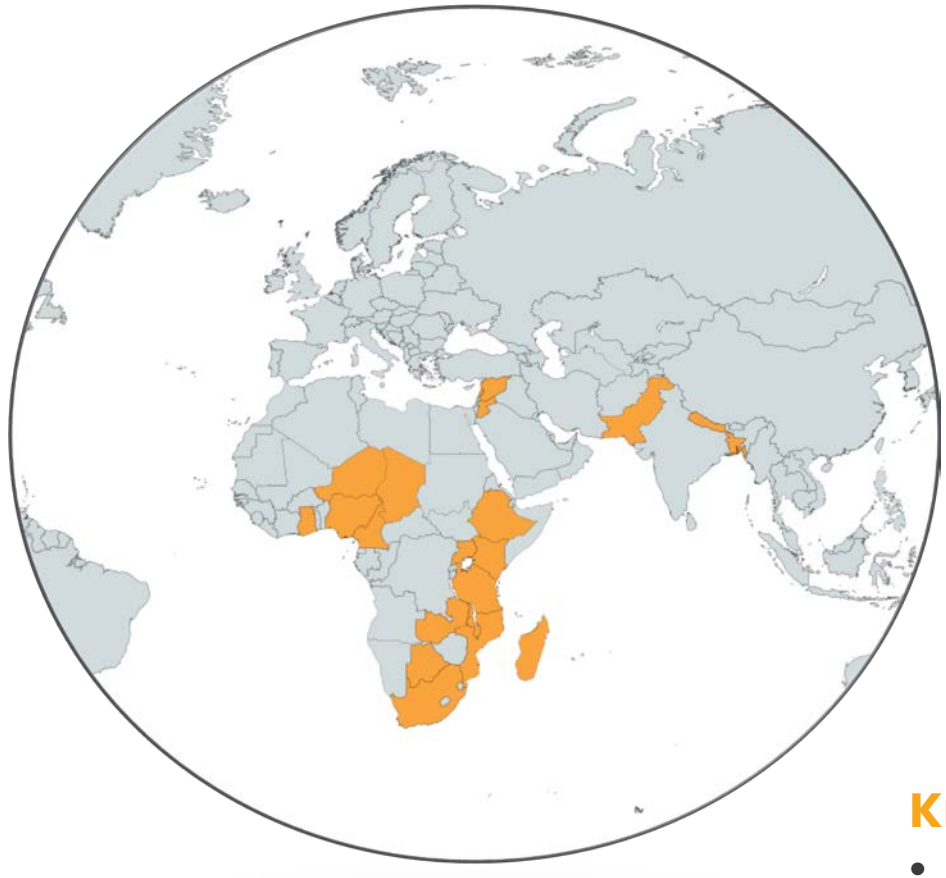
3 main themes:

- Evaluating complex interventions
- Enhancing evidence transferability
- Increasing evidence use

20 Funded Projects



Consortium papers

- 5 pre-inception papers
- 15 inception papers
- 4 sets guidelines

Knowledge products

- 10 methods working papers
- 7 synthesis working papers
- 9 Methods briefs
- 8 Evidence briefs
- 4 Research project papers

