



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Some Summary Inputs on Learning Outcomes

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About the presentation

- This presentation was prepared for USAID's Worldwide Education and Training Workshop, Arlington, Virginia, August 17-21, 2009. The workshop was organized by the Bureau for Economic Growth, Agriculture and Trade (EGAT/ED). The purpose was for "the international development community to share best practices in addressing the growing challenges in the field of education for social and economic development."
- Dr. Crouch is Vice President for Research, International Development Group, RTI International; and Director of the USAID EdData II project, Contract No. EHC-E-00-04-00004-00.
- Icons appearing on some slides in this presentation represent links to embedded files that are not available in the PDF version of this document. To obtain copies of the embedded files, please contact the author (see slide 1).

Questions / issues suggested by USAID

- **Appropriate indicator on learning outcomes (LO) for USAID**
 - What are others doing?
 - What was Basic Ed Coalition recommendation
- **What is “valid and reliable enough?”**
 - For assessment?
 - For impact evaluation?
- **Types of assessments: national, int, project-based**
- **Census or samples?**
- **What if no baseline?**

Questions / issues suggested by USAID

- **You will have seen answers or discussion to some of these from the other presenters**
- **And discussions will improve the “answers”**
- **Quickly sum up one or two key points, or raise a few key points**

Appropriate LO indicators for USAID – Other donors doing?

- You've seen Fast Track Initiative (FTI):
 - percentage of students who, after two years of primary schooling, demonstrate sufficient fluency and comprehension to be able to read to learn
 - percentage of students who are able to read according to grade level (or their countries' curricular goals) by the end of primary school
- UNESCO Working Group on “Learning Counts” emerging trend
 - Countries ought to report on something such as % of students meeting curricular goals in reading and math by end of primary
 - Somewhat “summative”, reporting, “accountability”
 - Countries ought to track early learning (grades 2, 3?) in more formative but reasonably rigorous ways

Appropriate LO indicators for USAID – Some expert recommendations

- Basic Ed Coalition
 - projects with quality of teaching and learning as goals ought to report on learning outcomes (in valid, reliable ways)
 - ought to be presented in such a way as to allow roll-up across projects (e.g., “in projects oriented at teaching and learning we see X% improvement in LOs”)
 - Note what it does NOT say!
 - No areas of knowledge specified, not all projects need to have LO measures, only those on teaching and learning
- Expert panel at USAID-convened workshop in Jan 09:
 - Incentivize or require partic in international assessments
 - Build capacity to do national assessment
 - Measure conditions of learning, too
 - Provide technical assistance (TA), funding to close loop from measurement to improvement

Census or samples?

- That is, universal or sample? And, if “universal,” then “universal” by whom?
- Lots of choices
- If assessment being done to help individual learners, obviously universal, probably best done by teachers, but against external standard and with externally-established methods
- If the LO system (either national or project-demonstration) is aimed at community or “market” accountability, probably needs to be universal AND external
- If the LO system (either national or project) is aimed only to improve TT or policy through bureaucratic means (circulars, more and better TT), then sample-only is fine
- Can combine both: use sample for rigor, give teachers similar items for teacher-based learner assessment, show marking guides from sample-based, national
- Many combinations possible
 - Factors to consider include purpose (accountability? Improvement of individual learners?), cost, technical feasibility

