

SDC 2018 Annual Meeting Abstracts

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Title: Sustainability of early childhood education projects



As the international community adopts and implements the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a growing concern is whether interventions established by development aid agencies are sustainable. Between 2001 and 2013, the World Bank invested USD 3.3 billion in early childhood development alone through 273 investment projects (Sayre et al. 2015). However, we know very little about whether these investments are sustained after external funding stops.

In this paper, we examine the sustainability of a large-scale early childhood education project. Covering 50 districts across Indonesia, this project increased access to early childhood education centers in rural areas for over 634,000 children between 2009 and 2013 (World Bank 2014). We define sustainability as the continued use of project components in 2016 – three years beyond the funding period.

Our study uses unique panel data (2009-2016) on early childhood education centers. We estimate a series of logistic regression models to predict center sustainability. We find that sustainability is strongly predicted by local government support during the project period and frequency of service during the project period (i.e., operating for more days per week and providing additional nutrition and health services).

To the best of our knowledge, our paper is the first to use panel data to measure varying degrees of sustainability of an early childhood education project. Another novel contribution of our paper is the use of a comprehensive measure of early childhood education quality (using the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale) to better understand how quality of services during the project period is associated with longer-term sustainability.

The findings from this paper highlight the importance of introducing strategies to ensure sustainability of project activities well before the end of the project, ideally during the early stages of project implementation. Our study helps clarify how international development projects in early childhood education will greatly benefit from conducting a careful assessment of what types of early childhood programs already exist in the local community, how these various programs are utilized by families, and the demand and supply of each type of service in order to better understand the market conditions before project implementation.