

# Implementation Research with AdLAB

## A Guide for World Bank Task Teams

### AdLAB's Scope of Work

AdLAB – Adolescent Learning, Action, and Benchmarking – is an initiative for learning and action focused on adolescent health and wellbeing created by the [Global Financing Facility](#) and the [Development Economics Research Group](#) at the World Bank. Its primary objectives are: 1) to strengthen the evidence and learning on what works and how; 2) to facilitate use of evidence and learning, particularly on delivering at scale, and 3) to redefine how we measure and learn about adolescent health and wellbeing in a more comprehensive, holistic way.

**Who is AdLAB?** We are a multi-disciplinary team of health researchers, implementation scientists, and economists equipped with a deep knowledge of adolescent health and wellbeing, implementation and evaluative research, and policy analysis.

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**What does AdLAB do?** AdLAB operates through four key functions:

- Priority setting – identifying country driven evidence needs and Implementation science priorities
  - Evidence generation – conducting implementation research (IR)
  - Evidence dissemination and translation – supporting the sharing and understanding of the evidence
  - Evidence use – supporting the use of evidence in policies and programs
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**What services does AdLAB offer:**

- **Implementation and evaluative research:** lead or advise on research design, tool development, and study implementation to assess both the effectiveness and the implementation processes of interventions
  - **Evidence synthesis and design support using an IR lens:** review evidence on effective interventions and implementation strategies tailored to specific project needs to support the use of evidence at various decision-making points. Contribute to project design (e.g., providing inputs to PAD/PASA) to identify critical implementation challenges related to priority interventions and determine how these challenges can be addressed through IR
  - **Capacity building for IR:** provide training and mentorship to develop competence in conducting and using IR and support the development of tools, processes, and structures to strengthen country systems for IR
  - **Stakeholder engagement through IR:** support the development and implementation of plans and tools to engage key stakeholders (especially adolescents, youth, and youth-led organizations) at conceptualization, dissemination, and other stages of the research process
  - **Dissemination and uptake of IR findings:** support the sharing of key findings and lessons learned through reports, workshops, forums, and other dissemination channels or knowledge products to inform future practice and policy
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# Doing Implementation (IR) with AdLAB

Implementation research is “the scientific inquiry into questions concerning implementation – the act of carrying an intention into effect, which in health research can be policies, programs, or individual practices (collectively called interventions).” The goal of IR is to understand what, why, and how interventions work in “real world” settings and to test approaches to improve them.

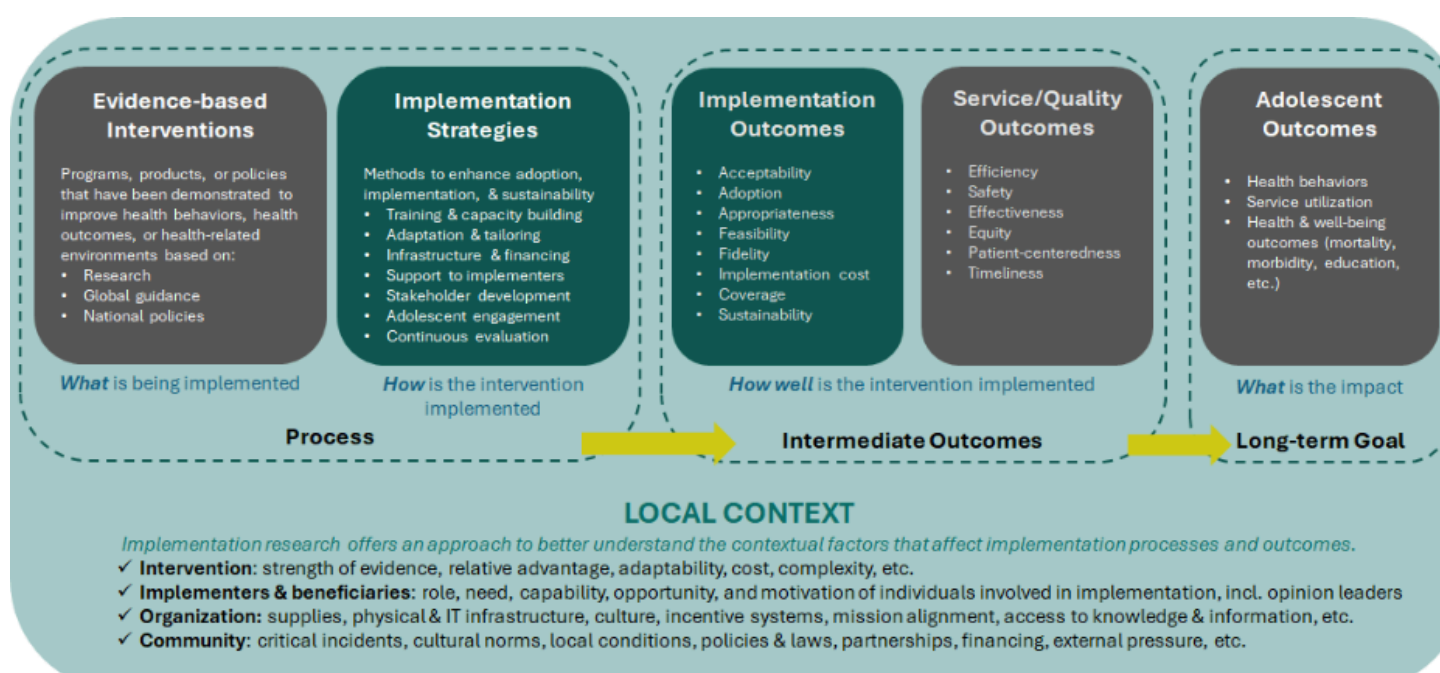
## Why IR?