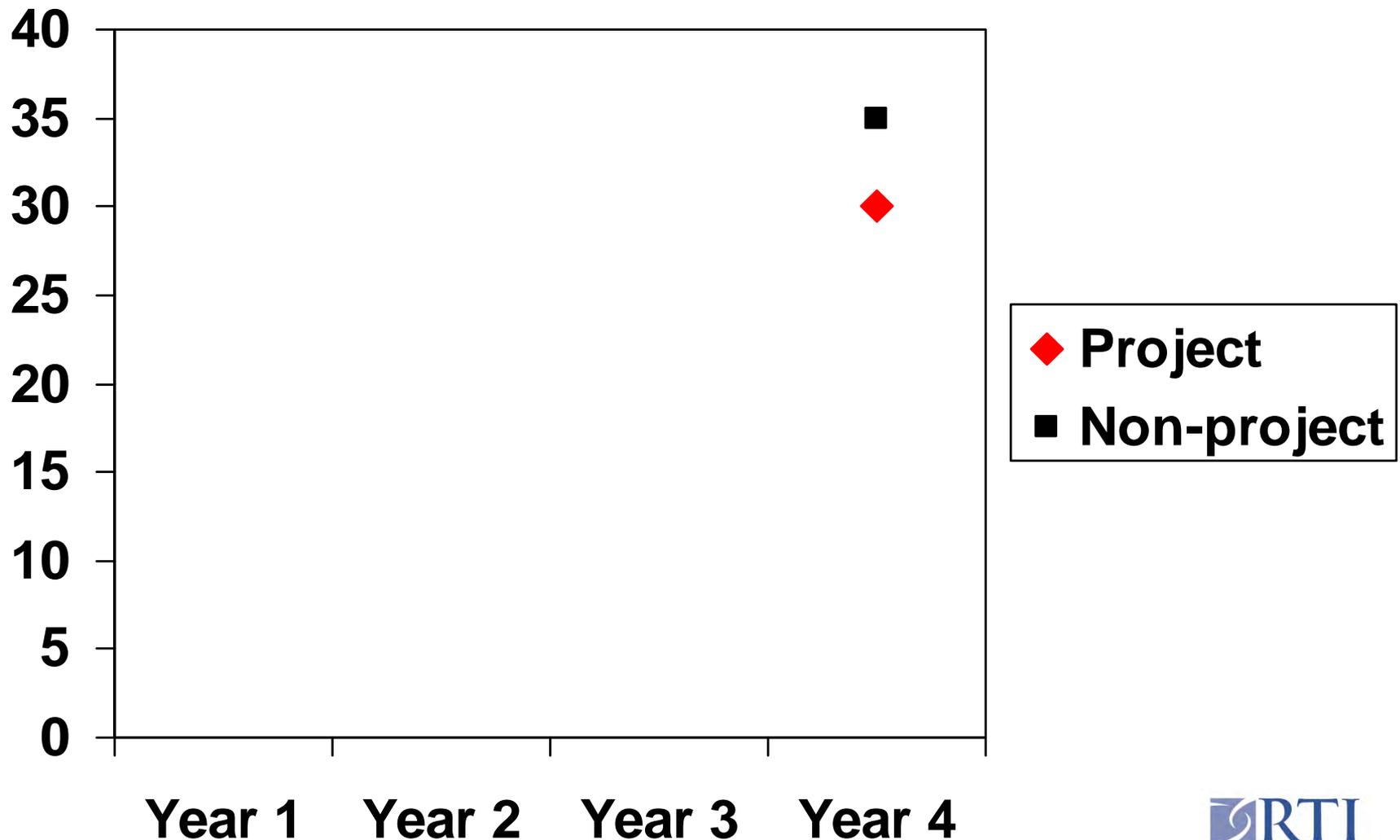
Impact assessment

- Increasing pressure to “show impact”
- So, not just LOs, but comparative LOs
- But, compare WHAT?
- Question put to me many times: “oops, we forgot to do a baseline, what now?”
- An attempt to answer
- First, what really matters is control vs. treatment, with randomized assignment, not baseline
- Baseline plus post-treatment is a very poor cousin of randomized control vs. treatment

