

ECHIDNA GLOBAL SCHOLARS PROGRAM EVALUATION

DECEMBER 2019

EVALUATION
PREPARED BY MISKE
WITT & ASSOCIATES
INTERNATIONAL,
SUMMARY PREPARED
BY THE CENTER FOR
UNIVERSAL
EDUCATION AT
BROOKINGS



2018 Alumni Convening, Washington, D.C.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Echidna Global Scholars Program at-a-glance

The Echidna Global Scholars Program is a visiting fellowship hosted by the Center for Universal Education (CUE) at the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C. with support provided by Echidna Giving. Since 2012, the program has aimed to build the research and analytical skills of emerging local leaders in girls' education who have demonstrated a strong growth mindset.

Scholars selected for the program conduct novel, independent research exploring an issue in girls' education with particular application to the locality in which they are engaged. During their four-and-a-half month residency at Brookings, Echidna Global Scholars work with CUE staff to produce a high-quality research product, hone their policy and practice messaging, and meet with global education stakeholders to elevate their research and inform the girls' education ecosystem. Upon completion of their fellowship, scholars are given the opportunity to implement an action plan that applies their new skills and expertise in the low or middle-income country where they have demonstrated substantial ties. They go on to join an alumni network with continued leadership development programming and convening opportunities.

The Echidna Global Scholars Program would not be possible without the generous support of Echidna Giving. Summary adapted by the Center for Universal Education at Brookings from the original by Miske Witt & Associates International. The full evaluation is available upon request to Amanda Braga at abraga@brookings.edu.

SUMMARY

This document provides an overview of key findings and recommendations from the program evaluation and outlines high-level next steps for the Echidna Global Scholars Program.



The first cohort of Echidna Global Scholars presents their research findings, Washington, D.C. 2012



GOALS & RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In December 2018, Echidna Giving commissioned an evaluation by Miske Witt & Associates International (MWAI) to better inform CUE and Echidna Giving on the impact of the program.

The evaluation particularly sought to address the following questions:

1. How effectively does this program build the skills, capacities, expertise, and social networks of a cadre of leaders across low-and-middle-income countries to strengthen the girls' education policy and programming in their contexts?
2. What about the program should be continued, strengthened, or changed to maximize its impact?

METHODS

Utilization-focused mixed methods evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation was to identify successes and areas for improvement to inform future program development. The evaluation used a mixed-methods approach which included a survey, cost analysis of the program, analytics of scholars' online presence and publications. Twenty-four of 28 alumni (2012-2018) were interviewed and surveyed. Data was mapped and analyzed longitudinally to observe changes in their knowledge, skills, and behavior over time, including their connections to institutions and organizations, experts, and each other.

The evaluation focused on three distinct areas of inquiry:

1. The **process** of how the program's key activities are being implemented and scholars' satisfaction with the program.
2. The **outcomes** of scholars' research, leadership knowledge and skills, networks, and professional growth and development.
3. The broader **impact** of the scholars' work on improved education and life outcomes for girls.

The Echidna Global Scholars Program kicked off its first cycle in 2012, with a 2016 program renewal.

Findings from the evaluation will inform the next cycle of the Echidna Global Scholars Program, beginning in 2021.

FINDINGS & NEXT STEPS

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Alumna Musammat Badrunnesha conducts a workshop in Bangladesh

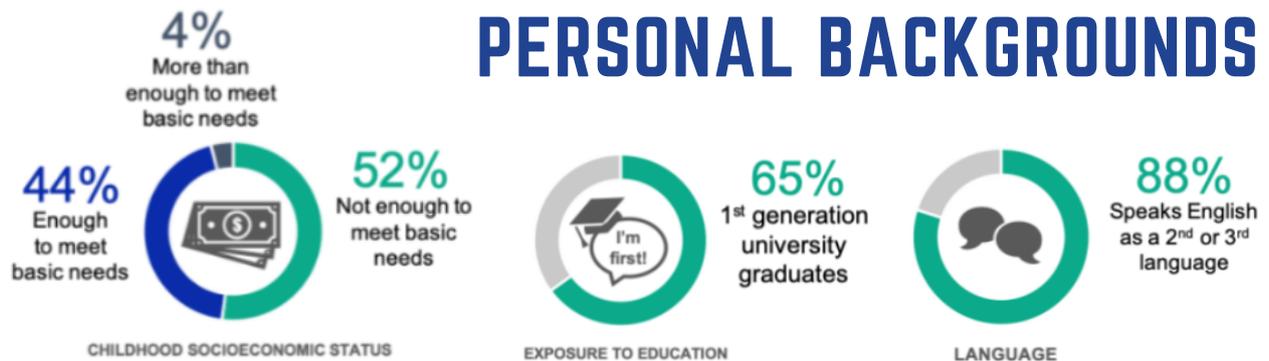
FINDINGS

WHO ARE THE ECHIDNA GLOBAL SCHOLARS?

