



Effective Giving Institute India

The EGII Methodology: A Framework for Evaluating Social Interventions in India's Institutional Philanthropy Ecosystem

How EGII determines that Intervention A creates more expected social impact than Intervention B

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This is a working draft. All methodological commitments are provisional and subject to revision. EGII welcomes critique, challenge, and engagement from researchers, practitioners, and institutional philanthropists. Comments and critiques can be sent via the EGII website at egiindia.netlify.app. This document was prepared by EGII; AI tools were used for drafting assistance, fact-checking, and editing, and all methodological judgements and final content are EGII's own.

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Abstract

This paper sets out the evaluation methodology and research framework of the Effective Giving Institute India (EGII). Its central purpose is to answer one question with rigour and transparency: how does EGII determine that one social intervention creates more expected social impact than another?

EGII is an independent research initiative developing evidence infrastructure for institutional philanthropy in India. India's institutional giving ecosystem - including mandatory corporate social responsibility (CSR) under the Companies Act 2013, corporate foundations, family offices, and grantmaking foundations - deploys substantial philanthropic capital annually. The challenge is not the scale of that capital. The challenge is the limited evidence infrastructure available to support the decisions about where it goes.

This paper establishes the intellectual foundations of EGII's work: its institutional positioning, guiding principles, theory of change, research prioritisation approach, multi-dimensional evaluation framework, approach to evidence quality, cost-effectiveness modelling, and contextual adjustment for India. It also describes the research workflow, the outputs EGII intends to produce, the limitations of the methodology, and the directions in which it will evolve.

The methodology draws on established approaches in evidence-based philanthropy and development economics while adapting them for India's specific institutional, regulatory, and cultural context. EGII does not claim to have resolved the deep epistemic challenges of philanthropic evaluation. It claims only to be transparent about its methods, honest about its uncertainties, and committed to updating its conclusions as evidence develops.

Introduction

1.1 The allocation problem in philanthropy

Philanthropic capital is not scarce in absolute terms. India's mandatory CSR framework alone channels over Rs. 34,900 crore (approximately \$4.2 billion) annually through the mechanism established under Section 135 of the Companies Act 2013, making it one of the largest institutional social investment mandates in the world ([National CSR Portal, Ministry of Corporate Affairs, 2024](#)). In the United States alone, charitable giving totalled over USD 557 billion in 2023 (Giving USA Foundation, 2024).

The challenge is not the volume of capital. The challenge is the quality of the decisions about where it goes.

Research in development economics consistently shows that the effectiveness of social interventions varies enormously - often by an order of magnitude or more - even within the same cause area and with identical stated objectives (Banerjee and Duflo, 2011; Glennerster and Takavarasha, 2013; Vivalt, 2020). An institution allocating philanthropic capital to health interventions may achieve outcomes ranging from negligible to highly significant depending entirely on which specific intervention it chooses to fund. This variation in effectiveness is not primarily a function of the quality or commitment of implementing organisations. It is a function of the underlying evidence base.

Most institutional philanthropic decision-makers in India lack systematic access to rigorous, comparative evidence at the point of allocation. EGII exists to explore whether an independent research institution can help fill that gap - and to begin laying its methodological foundations.

1.2 Why evidence alone is insufficient

Evidence is necessary but not sufficient for good philanthropic decisions. External validity is rarely guaranteed: an RCT conducted in Kenya does not establish that an intervention will perform comparably in Maharashtra or Bihar. Government capacity, infrastructure quality, labour markets, social norms, and political economy all affect local outcomes (Pritchett and Sandefur, 2015; Bold et al., 2018). Even where evidence is strong, implementation matters - the gap between controlled-trial efficacy and real-world effectiveness is well-documented (Glennerster and Takavarasha, 2013).

Institutional philanthropists also operate within real constraints. CSR committees face regulatory requirements under Schedule VII. Corporate foundations have strategic priorities. Family offices have geographic ties and cause preferences. A methodology that treats these considerations as noise fails to serve the decision-makers it aims to support. EGII's approach integrates evidence quality with contextual adjustment, institutional feasibility, and explicit acknowledgment of uncertainty.

1.3 Why India requires its own methodology

India's institutional philanthropy ecosystem has characteristics that distinguish it from the contexts in which most evidence-based philanthropy methodology was developed. Mandatory CSR is the most significant structural difference: no comparable legal mechanism exists in the United States, United Kingdom, or the countries in which most development economics evidence is generated.

The regulatory architecture of Schedule VII defines eligible cause areas, mandates minimum spend levels, and creates accountability requirements that shape how capital is allocated.

India also has a distinctive NGO sector: large, heterogeneous, and variable in quality. The density of intermediary organisations, the variation in state capacity across India's 28 states, the presence of government welfare programmes that may crowd in or crowd out philanthropic spending, and the political economy of corporate giving all require methodological adaptation that no existing global framework fully provides. Section 9 of this paper - Contextual Adjustment for India - is the most distinctive contribution of EGII's methodology and addresses these factors in depth. The boundaries of that ambition - what EGII does not do - are set out early, in Section 2.3.

1.4 Relationship to existing approaches

EGII's methodology builds on work by several organisations that have made significant advances in philanthropic evaluation. GiveWell has established a standard for transparency and quantitative rigour in cost-effectiveness analysis that this methodology aspires to match ([GiveWell, 2023](#)). Founders Pledge has extended evidence-based philanthropy to broader cause areas and developed approaches to evaluating systemic and policy interventions ([Founders Pledge, 2022](#)). J-PAL and related networks have produced the underlying evidence base - primarily through randomised controlled trials - on which much of EGII's synthesis will draw ([J-PAL, 2023](#)).

EGII does not seek to replicate these organisations. It seeks to adapt their strongest intellectual contributions for a context they were not designed to serve: the institutional philanthropy ecosystem of India.

Institutional Positioning

2.1 The philanthropy ecosystem and its functions

India's institutional philanthropy ecosystem comprises several distinct types of organisation, each performing a different function. Understanding where EGII sits - and does not sit - requires some clarity about what these functions are and where gaps exist.

Academic research institutions and development economics networks generate rigorous empirical evidence on the causal effects of social interventions. Their primary output is peer-reviewed research. Their primary audience is other researchers and, secondarily, policymakers. By design, they are not oriented toward producing decision-support for institutional philanthropists on a timely basis.

Philanthropy advisory and consulting organisations support donors and institutions with strategy, implementation design, reporting, and compliance. Their value lies in deep relationships, contextual knowledge, and operational experience. Their research function, where it exists, typically serves specific client mandates rather than producing public evidence.