20 Funded Projects in 22 countries

2017 – 2023

Funded by

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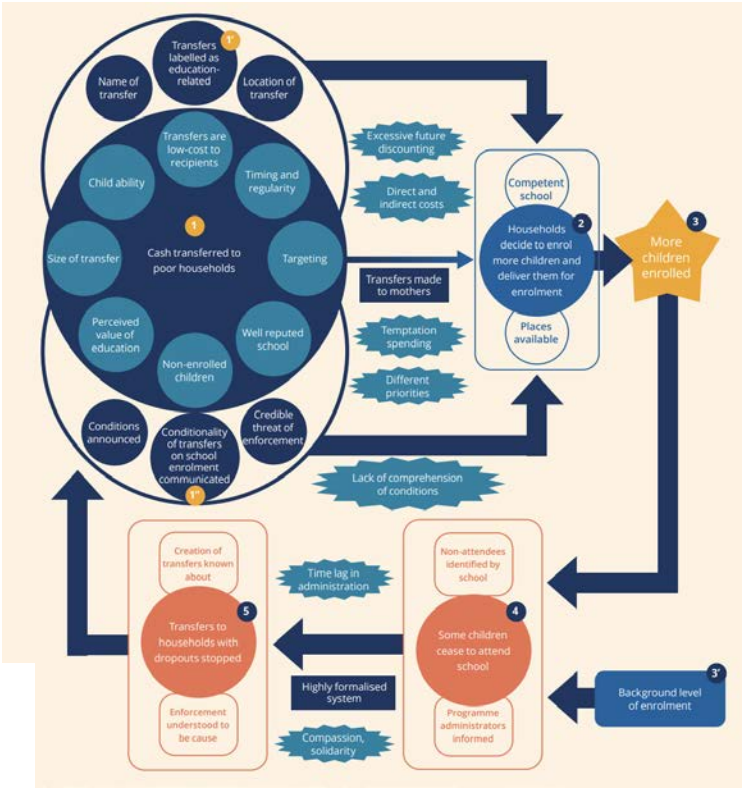
Ethiopia, Uganda, Pakistan, Malawi, Syria, Bangladesh, Nepal, Jordan, Lebanon, Uganda, Chad, Cameroon, Nigeria, Niger, Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia

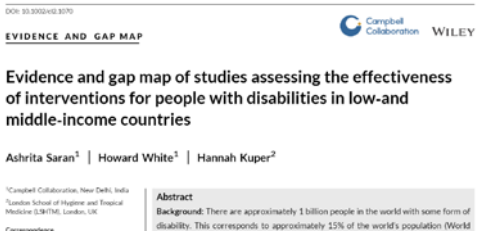
Methods products from Fast Track studies