Echidna Global Scholars are researchers, policymakers, and practitioners located in low-to-middle-income countries

At the time of the evaluation, scholars were from 18 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, South and East Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

PERSONAL BACKGROUNDS

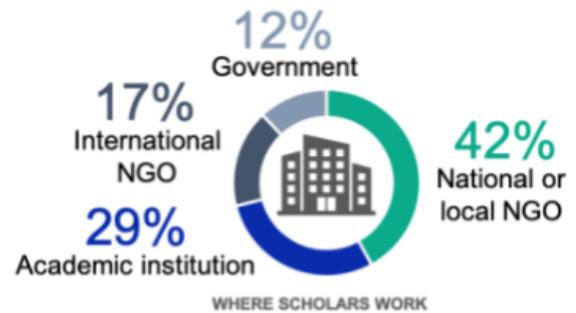
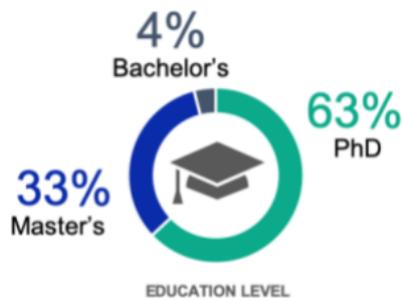


SCHOLARS' NARRATIVES DRIVE THEIR WORK

When interviewing for the program and in application materials, scholars cite their personal narratives or mothers' narratives as a motivating factor for doing this work.



PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUNDS



PROGRAM ACHIEVEMENTS

Increase in publications

All researchers nearly doubled their publications post-residency and 3 of 24 scholars turned (or are turning) their research into books

Increase in leadership roles

75% of scholars hold advisory roles and 83% directly mentor individuals and groups in their networks

Expanded networks

All scholars report increased networks through the program and credit the program for over half of their top girls' education connections

Increased alumni network engagement

Participation in the biannual alumni convening increased from 85% in 2016 to 100% in 2018.



Alumnae Jin Chi and Dasmine Kennedy participate in activity

FINDINGS

The Theory of Change has not kept pace with the natural evolution of the program and, to some extent, the girls' education field writ large.

One of the strengths of the program is its responsiveness to alumni feedback through surveys, observations, and formal and informal conversations. However, the program's Theory of Change has not been adapted accordingly. While programmatic decisions have been driven by shifts in the global development field as it relates to girls and women (i.e. shifting from a "women in development" approach toward a more inclusive "gender and development" approach), they have not always been integrated into the program's overall mission and framework.

NEXT STEPS

The evaluation recommended that CUE particularly consider how gender, boys, and intersectionality fit into the current vision and revise the Theory of Change framework.

Through consultations with CUE and Echidna Giving, the MWAI team crafted a Theory of Change framework that articulates the intended outcomes and impact of the program.

From there, CUE, in consultation with Echidna Giving, crafted a mutually-agreed upon Theory of Change (see page 10) including simplified measurement and tracking points. These are in turn informing the programmatic design and proposal for the next phase of the program (beginning in 2021).

VISION & DESIGN

Condensed findings associated with the driving purpose of the program as well as programmatic decisions.



FINDINGS

Certain phases of the program have become more robust over time, evolving in response to scholars' needs. For example, the expansion of the pre-and post-residency phases and the addition of the leadership development program. The linkages between these components are not always clear to the alumni and are not reflected in the Theory of Change.

CUE increased its program management capacity and technical expertise in 2016, which led to new outcomes:

- 1) A more robust application process drew a higher caliber of candidates;
- 2) More staff support enabled more rigorous research and the addition of a leadership development focus;
- 3) Higher visibility events increased scholars' exposure to strategic girls' education networks.

NEXT STEPS

The evaluation recommended that CUE creates a clearer pre-residency plan, define the leadership development program and alumni program objectives more clearly, and intentionally link the post-residency component to wider Theory of Change objectives.

The evaluation has helped to create time and space for the critical reflections that are needed to support greater program continuity and integration. CUE intends to create clearer linkages across all program components such that they are all inputs in a process of social change. It does this by conceptualizing the residency as only one component of that process. Instead, scholars, their organizations, and their networks, as part of a wider girls' education ecosystem, are all part of that process.

CUE has also created greater transparency at the recruitment stage so that scholars are aware of expectations throughout the program, from pre- to post-residency. CUE's direct involvement in scholars' work should also phase in and out over time so that scholars' efforts are strategically supported for maximum impact. 2016 to 2018 and 2018.

PROGRAM CONTINUITY

Condensed findings associated with creating greater continuity between program components: pre-residency data collection and onboarding; residency in D.C.; leadership development; post-residency projects; and entry into alumni network.