Grantmaking foundations and intermediary organisations - both domestic and international - make and manage grants within defined cause areas. They develop expertise within those areas, but do not systematically produce comparative, cross-cause evidence for institutional funders outside their portfolio.

Implementation organisations - NGOs, social enterprises, and delivery agencies - deliver programmes. Their evidence base is typically programme-specific rather than comparative. Their primary interest is demonstrating impact, not enabling cross-programme comparison.

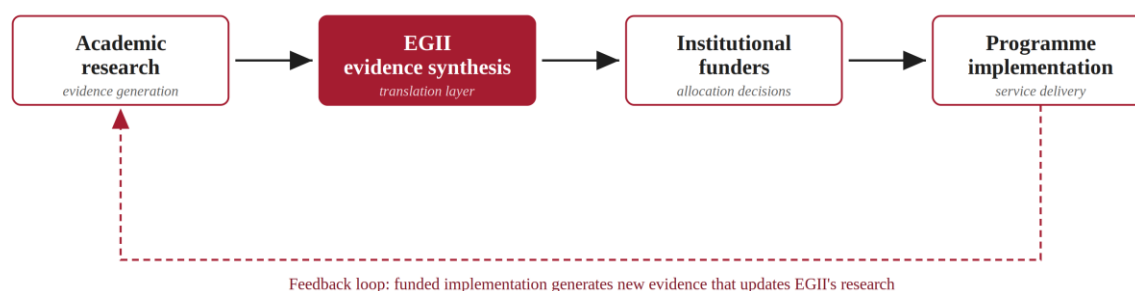
What is largely absent from this ecosystem - in systematic, accessible, publicly available form - is an independent institution that synthesises evidence across cause areas and intervention types, contextualises it for India's institutional funders, and publishes it as a public good. Some existing organisations approach this territory. Evidence advisory organisations operating in India typically provide client-commissioned, bespoke services rather than publicly available research. Systematic evidence gap maps produced by development research institutions are point-in-time and topic-specific rather than ongoing, funder-facing synthesis programmes contextualised for India's institutional philanthropy. EGII is attempting to develop that function.

2.2 EGII as public evidence infrastructure

EGII's intended role is closer to a public research institution than to any of the categories above. Its outputs are public-facing research documents - evidence memos, intervention reviews, landscape reports - designed to be read, challenged, and updated. It does not manage grants, deliver programmes, or provide bespoke advisory services. It produces evidence that any institutional funder can use.

This positioning has two important implications. First, EGII's value depends on the quality and independence of its research, not on proprietary relationships or operational capacity. Its credibility is entirely a function of methodological rigour and intellectual honesty. Second, because EGII's outputs are public, they are subject to external challenge in a way that private advisory work is not. This is a feature, not a limitation - external critique is the mechanism by which the methodology improves over time.

Figure 1: EGII's position in the evidence-to-allocation chain



EGII occupies the synthesis and translation layer between evidence generation and institutional allocation decisions. The feedback loop reflects that funded implementation generates new evidence that updates EGII's research.

2.3 What EGII does not do

Clarity about what EGII does not do is as important as clarity about what it does. EGII does not make funding decisions on behalf of institutional donors. It does not evaluate individual NGOs or recommend specific organisations for funding. It does not provide bespoke donor advisory services, manage grants, or deliver programmes. It does not replace the relationship-based knowledge that philanthropy advisors and intermediaries carry.

These functions are important and are performed by others. EGII's role is complementary: to provide the evidence layer that those functions can draw on, but which none of them currently produces in systematic, publicly available form for India's institutional philanthropy context.

2.4 Institutional transparency

Because EGII's credibility rests on its independence and the quality of its research, it holds itself to the same standard of disclosure it expects of the organisations whose evidence it evaluates. EGII is an independent, founder-led research initiative at an early stage of institutional development. It is not currently funded by, and has no financial relationship with, any of the corporate CSR programmes, corporate foundations, or family offices that its research is intended to inform. Where EGII secures external funding in future, it will disclose its funders and any material change to them, and will state clearly whether a funder has any relationship to an organisation or cause area covered by a given piece of research.

EGII is committed to developing formal governance arrangements, including an external advisory panel to review both the methodology and a sample of published evaluations, as the institution matures. In the interim, EGII commits to three safeguards. First, no funder has editorial control over research conclusions, and funding relationships do not determine which interventions are assessed favourably. Second, researchers and reviewers recuse themselves from any evaluation in which they hold a financial, professional, or personal interest, and any such interest that cannot be avoided is disclosed alongside the relevant output. Third, EGII publishes the evidence and reasoning behind its recommendations in full, so that its independence can be checked by readers rather than merely asserted. These arrangements will be updated to reflect the governance and funding structure in place at the time of each revision.

Guiding Principles

The following principles govern EGII's research methodology. They are operational commitments that determine how EGII conducts research, handles uncertainty, and communicates findings.

3.1 Evidence before intuition

Where empirical evidence exists on the effectiveness of an intervention, EGII gives that evidence priority over expert intuition, practitioner experience, or institutional reputation. Intuition is valuable in the absence of evidence or in identifying which questions to ask. But where a rigorous study contradicts a widely-held belief, EGII follows the evidence, acknowledges the tension, and explains its reasoning transparently.

3.2 Epistemic humility

Much of what EGII evaluates involves genuine uncertainty. Effect sizes may be imprecisely estimated. Evidence may come from contexts that differ from the funding context in important ways. EGII will not manufacture false precision. Where uncertainty is high, it will be stated explicitly. Where confidence intervals are wide, they will be reported. Where conclusions are provisional, they will be labelled as such.

3.3 Cause neutrality

EGII does not have a predetermined view about which cause areas are most important. Its evaluations are driven by evidence about expected impact, not by ideological commitments to particular development theories or sectoral preferences. EGII acknowledges that cause selection involves normative judgements - about whose welfare counts, how to compare different types of benefit, and what time horizon matters - and it will be transparent about those judgements rather than treating them as settled.

3.4 Expected value thinking

Under uncertainty, EGII uses expected value as a decision criterion - weighting outcomes by their estimated probability and magnitude. This approach has known limitations, including sensitivity to probability estimates that are themselves uncertain and difficulty in comparing incommensurable outcomes. EGII applies expected value thinking while acknowledging its limitations and supplementing it with robustness analysis.

3.5 Transparency

EGII publishes its methods, assumptions, data sources, and model parameters. Recommendations are accompanied by the evidence and reasoning that support them. Disagreements between assessors are noted. Changes to recommendations are explained. The goal is for any reasonably informed reader to be able to evaluate, critique, and challenge EGII's conclusions.