CEDIL's sequenced approach

- The CEDIL-3ie Map of Maps and its children

Map of maps



Access to justice

Transport

Maps

Education
Livelihoods
Social inclusion
Empowerment

Reviews

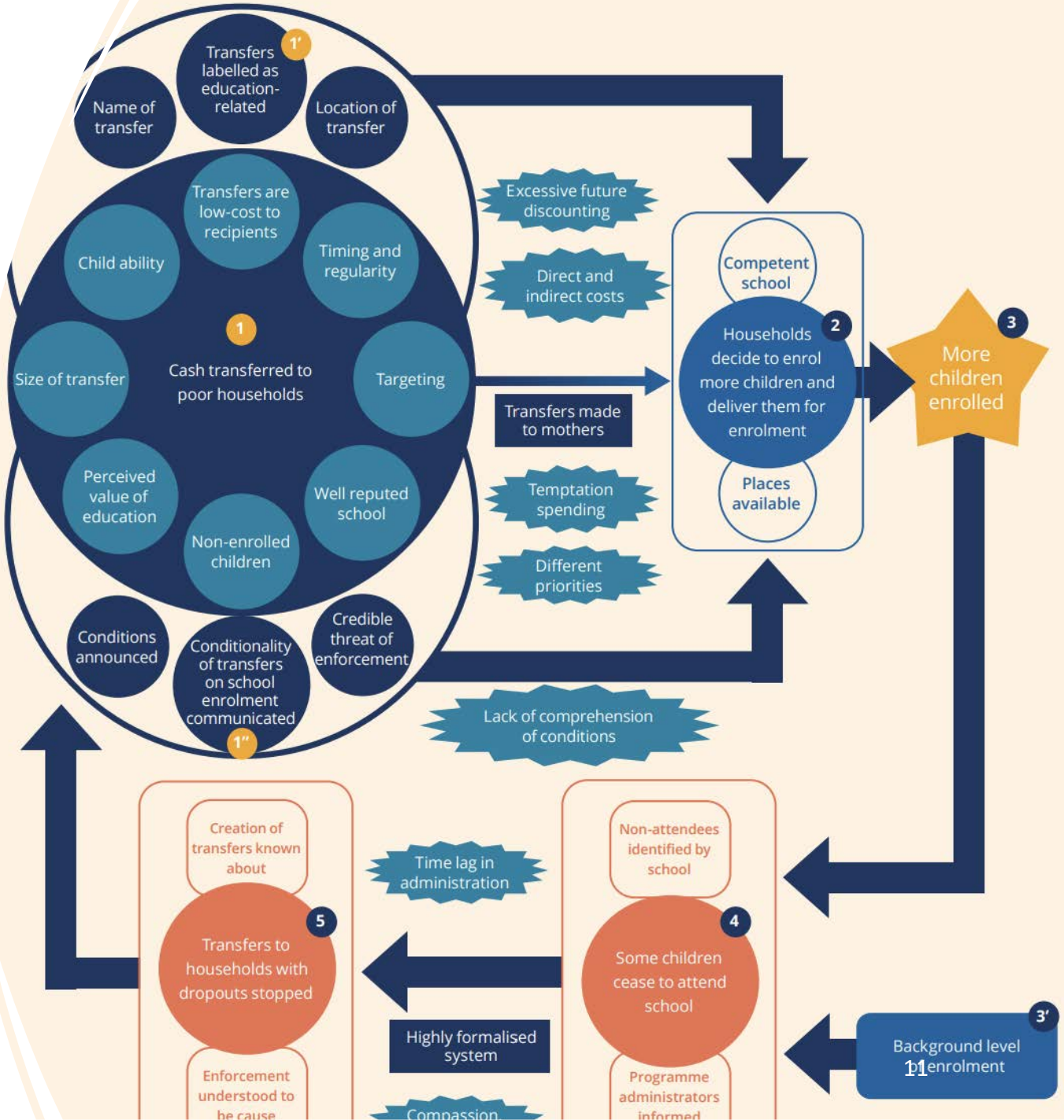
Evidence Portal

Reflections on CEDIL as a research programme