Below: Alumna Armene Modi submits her pledge to impact girls' education by 2020



FINDINGS

Regarding post-residency inputs, alumni reported that:

- 1) They highly valued alumni convenings, but thought that they could be more strategic;*
- 2) Some alumni were not aware that they had access to an Alumni Travel Fund*

CUE's engagement with alumni has grown considerably over the past four years. Given the expansion of the program to include a larger symposium and a leadership development program, the biannual alumni convening (which is held on the heels of the symposium) has also expanded accordingly.

Scholars see the convening as an opportunity to network and reconnect but would like more time to do so and to have a more concrete sense of the goals for the meeting.

In 2016, CUE also added an Alumni Travel Fund to encourage alumni to take advantage of opportunities located abroad that they would otherwise not be able to leverage. Many alumni were not aware of this funding opportunity for high-impact travel.

NEXT STEPS

The evaluation recommended that CUE set clearer objectives for the convenings, including an emphasis on scholar collaboration and networking. It also recommended a shift toward a region-based model as opposed to one that is based in D.C. Similarly, the evaluation recommended that the Travel Fund resources instead support alumni collaboration.

As the alumni base grows, CUE intends to create a more sustainable model that deepens scholars' relationships across regional and thematic lines. It also hopes to encourage shared learnings across impact pathways (i.e. research or practice). CUE intends to host more frequent subconvenings across those common lines and provide more web-based opportunities for sharing evidence and best practices.

CUE intends to shift from a Travel Fund model to a Collaboration & Impact Fund model, encouraging collaboration across alumni cohorts and with CUE. As a result, CUE expects deepened country-level impact for those who collaborate within their country contexts as well as great thematic collaboration. CUE intends to ensure that evidence generation is at the core of those activities.

ALUMNI SUPPORT

Condensed findings pertaining to inputs after scholars transition from residency to post-residency and the alumni program

Below: An alumnae's sculpture of "leadership" in play-doh during an alumni convening activity.



FINDINGS

The current monitoring and evaluation system is complex and as a result, not sustainable given the growing community of alumni. Scholars reported positive and negative unintended consequences of the program and the program is not clearly measuring and tracking the expanding alumni network.

CUE's monitoring and evaluation system is comprehensive but requires scholars and alumni to report back frequently. As a result, surveys come back with vague data, redundancies, or low response rates. Because of the volume of metrics, reconciling data also becomes cumbersome.

There are also many unintended consequences of the program that are not always captured by survey responses and may require a different set of methods to better understand these nuances.

NEXT STEPS

Given the growing number of alumni and their increasingly demanding schedules, CUE should simplify its monitoring and evaluation methods. The program should also be sure to track unintended outcomes of the program and engage scholars in tracking changes longitudinally using targeted categories.

CUE intends to simplify its ambitious monitoring and evaluation plan while adding methods that track the indirect outcomes that emerge from the program. This monitoring and evaluation framework is also being built into the Theory of Change to reflect the program's inputs, outputs, and outcomes. CUE will also capture anecdotal data from alumni regularly to provide impact stories and better understand the indirect or unintended outcomes that emerge from the program.

Participation in the biannual alumni convening increased from 85% in 2016 to 100% in 2018.

MONITORING & EVALUATION

Condensed findings pertaining to measuring and tracking program outcomes.



THEORY OF CHANGE

VISION

IMPROVED EDUCATION
-AND THEREFORE-
LIFE OUTCOMES FOR GIRLS IN LMICS



OUTCOMES

INDIRECT RESULTS OF
CUE INPUTS



EVIDENCE-INFORMED
DECISIONMAKERS
& THOUGHT
LEADERS



EXPANDED
NETWORK
OF LEADERS
& ORGS



STRENGTHENED
ECOSYSTEM



RENOWNED &
CITED
EXPERTS

GIRLS' EDUCATION ECOSYSTEM

Funded collaboration
opportunities, strategic
advisement and platform
expansion, and group
convenings

Expanded visibility
and influence on the
girls' education
ecosystem

ALUMNI

Impact support,
strategic advisement,
connection-building,
and leadership
development

Increased research and
leadership capacity as
well as strategic
networks for impact



INPUTS

WHAT CUE
DOES

OUTPUTS

WHAT CUE
MEASURES
AND TRACKS

ECHIDNA GLOBAL SCHOLARS

Research and leadership
development coupled
with professional
networking

Increased leadership
capacity, expansion of
impact pathways, and
evidence literacy

ECHIDNA GLOBAL SCHOLARS PROGRAM: LOOKING AHEAD

The evaluation would not have been possible without the work of the Miske Witt & Associates International team and the stories of the Echidna Global Scholars Program alumni. For the next program cycle, beginning in 2021, CUE looks forward to building on the program's strong foundation and using the evaluation findings to enhance the impact of the program and its community.