3.6 Context sensitivity

Global evidence is the starting point, not the conclusion. EGII systematically adjusts for the difference between the contexts in which evidence was generated and the Indian institutional

contexts in which funding decisions are being made. The contextual adjustment framework is described in detail in Section 9.

3.7 Cost-consciousness

Philanthropic capital is finite. Resources spent on less effective interventions are unavailable for more effective ones. EGII treats cost-effectiveness not as a supplementary consideration but as a central criterion, while recognising that cost-effectiveness estimates are uncertain and context-dependent.

3.8 Continuous updating

EGII treats its recommendations as provisional conclusions based on current evidence, not settled judgements. New evidence changes recommendations. EGII will publish updates when evidence materially changes a conclusion, and will explain what changed and why.

3.9 Institutional humility

EGII is an early-stage research initiative. Its methodology is not yet validated against outcomes. The claims made in this paper are intellectual commitments, not established achievements. EGII will seek external review of its methodology, publish data that allows its conclusions to be challenged, and acknowledge when its assessments prove incorrect.

Theory of Change

4.1 A non-linear model

The theory of change underlying EGII's work is not a simple linear chain from research to impact. It is a system with feedback loops. Research informs decisions; decisions fund implementation; implementation generates real-world evidence; that evidence updates research. Each link in this system depends on conditions that EGII cannot fully control but must explicitly acknowledge.

The core pathway is as follows: EGII produces independent, rigorous research on the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of social interventions relevant to India's institutional philanthropy context. That research is synthesised into accessible decision-support resources. Institutional funders use those resources when making allocation decisions, directing more capital toward evidence-backed, high-impact interventions. Improved allocation decisions result in more effective interventions being funded at greater scale. More people benefit, more significantly, from philanthropic capital than would otherwise be the case.

But that pathway does not end there. Funded programmes generate real-world data on implementation quality, cost structures, and outcomes. That data feeds back into EGII's evidence base, updating its assessments. This learning loop - from implementation to evidence to updated research - is essential to the long-term value of the institution. An evidence institution that does not learn from the outcomes of funded programmes is not fulfilling its core function.

4.2 Why allocation leverage is large

The leverage of improving allocation decisions is substantial. Evidence from development economics shows that the ratio of effectiveness between the best and average interventions within a cause area can be very large. Studies comparing the cost per disability-adjusted life year (DALY) averted across health interventions found variation of several orders of magnitude even within the same disease burden (Jamison et al., 2006). Studies comparing the cost-effectiveness of educational interventions in low- and middle-income countries found similar patterns (Kremer and Holla, 2009). If a corporate foundation allocating Rs. 10 crore annually to health interventions shifts even a portion of its portfolio toward more evidence-backed interventions, the additional impact can be substantial - without any increase in the total level of giving.

4.3 Limits and conditions

EGII is transparent about the conditions the theory requires. Institutional funders must be receptive to evidence: if CSR allocation decisions are primarily driven by relationships or political economy, evidence will have limited impact regardless of quality. EGII's research must be accurate and well-calibrated: systematically incorrect assessments could redirect capital toward less beneficial interventions. The interventions EGII identifies must be accessible within India's regulatory context. And the feedback loop from implementation to evidence requires that funded programmes invest in monitoring and evaluation, which is not universally the case. EGII will monitor each of these conditions and revise its theory of change if empirical evidence warrants it.

Research Prioritisation

5.1 Why prioritisation is necessary

EGII cannot evaluate every social intervention relevant to India's institutional philanthropy context. Research capacity is limited, evidence synthesis takes time, and quality requires depth rather than breadth. EGII therefore requires an explicit framework for deciding which interventions and cause areas to study first.

The prioritisation framework is transparent and subject to revision. It does not pre-commit EGII to studying only certain cause areas. It provides criteria for assessing research value that can be applied consistently and challenged externally.

5.2 Prioritisation criteria

EGII assesses potential research topics against seven criteria: scale of philanthropic capital, neglectedness of evidence, decision relevance, evidence uncertainty, feasibility of evidence synthesis, policy importance, and EGII's comparative advantage. These criteria are assessed qualitatively and deliberatively rather than scored numerically.

Criterion	Definition	Assessment Question
Scale of philanthropic capital	The volume of institutional funding currently flowing to this cause area in India	Is this a major or minor area of institutional philanthropic expenditure in India?
Neglectedness of evidence	The degree to which the cause area or intervention is understudied relative to the volume of funding it receives	Is there a significant gap between the volume of funding and the quality of evidence available?
Decision relevance	The degree to which an EGII research output would actually inform allocation decisions	Is there a realistic institutional funder who would use this research in the near term?
Evidence uncertainty	The degree to which reasonable, evidence-informed funders disagree about what works	Would rigorous evidence synthesis meaningfully reduce uncertainty?
Feasibility of evidence synthesis	Whether sufficient evidence exists to support a useful synthesis	Is there enough published and grey literature to produce a meaningful assessment?
Policy importance	The degree to which the cause area intersects with government priorities and regulatory frameworks	Does this area benefit from or require alignment with government schemes or Schedule VII eligibility?
EGII's comparative advantage	Whether EGII has or can develop specific expertise in this area	Can EGII add value that is not already provided by existing research or advisory organisations?

Table 5: EGII Research Prioritisation Criteria

5.3 Prioritisation process

EGII will publish its research agenda, explaining which topics it is studying and why, in terms of these criteria. This agenda will be updated periodically and will be open to input from institutional funders, researchers, and practitioners. Topics that score highly on multiple criteria will generally receive priority. Topics that score highly on a single criterion - particularly decision relevance - may also merit study if EGII can add significant value with limited resources.

EGII will not commit to studying cause areas in which it lacks sufficient methodological competence to produce credible research. Where EGII cannot produce a useful synthesis, it will say so rather than publishing low-quality outputs.

The EGII Evaluation Framework

6.1 Overview

EGII evaluates social interventions across ten dimensions. No single dimension is sufficient. The framework integrates these considerations while maintaining analytical transparency about how they are weighted. Table 6 provides an overview.