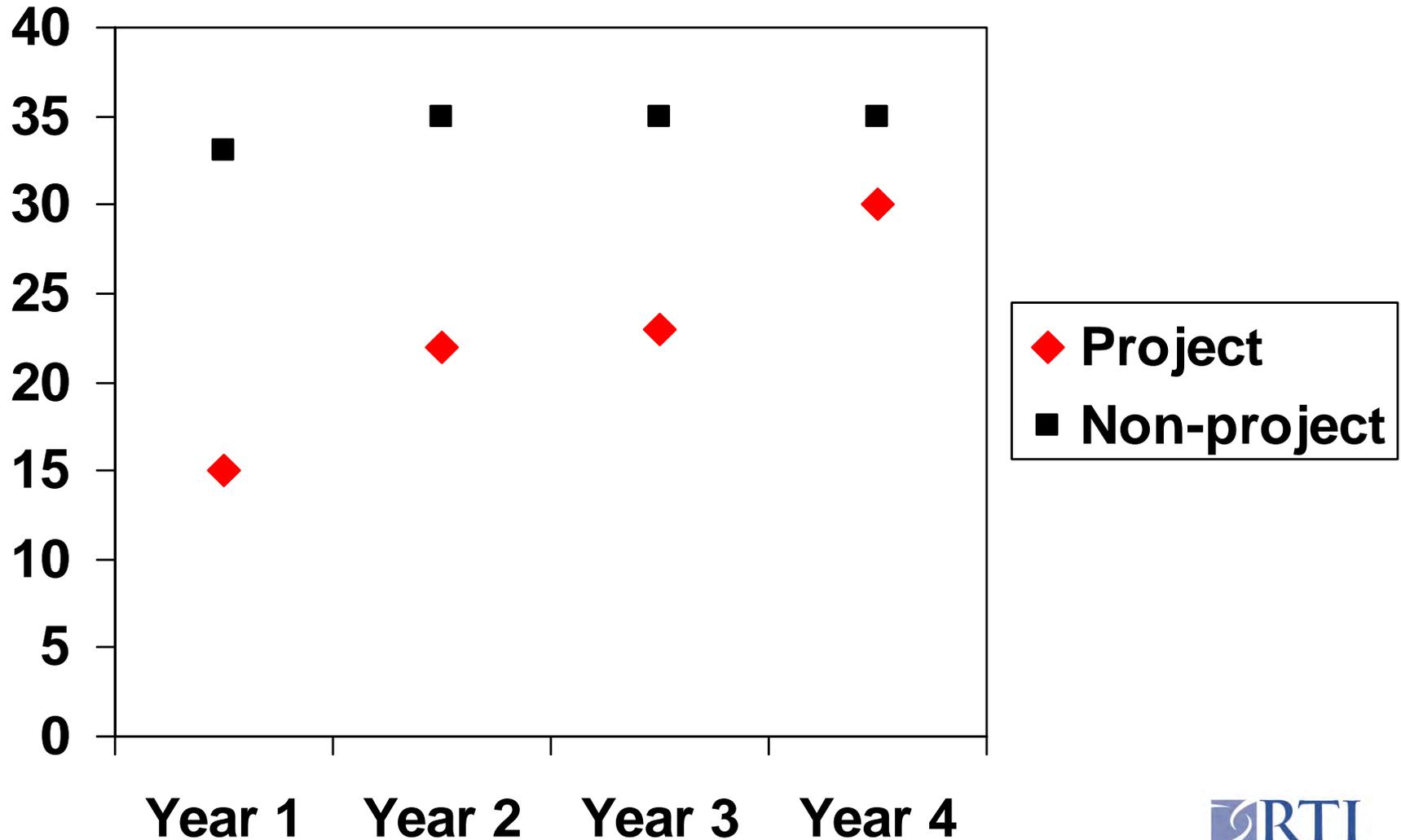
Impact assessment

- Worst case: no LO at all; basically can claim nothing about learning improvement
- Next worst: measure LO in project schools, nowhere else, without baseline; if done twice during project, and at least see SOME improvement, can fine-tune project inputs, and know something about factors that determine learning in the country
- Better: LO in project, with some casual controls, only at end, no baseline
 - Problem with that: project schools often picked because they are “bad,” so may have worse results even AFTER project, but maybe even worse if no project

Conclusion: Project no good?