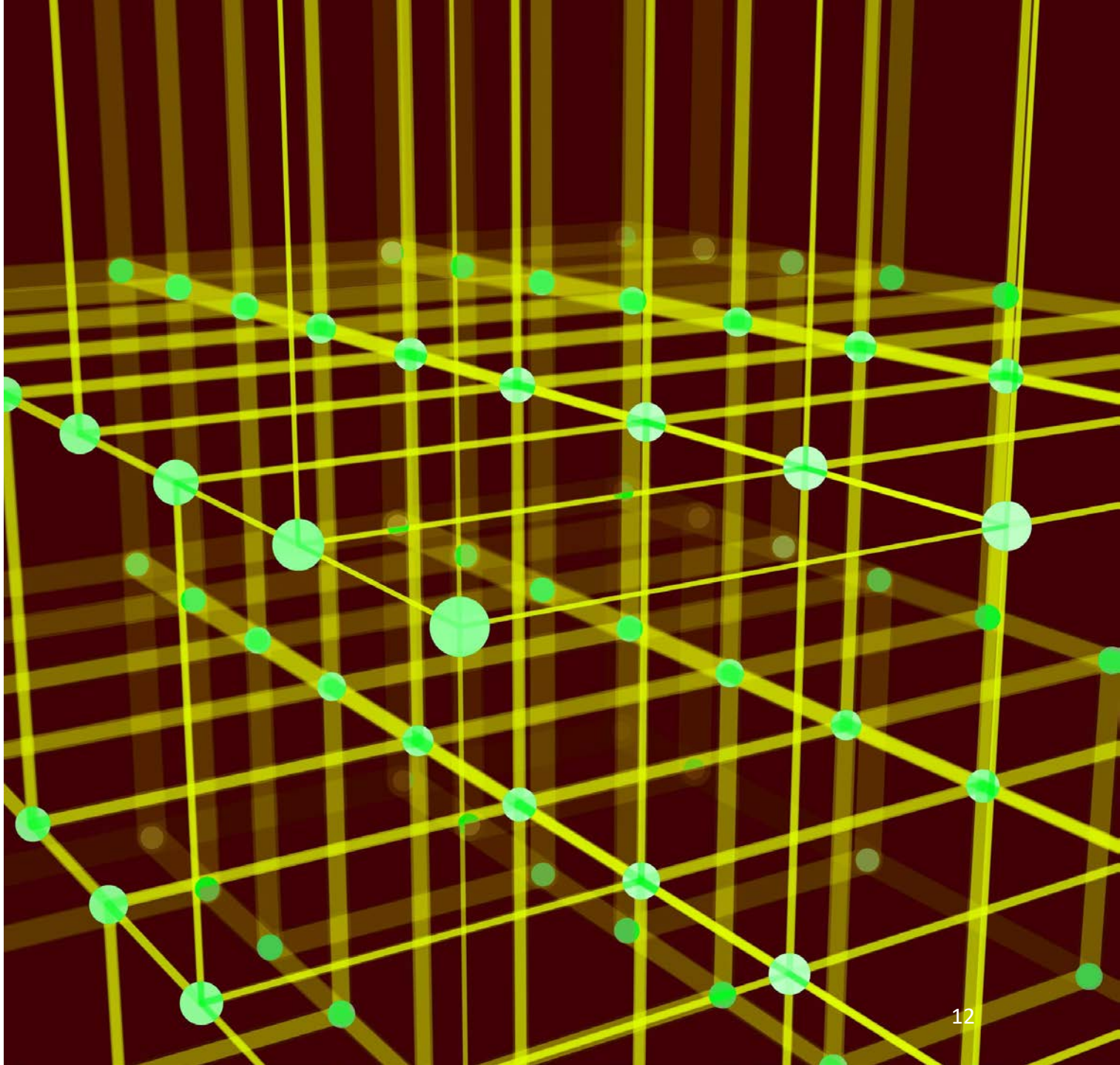
- Sequenced approach worked
- Investment in methods worked
- Largely didn't fill sector or geographic gaps
- Prescribe methods to be tested – rather broad Programmes of Work
- Not so much on use of evidence
- Funded frontier settlers not scouts