Dimension	Core Question	Primary Data Sources
1. Evidence Quality	How confident are we that the intervention causes the claimed outcomes?	Systematic reviews, RCTs, quasi-experimental studies
2. Cost-Effectiveness	How much outcome is achieved per unit of cost?	Programme cost data, outcome measures, benchmarks
3. Scalability	Can the intervention maintain effectiveness at larger scale?	Scale-up evidence, organisational capacity data
4. Implementation Feasibility	Can this intervention be delivered effectively in India?	Operational context, NGO capacity, regulatory fit
5. Contextual Fit	Does evidence from other contexts transfer to India?	Context comparison, adaptation studies
6. Neglectedness	Is this cause area underfunded relative to need?	Funding landscape data, burden of disease
7. Funding Gap	Would additional funding here produce marginal impact?	Current funding levels, absorption capacity
8. Institutional Readiness	Are there capable organisations to implement this?	Organisation assessment, sector mapping
9. Time Horizon	When do benefits accrue and over what period?	Programme design, outcome timing data
10. Distributional Equity	Who benefits, and do benefits reach the most disadvantaged?	Beneficiary profiling, targeting data

Table 6: EGII Evaluation Framework - Summary

6.2 Key dimensions

Evidence Quality

Evidence quality refers to the degree of confidence that can be placed in a causal claim: that the intervention, and not some other factor, is responsible for the outcomes observed. EGII assesses evidence quality using the hierarchy described in Section 7. The strength of causal identification, sample size, generalisability of the study population, quality of outcome measurement, and risk of publication bias are all considered.

Cost-Effectiveness

Cost-effectiveness analysis is described in full in Section 8. Within the evaluation framework, EGII generates a central cost-effectiveness estimate with explicit confidence bounds and sensitivity analysis. Cost-effectiveness is treated as a necessary condition for high-priority recommendations, not a sufficient one.

Scalability

Scalability refers to whether an intervention can maintain its effectiveness and cost-efficiency at larger scale. Evidence from small pilots frequently does not translate to large-scale programmes. Factors that affect scalability include the degree to which an intervention depends on specific skills in a small delivery team, the availability of required inputs at scale, the absorptive capacity of the target population, and the degree to which positive outcomes depend on novelty rather than the intervention's intrinsic mechanism.

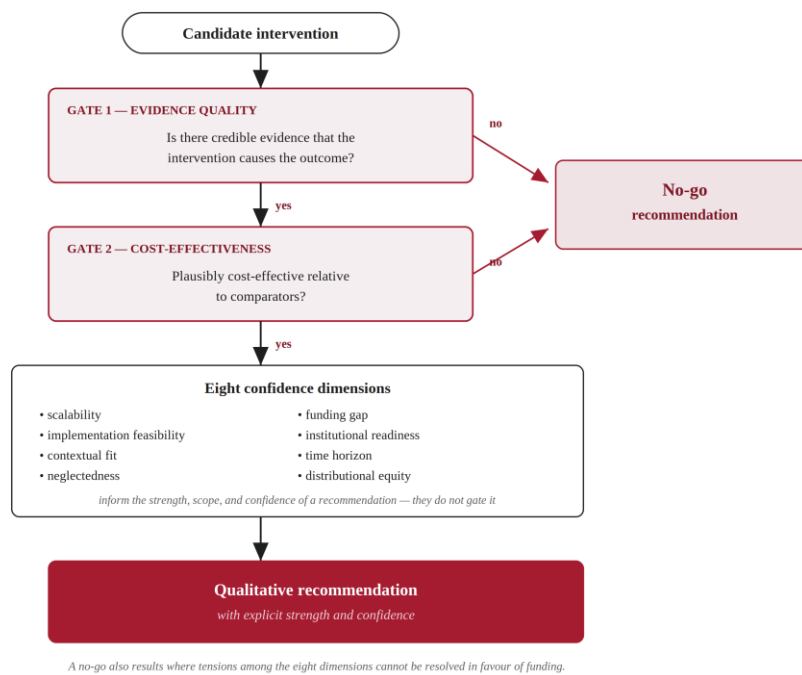
Remaining dimensions

Implementation feasibility assesses whether the intervention can be delivered effectively within India's operational context. Contextual fit is the degree to which evidence from other settings transfers to the specific Indian context - addressed in depth in Section 9. Neglectedness and funding gap together assess whether additional capital in this area would produce meaningful marginal impact. Institutional readiness asks whether capable implementing organisations exist in India. Time horizon captures when benefits accrue. Distributional equity captures who benefits - whether the intervention primarily reaches relatively advantaged populations within a target group or the most disadvantaged.

6.3 Weighting and aggregation

EGII does not apply fixed numerical weights to evaluation dimensions and aggregate them into a single score. This approach, while superficially rigorous, masks the normative assumptions embedded in the weights and creates a false impression of precision. Instead, EGII uses a structured deliberative approach with an explicit, non-numerical hierarchy among the dimensions. Two dimensions function as gating criteria: evidence quality and cost-effectiveness. An intervention that lacks credible evidence of effect, or that is not plausibly cost-effective relative to comparators, does not reach a high-priority recommendation regardless of how it performs on the remaining dimensions - these are necessary conditions, not one input among ten. The other eight dimensions - scalability, implementation feasibility, contextual fit, neglectedness, funding gap, institutional readiness, time horizon, and distributional equity - then inform the strength, scope, and confidence of a recommendation rather than determining whether it is made at all. Dimensions are assessed individually and documented transparently. Where they point in the same direction, EGII communicates greater confidence; where they conflict, EGII does not resolve the tension by summing scores, but states it explicitly and explains which consideration was given more weight and why. A no-go recommendation results when a gating criterion fails, or when tensions among the remaining dimensions cannot be resolved in favour of funding. The final output is a qualitative recommendation with quantitative support, not a composite score.

Figure 2: The EGII decision process



Evidence Hierarchy

7.1 Why evidence quality varies

Not all empirical evidence is equally informative about causal claims. The fundamental challenge in evaluating social interventions is that we cannot observe the counterfactual: what would have happened to the people served by the intervention had they not received it. Different research designs address this challenge with varying degrees of rigour.

7.2 The EGII evidence hierarchy

EGII uses a modified version of the evidence hierarchy common in medical and development research (Sackett et al., 1996; 3ie, 2013). Table 7 sets out the hierarchy and its associated limitations.