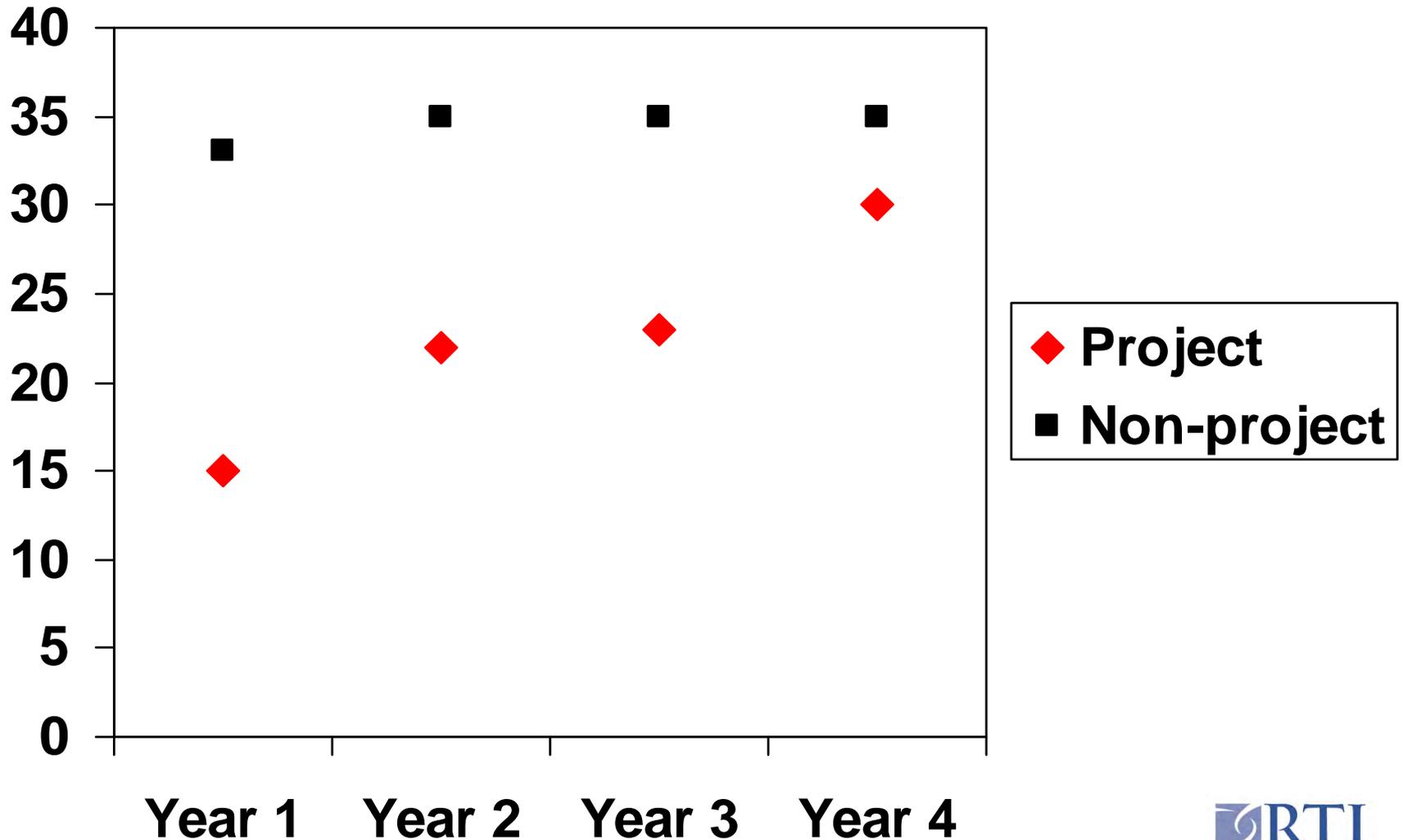


How about now?



And now?

Clearly the project had major impact



Impact assessment

- Problem was that project schools and control were not randomized.
 - Project schools were “bad” schools—that’s why we’re helping, after all!
 - Non-project by definition, often cannot be as bad, because our project is in the worst
- Baseline helps in that case
- Key realization: if there is randomized control and treatment, there is NO NEED FOR BASELINE
- Baseline + post-treatment is in fact a “poor cousin” of randomized control + treatment
- If pick enough people, and random, then they will be the same at baseline by the magic of large numbers and randomization. “Proof”:



randomization
teachers

Impact assessment

- But best be cautious so do baseline anyway
 - May not be able to have large enough numbers
 - May not be able to properly randomize
- So, ideal
 - Control and treatment groups
 - Baseline and post-treatment
 - Randomized
- Adjustments possible if ideal conditions not met!!!
 - No baseline? If control and treatment large and random, no problem, probably can do entirely without baseline.
 - But what if no baseline and no real control groups?
 - Can assign entry into project at random, and use timing of entry as “control” factor
 - Can assign “comparable” schools as controls
 - This can be done rigorously using statistical matching; find schools that are “nearly equivalent” to the project schools
 - Gets trickier if the project schools are the absolute worst, since hard to match, but can still predict what test scores WOULD have been
 - Still requires that one test non-project schools! (So it does imply an expense.)
 - And is not as perfect as random assignment

But, warning

- All this does get quite technical
- Impossible to convey all in one session
- “A little knowledge is a dangerous thing”
- Get help from real psychometricians, evaluators, and sampling statisticians