**Evaluating the design, implementation and impact of SSDP trainings for teachers of secondary math and science in Nepal**

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## Online appendix C. Lessons for government-researcher collaboration on evaluations

Our experience suggests several lessons for collaboration between researchers and government officials on major evaluations. First, it is important to consult adequately with all levels of policy implementing agencies before choosing to evaluate a government intervention. During the initial consultations that led to the decision to evaluate the teacher training program, we consulted extensively with the National Planning Commission and Ministry of Education and Department of Education senior officials, thinking that this gave adequate opportunities for involvement by officials connected to the candidate interventions. Only after teacher training was selected as the focus of the evaluation did we realize, however, that National Centre for Educational Development (NCED) and education training center officials have a high degree of autonomy when implementing teacher training policy and should have been included in the intervention selection process much earlier. Their input may have given us a better understanding of the planned teacher trainings, and consulting them earlier may have increased their buy-in. In practice, their inadvertent exclusion from earlier conversations required extensive investments in building trust with NCED officials who were key to the feasibility and quality.

Second, and closely related, it was important to emphasize throughout the study that the aim was to improve future teacher trainings in Nepal, and to address a wider range of questions of interest to policymakers, and not merely to classify as successes or failures past and current teacher trainings. This broader and more constructive emphasis may have helped reduce the concern among NCED officials that other government agencies or the research team would use the study to blame them for the perceived failure of past training policies. Our team had to work hard to alleviate these concerns and establish an effective partnership with NCED collaborators.

Third, even though government engagement in the study waned due to transfers of many government officials, we believe that creating the official technical committee for the study, and our many meetings with government officials, helped to maintain government support for the evaluation.

Finally, obtaining monitoring and administrative data from government sources, and maintaining good communication with all relevant parties regarding the intervention's roll-out and the evaluation, were far more time consuming than initially expected. Fortunately, we had excellent research assistants who visited government offices and made frequent phone calls to the education training centers. We believe that this research team time could have been used even more productively if we had arranged from the beginning to embed a research team member for several days per week in the NCED, the federal agency most closely connected to the teacher training program. Having a desk and an official position in the NCED, this team member may have been able to communicate more rapidly about study and policy developments, may have had greater authority to request data and assistance from the education training centers, and would have had more opportunities to influence the procedures and culture of data collection and enthusiasm for evaluation.