Level	Study Type	Causal Strength	Typical Limitations
1	Systematic reviews and meta-analyses	Highest	Heterogeneity; publication bias
2	Randomised controlled trials (RCTs)	Very high	Narrow context; Hawthorne effects
3	Natural experiments and instrumental variable studies	High	Requires credible instrument
4	Difference-in-differences and regression discontinuity	Moderate-high	Parallel trends assumption
5	Propensity score matching and observational studies	Moderate	Selection bias; unobservables
6	Administrative data and time-series analysis	Low-moderate	Confounding; data quality
7	Expert opinion and practitioner testimony	Low	Systematic biases
8	Theoretical models and programme logic	Very low	Unfalsifiable; context-dependent

Table 7: EGII Evidence Hierarchy

7.3 When lower-quality evidence is still useful

EGII does not require Level 1 or Level 2 evidence before evaluating an intervention. For many interventions relevant to India's institutional philanthropy context - including systemic change interventions, policy advocacy, and capacity building - RCTs are not feasible or appropriate. Lower-quality evidence, combined with strong theoretical mechanisms and consistent observational data across multiple contexts, can support reasonable confidence in a causal claim. For new interventions without an evidence base, EGII can still conduct theory-based assessments that document assumptions, identify key uncertainties, and suggest evaluation designs. In all cases, EGII clearly communicates the quality of evidence underlying each assessment.

7.4 Publication bias

The published evidence base systematically underrepresents null results and interventions that failed. EGII will actively seek out unpublished evidence, conduct targeted consultations with practitioners, and explicitly note where the evidence base may be systematically skewed (Olken, 2015).

Cost-Effectiveness Analysis

8.1 The role of cost-effectiveness

Cost-effectiveness analysis is EGII's primary quantitative tool for comparing interventions. It provides a common metric - cost per unit of outcome - that allows comparison across interventions with different mechanisms, beneficiary groups, and delivery models. EGII uses cost-effectiveness as a necessary condition, not a sufficient one: an intervention may score well on cost-effectiveness but fail on evidence quality, scalability, or contextual fit.

8.2 Outcome metrics

For health interventions, EGII's primary outcome metric is the disability-adjusted life year (DALY), which combines mortality and morbidity into a single measure (Murray et al., 2012). The DALY embeds normative judgements about the relative weight of different types of disability - EGII will be transparent about these - but it is the most widely used comparative metric in global health and permits comparison with international benchmarks.

For education and livelihood interventions, EGII uses primary outcome measures - learning outcomes, income gains, employment rates - and, where available, estimates of long-run welfare impact. Where outcomes are incommensurable, EGII does not force comparison through a single metric but presents estimates side by side with explicit discussion of the normative choices involved.

8.3 Cost estimation

Cost estimates include all programme costs attributable to the intervention: direct delivery costs, staff costs, overhead, monitoring and evaluation expenditure, and capital costs amortised over the programme life. EGII seeks to use total cost data rather than reported programme costs, which often exclude overhead in ways that systematically understate true cost. Where organisations do not report full cost data, EGII uses adjustment factors based on standard ratios from comparable organisations, and notes where cost data quality is limited.

8.4 Sensitivity analysis and model uncertainty

Cost-effectiveness estimates are models, and all models involve assumptions. EGII conducts systematic sensitivity analysis varying key parameters - effect size estimates, cost assumptions, discount rates, scale-up factors - to understand how robust conclusions are to changes in inputs. Interventions that rank highly under a wide range of assumptions are treated as more robust recommendations than those whose rankings are sensitive to specific parameter values.

8.5 Discounting

Benefits that accrue in the future are discounted relative to present benefits. EGII uses a standard discount rate of 3% per annum for health and welfare outcomes, consistent with standard practice in global health economics (Jamison et al., 2006), while reporting results at both 0% and 5% as robustness checks. The appropriate discount rate is contested - the public-finance literature offers India-specific social discount rate estimates that are sometimes higher than global-health conventions - and EGII will be transparent about this choice and report sensitivity to it.

8.6 Why cost-effectiveness is necessary but insufficient

Cost-effectiveness analysis has well-known limitations. Measurability bias means that interventions with easily measurable, near-term outcomes generate more favourable estimates than interventions with diffuse, long-term, or systemic effects - even if the latter are genuinely more impactful. Attribution problems affect policy advocacy and systems-strengthening interventions, which do not produce outcomes attributable to a single funder's contribution. Context-stripping means that cost-effectiveness models abstract away from political economy and implementation risk in ways that can produce misleading conclusions. EGII addresses these limitations through the multi-dimensional framework described in Section 6.

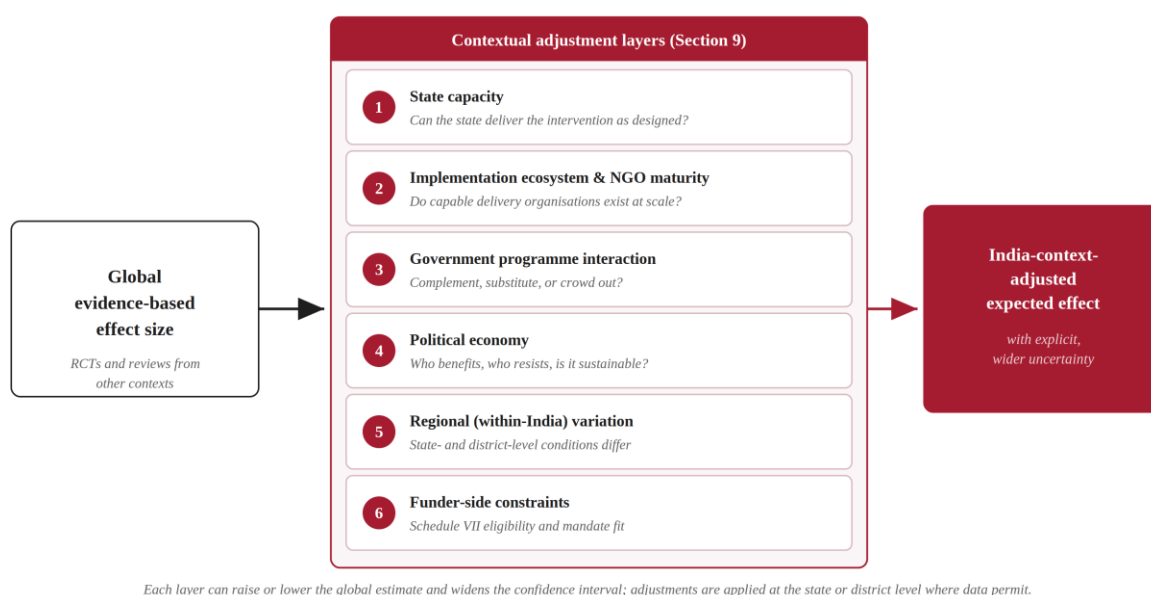
Contextual Adjustment for India

9.1 The external validity problem

The majority of rigorous evidence on social intervention effectiveness comes from a relatively small number of countries - primarily in East Africa and South Asia - and from contexts that may differ substantially from the specific Indian state or population where a funder is considering allocating capital (Banerjee et al., 2017; Bold et al., 2018). An RCT demonstrating that a particular deworming protocol is effective in Kenya cannot, without adjustment, justify the same investment decision in Odisha. The mechanisms that determine whether an intervention works are not portable across contexts in the way that a mathematical formula is.