Worldwide efforts to improve adolescents’ health and well-being are currently insufficient. Existing evidence-based interventions often do not fully achieve their intended benefits, particularly in low- and middle-income countries with complex challenges and limited resources. Often, this failure to attain desired effects is due to gaps in how these interventions are **delivered** in diverse contexts.

IR is designed to address such gaps. Beyond assessing whether an intervention is effective, IR aims to enhance the implementation of programs and provide contextualized, targeted, and timely evidence for decision makers to:

- Understand what is and is not working in implementing programs for adolescents
- Uncover and adapt to the contextual factors affecting implementation success
- Test new approaches to delivering critical interventions that ensure adolescents receive needed services

IR helps identify contextual factors influencing implementation, guide program design and strategy selection, and establish measurement frameworks to track processes and outcomes—ultimately improving adolescent health and wellbeing (see Figure below for key issues and topics). By doing so, IR informs evidence-based decisions that lead to more impactful implementation and better health outcomes.



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## When is IR appropriate?

Whether IR is the appropriate approach to respond to a project's learning agenda depends on several factors, including the strength of existing evidence that supports the intervention, the type of implementation challenges anticipated or encountered by policy makers and program implementers, and the research questions prioritized by stakeholders.

IR is well-suited to address the following **programmatic challenges**:

- **Real-world effectiveness:** Ensuring interventions proven effective in controlled environments maintain their effectiveness in routine conditions across diverse settings
- **Replication:** Adapting and effectively modifying programs for adolescents to suit different regions or countries
- **Program integration:** Linking together health, education, and social support services typically offered by siloed systems to provide a cohesive program for adolescents
- **Scale up:** Expanding successful pilot programs to a national level while ensuring quality and accessibility across diverse regions and adolescent groups
- **Sustainability:** Securing ongoing funding, building robust institutional capacities, and ensuring community ownership and engagement to maintain the long-term impact of adolescent health and wellbeing programs
- **Equitability:** Addressing disparities and ensuring marginalized and vulnerable adolescent groups – such as those based on socioeconomic status, gender, ethnicity, disability, or geographic location – have equitable access to programs and services