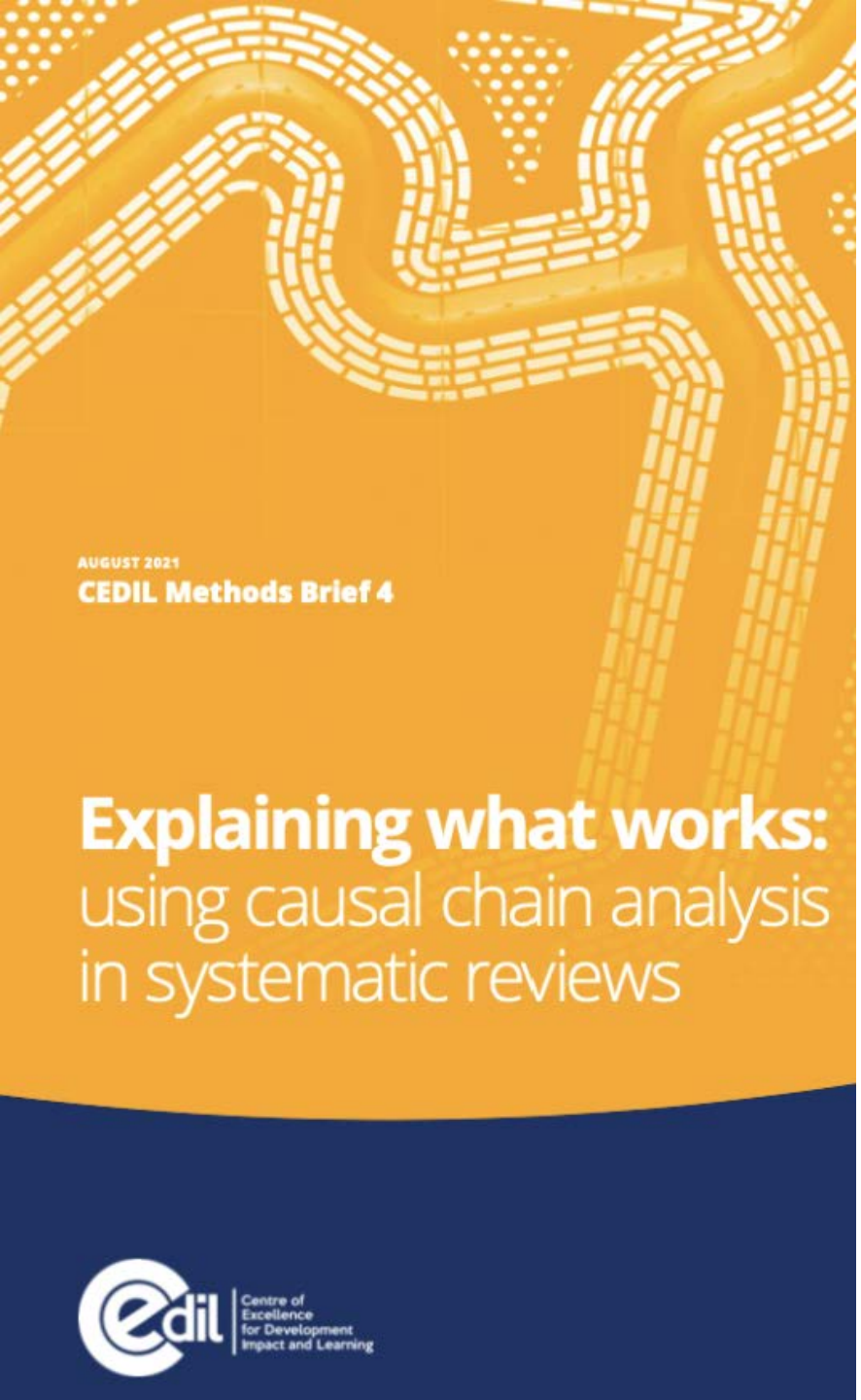
We will discuss here briefly

- Enhancing transferability (mid-level theory)
- Evaluating complexity
- Machine learning



Mid-level theory





Mid-level theory

- Arose out of LSHTM pre-inception and inception papers
- Fast track study leading to methods working paper and brief
- Applied in several funded studies

What is mid-level theory?

Mid-level theory (MLT) sits between project-level theory which is specific to a particular context and general theory which is too general to be empirically useful.

Understanding the underlying causal processes, and the factors which condition their operation, for a class of interventions, MLT seeks to enhance the transferability of study findings and so inform programme selection and design

Approaches to developing MLT: some examples

- Bottom-up or data driven: (1) *Empirically-driven theory of poverty reduction*: using machine learning to assess factors associated with a larger impact of CTs on poverty. (2) Teaching at the right level: assess and test
- Top-down or model based: *Involving men and boys in family planning*: MLT based on existing conceptual framework
- Iterative:

An example: a causal chain

Providing modern contraceptives to reduce unwanted pregnancies and abortions

Each arrow has a different causal process, with a different set of support factors, derailers and safeguards