This external validity problem is the central methodological challenge for EGII. It cannot be resolved by waiting for India-specific evidence in every cause area - such evidence will rarely exist at the required level of rigour, at the required scale, for the specific intervention being evaluated. EGII must therefore develop a systematic, transparent approach to adjusting global evidence for Indian contexts. That approach is described in this section.

Figure 3: The contextual adjustment model for India



9.2 State capacity

State capacity - the ability of government institutions to design, implement, and enforce policy - varies enormously across India's 28 states and hundreds of districts. This variation directly affects whether philanthropically-funded interventions can operate as designed.

Many interventions depend on co-implementation with government: health programmes that require government health workers, education programmes that require government school infrastructure, nutrition programmes that operate through the Integrated Child Development Scheme. In states with strong administrative capacity, these co-implementation arrangements can amplify impact. In states with weak capacity, they can fatally undermine programme fidelity.

EGII uses available indices of state administrative capacity - including public expenditure data, programme delivery outcomes from UDISE+, HMIS, and NITI Aayog composite indices - to assess whether the state capacity conditions for an intervention to work as designed are met in the target geography. Where they are not, EGII applies a downward adjustment to the expected effect size and expands the confidence interval around its cost-effectiveness estimate.

9.3 Implementation ecosystems and NGO maturity

Evidence that an intervention is effective in a particular context does not establish that an organisation exists in India with the capacity to implement it at the required quality and scale. The implementation ecosystem - the density, quality, and specialisation of NGOs and social enterprises capable of delivering an intervention - varies substantially across cause areas, geographies, and intervention types.

In some cause areas, such as microfinance, primary education support, and clean water provision, India has a mature, well-funded NGO sector with established delivery models and track records. In other areas, such as workforce development for informal sector workers or quality mental health services in rural settings, the implementation ecosystem is thin and organisational capacity is limited.

EGII assesses implementation ecosystem maturity as a distinct dimension of contextual adjustment. Where a strong implementation ecosystem exists, EGII applies a smaller discount to evidence-based effect size estimates. Where the ecosystem is thin or immature, EGII applies a larger discount and recommends that funders treat cost-effectiveness estimates with additional caution. This assessment draws on sector-specific mapping exercises, consultations with practitioners, and available data on NGO registration, auditing, and outcomes reporting.

9.4 Government programme interactions

India has a large and complex welfare state. Government programmes in health (Ayushman Bharat, POSHAN Abhiyaan), education (Samagra Shiksha), livelihoods (MGNREGS, PM-KISAN), and social protection (PM Jan Dhan Yojana) collectively rank among the largest social-protection and welfare programmes in the world by population reach. Philanthropically-funded interventions operate alongside, within, or in competition with these programmes.

The interaction between philanthropic interventions and government programmes can take several forms, each with different implications for cost-effectiveness assessment. Complementarity occurs when a philanthropic intervention fills a gap that government programmes do not cover, or enhances the quality of government service delivery - in which case additionality is high and EGII's adjustment is modest. Substitution occurs when a philanthropic intervention effectively replaces government provision - in which case the counterfactual impact is lower than the raw effect size suggests and EGII applies a downward adjustment. Crowding out occurs when philanthropic intervention reduces government provision of the same service, potentially leaving net outcomes unchanged.

EGII conducts explicit mapping of relevant government programmes for each intervention it evaluates and assesses the likely interaction. This mapping draws on government programme data, academic studies of crowding-out effects in India, and practitioner consultations. Where the interaction is uncertain, EGII presents a range of estimates under different interaction assumptions.

9.5 Political economy

India's political economy affects both the operating environment for philanthropic interventions and the sustainability of positive outcomes. Interventions that generate political opposition - because they compete with incumbent interests, challenge entrenched practices, or disturb established distributions of resources - face implementation risks that cannot be captured in a cost-effectiveness model.

Conversely, interventions that align with government priorities, generate positive political visibility for implementing organisations, or build constituencies for continued investment may sustain outcomes beyond the programme period. EGII's contextual adjustment framework includes an explicit assessment of the political economy of each intervention: who benefits, who might resist, what institutional incentives affect continued implementation, and how political conditions in the target state affect the feasibility of the programme.

This assessment does not require EGII to make political predictions. It requires EGII to identify the political economy conditions under which an intervention is most likely to operate as designed and to note prominently when those conditions do not hold in the target context.

9.6 Regional and within-India variation

India is not a single context. The variation in development outcomes, institutional capacity, cultural norms, infrastructure quality, and political conditions across India's states is in many cases larger than the variation between countries. An intervention that is cost-effective in Kerala may be significantly less cost-effective in Uttar Pradesh, not because the intervention is poorly designed, but because the contextual conditions that enable it to work are not present.

EGII's contextual adjustment framework is applied at the state or district level wherever data permits, not at the national level. For interventions where funders have a specific geographic mandate - a corporate foundation whose operations are concentrated in Gujarat, a family office with ties to Rajasthan - EGII will, where possible, produce geographically-specific adjustments rather than national-level estimates. Where district-level data is not available, EGII will clearly note the geographic scope of its contextual assessment and recommend that funders conduct supplementary local due diligence.

9.7 Institutional constraints of funders

Contextual adjustment must also account for the institutional constraints of the funder, not only the delivery context. A cost-effectiveness estimate that assumes unrestricted deployment of capital is not useful for a CSR committee whose investments must fall within Schedule VII categories, meet geographic reporting requirements, and satisfy board-level approval processes.

EGII's contextual assessment therefore includes a funder-side adjustment that maps the intervention against the specific regulatory and institutional constraints of the requesting institution. This does not change the underlying evidence assessment, but it does affect the practical cost-effectiveness estimate under the funder's constraints. An intervention that is highly cost-effective under ideal conditions but cannot be structured within Schedule VII eligibility requirements has lower practical value to a CSR committee than an intervention with slightly lower abstract cost-effectiveness but clear regulatory compatibility.

The EGII Research Workflow

10.1 From question to publication

EGII evaluates interventions through a structured, multi-stage process. The workflow is designed to be transparent, replicable, and open to external challenge. Table 10 sets out the stages, activities, and outputs.