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## What IR is NOT

**Not program evaluations:** IR focuses on how interventions are delivered, not just what outcomes are achieved

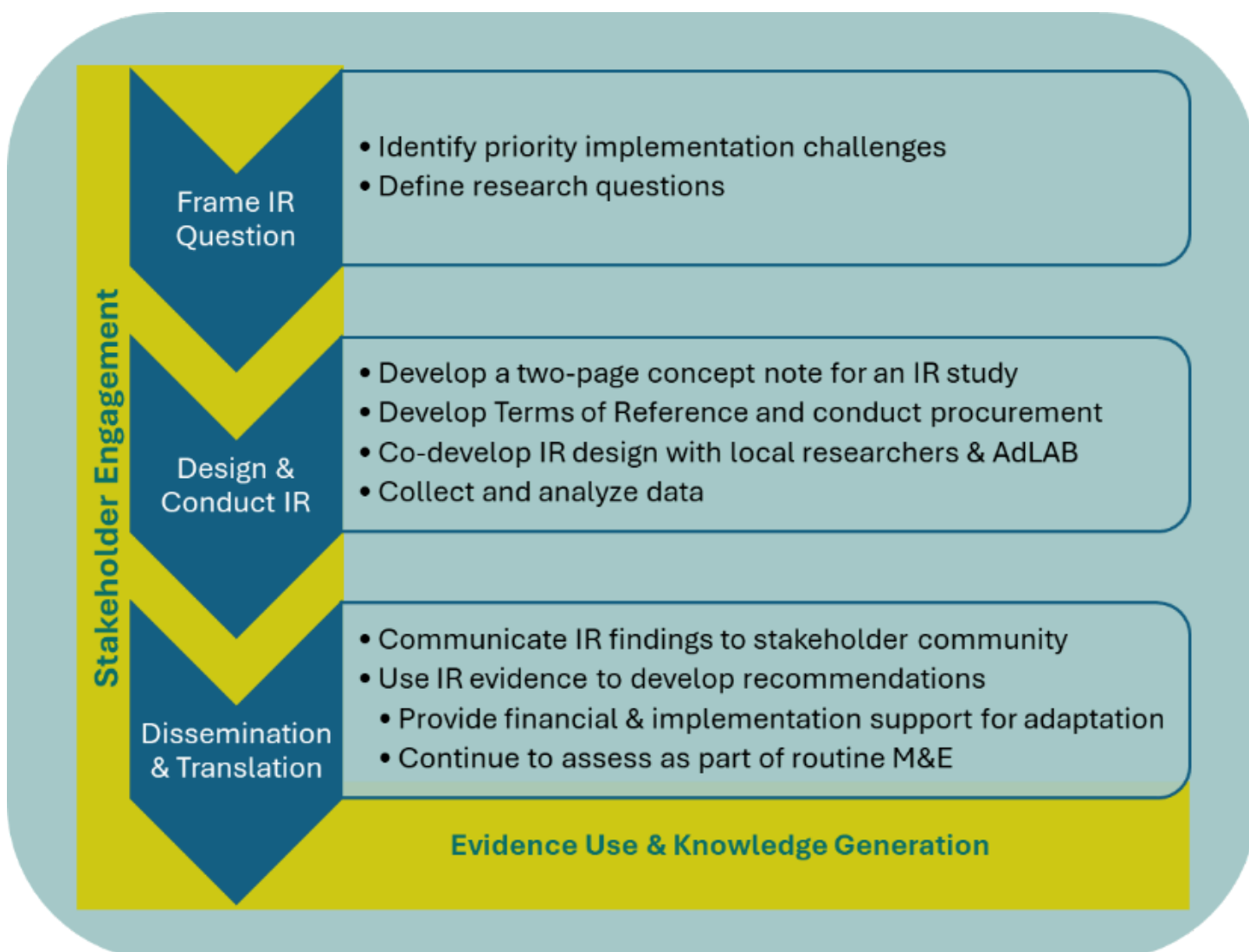
**Not routine monitoring:** IR aims to understand mechanisms, barriers, and facilitators that affect intervention delivery, beyond describing a process. However, routine monitoring often contributes to identifying IR needs.

**Not quality improvement:** While IR can contribute to improving quality of intervention delivery, it seeks generalizable knowledge and is more systematic and theoretical than quality improvement approaches.

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## How to do IR with AdLAB?

Conducting IR with AdLAB is an iterative process with three key stages: framing the question, designing and conducting the study, and disseminating findings (Figure 3). It typically begins with discussions between AdLAB, GFF colleagues, and task teams to develop preliminary research questions. Task Teams will need to review existing evidence – such as monitoring data, team experiential knowledge, and evidence gaps aligned with government needs – to identify specific program implementation challenges that the IR questions should address. A short concept note is then drafted to outline the IR aims and scope, followed by the recruitment of local researchers who will collaboratively develop the full IR study, lead data collection, and conduct analysis. Findings are shared with the stakeholder community to co-develop recommendations and inform policy or program changes. Throughout, AdLAB supports task teams in engaging stakeholders, facilitating evidence use, promoting the learning agenda, coordinating procurement, and providing technical oversight.



**Contact AdLAB: [adlab@worldbank.org](mailto:adlab@worldbank.org)**

- Emmanuel Segun Adebayo: [eadebayo@worldbank.org](mailto:eadebayo@worldbank.org)
- Wei Chang: [wchang3@worldbank.org](mailto:wchang3@worldbank.org)