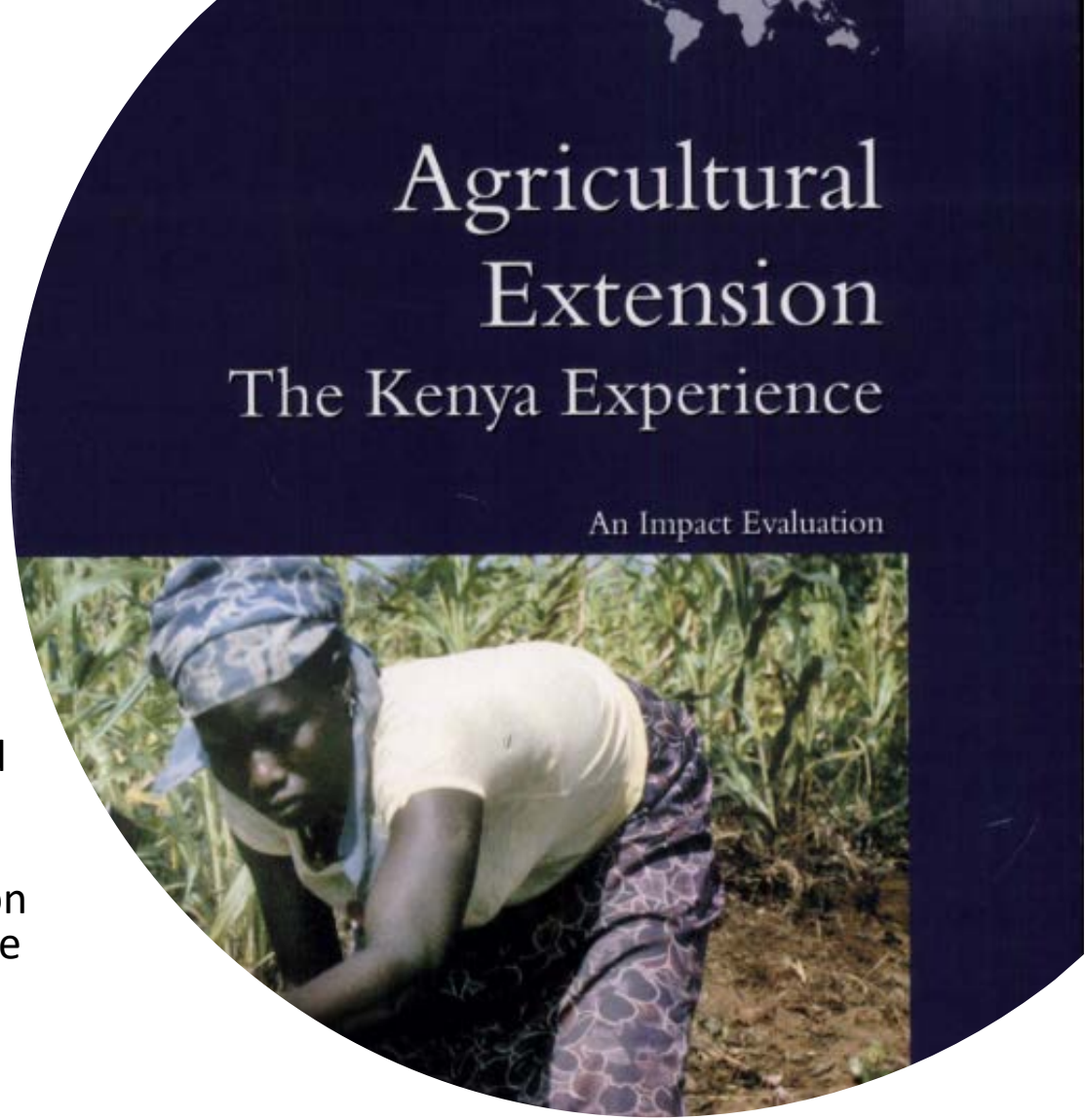
What is your problem?

- Common assumption is that providing information fills a lack of knowledge.
- But that may not be the case, e.g.
- Driver education (exhortation, shaming, consequences)
- Provide support (consultants!)
- Not what but how
- But may be wrong constraint –the role of formative research

What are the underlying assumptions?