Stage	Activity	Output
1. Problem scoping	Identify cause area; define policy question; apply prioritisation criteria; establish funder constraints	Problem definition memo
2. Literature review	Systematic search of published and grey literature; contact practitioners for unpublished evidence	Evidence map with source quality ratings
3. Evidence assessment	Evaluate study quality using evidence hierarchy; assess causal identification; note limitations	Evidence quality ratings for each study
4. Context adaptation	Apply Section 9 contextual adjustment framework; produce India-specific effect size estimates	Contextual adjustment report
5. Cost-effectiveness modelling	Develop central estimate; vary key parameters; produce confidence interval and sensitivity table	Cost-effectiveness model with range estimates
6. Expert consultation	Seek input from practitioners, academics, and sector specialists; document responses	Expert input documentation
7. Multi-dimensional assessment	Evaluate across all ten framework dimensions; produce structured scorecard	Evaluation scorecard
8. Internal review	Structured challenge of key assumptions and conclusions by a second EGII researcher	Review documentation with unresolved disagreements noted
9. Recommendation	Draft output with supporting evidence and explicit uncertainty acknowledgement	Evidence memo, intervention review, or decision brief
10. Publication and updating	Publish output; assign a scheduled review date; establish triggers for earlier revision	Published output with revision schedule

Table 10: EGII Research Workflow

10.2 Quality controls

Each EGII evaluation is subject to at least two independent internal reviews before publication. Reviewers are given explicit licence to raise concerns, challenge assumptions, and recommend revision. Major disagreements between reviewers are documented and, where not resolved, noted in the published output. EGII will establish an external advisory panel to conduct periodic review of its methodology and a random sample of its published evaluations, including researchers from development economics, practitioners from India's philanthropy sector, and methodologists with relevant technical expertise.

A Worked Example: Adolescent Anaemia Interventions in Rajasthan

11.1 Problem scoping

A corporate foundation with CSR obligations under Schedule VII plans to allocate Rs. 5 crore (approximately USD 600,000) to reduce anaemia among adolescent girls in Rajasthan. The foundation's CSR mandate falls under Schedule VII item (i) (promoting healthcare) and it has a geographic reporting requirement for Rajasthan. The foundation asks EGII: what does the evidence say about which interventions are most likely to reduce adolescent anaemia cost-effectively in this context?

EGII scores this against its prioritisation criteria. Anaemia is a high-burden public health problem in India, with an estimated 59.4% of adolescent girls (aged 15-19) classified as anaemic in Rajasthan (NFHS-5, 2019-21). Funding is substantial but not always evidence-informed. There is a meaningful evidence base to synthesise, including several high-quality trials from India. The question is decision-relevant: a real funder is asking, with a specific budget and geographic constraint. EGII proceeds to evaluation.

11.2 Literature review and evidence assessment

EGII's literature review identifies three main intervention categories with evidence on adolescent anaemia: (a) weekly iron and folic acid supplementation (WIFS), (b) multiple micronutrient supplementation (MMS), and (c) dietary diversification programmes including nutrition education and homestead food production. EGII also identifies relevant government programmes: the Anaemia Mukh Bharat (AMB) strategy, which provides WIFS through government schools.

Evidence quality assessment: WIFS has Level 1 and Level 2 evidence, including a Cochrane systematic review and several RCTs from India and South Asia. MMS has Level 1 evidence globally but limited India-specific RCT data. Dietary diversification has Level 4-5 evidence - observational studies and quasi-experimental designs - with limited data on cost-effectiveness.

11.3 Contextual adjustment for Rajasthan

EGII applies the Section 9 contextual adjustment framework. On state capacity: Rajasthan has moderate administrative capacity for health programme delivery. The WIFS government programme exists but coverage is incomplete, with substantial gaps in reach and adherence, particularly among out-of-school adolescents. There is a meaningful gap that philanthropic investment could fill without substituting for government provision. On NGO maturity: several established NGOs with track records in adolescent nutrition operate in Rajasthan, including organisations with experience delivering supplementation programmes through self-help groups. On government programme interaction: WIFS through EGII-funded NGOs would complement rather than substitute for the government scheme, targeting out-of-school adolescents not reached by the school-based programme. On political economy: no significant political obstacles to adolescent nutrition programmes are identified. On social norms: community acceptance of supplementation programmes is generally high in Rajasthan, though male household decision-making may affect uptake in some districts.

Net contextual adjustment: EGII applies a modest upward adjustment to the evidence-based effect size for WIFS given the complementarity with the government programme, and a larger downward

adjustment for dietary diversification given the thinner evidence base and implementation ecosystem.

11.4 Cost-effectiveness modelling

Consistent with the epistemic-humility principle in Section 3.2, and because this worked example is illustrative rather than a completed EGII cost model, this section does not report precise rupee estimates. What matters for the illustration is the ordinal finding, which is more robust than any single point estimate: on comparable Indian delivery-cost evidence, WIFS is expected to be substantially less costly per anaemia case resolved than multiple micronutrient supplementation, which is in turn less costly than dietary diversification. That ranking is driven mainly by coverage and compliance rather than by unit input prices. At low compliance the cost per case resolved rises sharply for any supplementation approach, because programme costs are incurred for tablets that are distributed but not consumed, and WIFS's simpler delivery through existing school and self-help-group channels makes that risk easier to manage than it is for the more complex alternatives. A full EGII output would replace this ordinal comparison with a sourced cost model, as described in the note at the end of this section.

11.5 Final assessment and output

EGII's assessment applies the hierarchy set out in Section 6.3. WIFS clears both gating criteria first: it has the strongest evidence base of the three options (Level 1-2, including a Cochrane systematic review and Indian RCTs) and the most favourable cost per case resolved. MMS and dietary diversification are not eliminated at this stage, but each is weaker on a gating criterion - MMS has thinner India-specific effectiveness evidence, and dietary diversification has both a weaker evidence base and higher cost - so neither displaces WIFS as the leading candidate. The eight non-gating dimensions were then used to test and qualify that provisional conclusion, and they largely reinforced it: WIFS shows good scalability, high implementation feasibility in Rajasthan given the available NGO ecosystem, good contextual fit, high neglectedness for out-of-school adolescents, a clear funding gap given incomplete government coverage, strong institutional readiness, near-term benefit accrual, and good distributional reach to the most disadvantaged adolescents outside the formal school system. The one genuine tension was between WIFS and dietary diversification on breadth of benefit: dietary diversification could in principle deliver wider nutritional gains beyond anaemia. EGII judged that its far weaker evidence base and thinner implementation ecosystem outweighed that potential upside at the point of a funding decision, and documented that trade-off rather than resolving it by score. On this basis EGII rates WIFS the leading intervention for this funder and context.