Assumption

Behaviour not already adopted

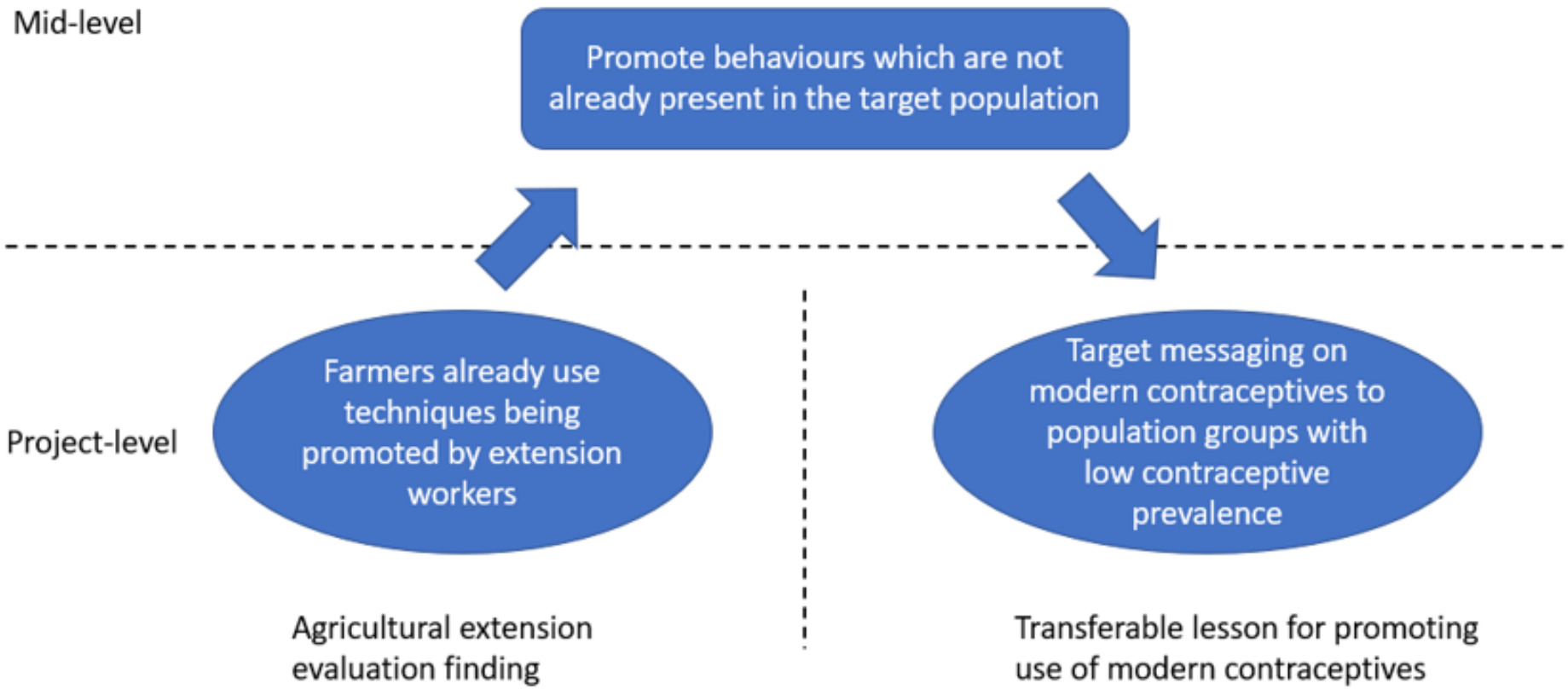


- Impact evaluation of agricultural extension in Kenya found no impact because farmers already using the practices being promoted

- Mid-level principle: 'In order for behaviour change communication to have an effect the desired behaviour is not already adopted in the target population'

- Testing: A necessary but not sufficient condition (under some circumstances could be continuous)

Transferability in action



Uses of MRT: some examples

- Teaching at the right level: Identified moderators from meta-analysis of existing TaRL projects. Identified fidelity as key moderated. Conducted RCT in which deliberately manipulated fidelity. Results showed large effect on learning outcomes. [Predict impact, test theory]

- Scaling social accountability for health: identified four MRTs based on a qualitative synthesis. Testing these in subsequent work. [Develop theory]

- SHARPE: mobile money in humanitarian setting [Test intervention]

Next steps

No CEDIL 2

How to support methods innovation?

How to have innovative methods used by FCDO?

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