EGII publishes an Evidence Memo covering: the evidence hierarchy ratings for each intervention type; the central cost-effectiveness estimate and sensitivity range for WIFS in Rajasthan; the contextual adjustment rationale; the key uncertainties (programme fidelity, supply chain reliability, coverage assumptions); and a note on Schedule VII eligibility and the interaction with the government WIFS programme. The foundation makes its own funding decision. EGII's role is complete when the memo is published.

This worked example is illustrative. The cost estimates above are indicative figures drawn from the published literature for explanatory purposes. EGII's actual research outputs will present fully documented cost models with explicit data sources, parameter references, and confidence bounds.

Research Outputs

12.1 Types of output

EGII will produce research outputs at varying levels of depth and specificity, designed for different institutional audiences and decision contexts.

Evidence Memos

Short (2,000-4,000 word) summaries of the evidence on a specific intervention or cause area, designed for CSR committees and corporate foundation professionals who need accessible, actionable research. Evidence memos include a central cost-effectiveness estimate, an evidence quality rating, a contextual fit assessment, and key uncertainties.

Intervention Reviews

Comprehensive (6,000-12,000 word) systematic assessments of an intervention or class of interventions, including full documentation of the evidence base, cost-effectiveness modelling, contextual adjustment analysis, and implementation feasibility assessment. Intervention reviews are the primary vehicle for EGII's substantive research outputs.

Funding Landscape Reports

Analysis of the current distribution of philanthropic capital across cause areas in India, identifying funding gaps, areas of concentration, and opportunities for additional impact. Primarily descriptive and analytical rather than prescriptive.

State Opportunity Reports

State-specific assessments of the philanthropic landscape, infrastructure conditions, NGO sector capacity, and government programme environment for specific cause areas. Designed for funders with geographic constraints on their giving.

Methodology Papers

Papers documenting EGII's methodological commitments, published to support external review and to provide a transparent basis for challenging EGII's analytical conclusions.

Decision Briefs and Annual Philanthropy Report

Decision Briefs are very short (500-1,000 word) outputs for senior decision-makers who need rapid synthesis of a funding question. The Annual Philanthropy Report reviews the state of India's institutional philanthropy ecosystem, tracking evidence use and allocation trends.

Updating Beliefs and Revision Policy

13.1 Recommendations are provisional

All EGII recommendations are provisional conclusions based on the best available evidence at the time of publication. EGII does not treat published recommendations as settled positions to be defended. When new evidence materially changes the expected cost-effectiveness or feasibility of a recommended intervention, EGII updates its recommendation and publishes a clear explanation of what changed and why.

13.2 Triggers for revision

EGII will initiate a formal review of a published recommendation when any of the following conditions are met:

- A new systematic review or high-quality RCT substantially changes the evidence base.
- New cost data from implementing organisations materially changes cost-effectiveness estimates.
- A policy or regulatory change alters the implementation context.
- Field evidence from funded programmes suggests that real-world impact differs substantially from predicted impact.
- External reviewers raise substantive methodological challenges that EGII assesses as valid.

13.3 Transparency over consistency

EGII prioritises transparency over the appearance of consistency. It is better to acknowledge that a previous recommendation was incorrect and explain why than to maintain a recommendation that evidence no longer supports. EGII will maintain a public revision log documenting all changes to published recommendations.

Limitations and Constraints

14.1 Data limitations

Many of the interventions most relevant to India's institutional philanthropy context are poorly studied. The evidence base for interventions in rural livelihood development, social protection in Indian states, and community health worker programmes in Indian contexts is substantially thinner than for interventions in global health. EGII will frequently be working with evidence that is indirect, incomplete, or generated in contexts with uncertain transferability to India.

14.2 Publication bias

The published evidence base substantially overrepresents interventions that worked. Studies with null results are less likely to be published; interventions that failed are less likely to be written up. EGII will attempt to correct for this by seeking out unpublished evidence and applying conservative adjustments to effect size estimates, but cannot fully resolve this systematic bias (Franco, Malhotra and Simonovits, 2014).

14.3 Measurement challenges

The outcomes that matter most - long-run welfare, intergenerational effects, systems change - are the hardest to measure. EGII's cost-effectiveness estimates are more reliable for near-term, measurable outcomes than for long-run, systemic ones. This creates a risk of systematically undervaluing interventions with diffuse or delayed effects.

14.4 EGII's own biases

EGII is not a neutral instrument. Its researchers will have perspectives, disciplinary backgrounds, and intellectual commitments that shape which questions they ask and which conclusions they find most plausible. EGII will seek to mitigate this through independent review, transparent methodology, and active recruitment of diverse intellectual perspectives. It cannot fully eliminate these biases and will acknowledge them where they are likely to be material.

14.5 Institutional constraints on funders

Even where EGII identifies a highly effective intervention, funders may be unable to fund it due to regulatory constraints, strategic priorities, geographic restrictions, or existing commitments. EGII's recommendations are necessarily constrained by the practical realities of institutional philanthropy.

Future Development of the Methodology

15.1 Bayesian updating

EGII's current approach to updating recommendations is structured but qualitative. A more rigorous approach would use Bayesian methods to formalise prior beliefs, define how new evidence should update those beliefs, and produce explicit posterior probability distributions over expected cost-effectiveness. EGII will develop a Bayesian updating framework as a medium-term methodological priority.

15.2 Machine-assisted evidence synthesis

Machine-learning-assisted systematic review tools can substantially increase the efficiency of evidence synthesis. EGII will evaluate these tools carefully, given concerns about reliability and systematic bias, but expects to incorporate appropriately validated tools into its evidence synthesis workflow.

15.3 Forecasting and prediction

Calibrated forecasting - using structured prediction exercises and track record analysis - can improve the quality of ex-ante impact estimates. EGII will develop a forecasting programme, drawing on established approaches in superforecasting research (Tetlock and Gardner, 2015), to improve the calibration of its cost-effectiveness and implementation feasibility estimates.

15.4 Living systematic reviews

Rather than producing static, point-in-time systematic reviews, EGII will move toward living reviews that are continuously updated as new evidence is published. This approach is increasingly used in medical research and is particularly valuable in areas where the evidence base is actively developing (Elliott et al., 2017).

15.5 Collaborative research

EGII's research programme will be strengthened through collaboration with academic institutions, research networks, and implementing organisations with access to primary data and contextual knowledge that EGII cannot generate independently. EGII will actively seek research partnerships and will publish the data underlying its assessments where data sharing agreements permit.

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