What Matters for Girls Economic Empowerment: Is it the "Bundle"?
Session Description

There is a growing body of evidence illustrating the effectiveness of different “approaches” for youth employment and economic empowerment programs – ranging from simpler unconditional cash transfers to more complex, multi-pronged interventions. There is the urge to look for a silver bullet, an ideal program that can be replicated across contexts and populations. However, even if a program works in one context with a specific population, implementation across contexts and at scale can be challenging. We need to disentangle what really matters and understand all the mechanisms at play. Through the frames of research conducted on three programs (BRAC’s Empowerment for Livelihood for Adolescents, Save the Children’s Kishoree Kontha and Population Council’s Balika), we will debate the evidence on and what we have learned about how these programs for adolescent girls can prepare them for economic independence. Is there a common narrative across these studies? Are there key common factors enabling economic empowerment for girls across the three programs? What can the long term evidence of these programs tell us about the sequencing of program components? Do we have enough evidence to know what types of interventions are fundamental for girls’ economic empowerment? How do we know how much is enough evidence?
Key Research that Informs this Session

**Empowering Adolescent Girls: Evidence from a Randomized Control Trial in Uganda**

**Authors and Year:** Oriana Bandiera, Niklas Buehren, Robin Burgess, Markus Goldstein, Selim Gulesci, Imran Rasul and Munshi Sulaiman (2013)

**Program:** The Empowerment and Livelihood for Adolescents Program (ELA)

**Methodology:** Randomized Control Trial

**Target Population:** Ugandan adolescent girls, ages 14-20

**Main Findings:** This study evaluated the ELA program in Uganda which trained girls in life skills and vocational skills in youth clubs in the treated communities. The program improved HIV/pregnancy knowledge and increased routine condom usage by 50%. The program also increased the probability of girls involved in income generating activities by 35%. The findings suggest that combined interventions are more effective than single interventions to reduce risky behaviors and improve labor market outcomes for adolescent girls.

**Unanswered Questions:** N/A

**Power vs Money: Alternative Approaches to Reducing Child Marriage in Bangladesh, a Randomized Control Trial**

**Authors and Year:** Nina Buchmann, Erica Field, Rachel Glennester, Shahana Nazneen, Svetlana Pimkina and Iman Sen (2017)

**Program:** Kishoree Kontha

**Methodology:** Randomized Control Trial

**Target Population:** Bangladeshi adolescent girls, ages 10-19

**Main Findings:** This study evaluated the Kishoree Kontha program which gave girls in the treated communities a financial incentive to delay marriage, a six-month empowerment program or both interventions. Financial incentives to delay marriage were effective in reducing the probability of child marriage by 25%, giving birth before the age of 20 by 16% and the likelihood of being in school at age 22 by 24%. The findings suggest that providing an incentive conditional on marriage alone was effective for out-of-school youth.

**Unanswered Questions:**
- Does Kishoree Kontha’s empowerment program translate to gains in reproductive health outcomes or marital bargaining power later in life?
- Are empowerment programs more effective in settings where girls have some agency over marriage timing?

**Note:** Results on the employment and economic outcomes of the program will be presented at the event.
Delaying Child Marriage Through Community-Based Skills-Development Programs For Girls: Results from a Randomized Controlled Study in Rural Bangladesh

Authors and Year: Sajeda Amin, Johana Ahmed, Jyotirmoy Saha, Md. Irfan Hossein and Eashita Farzana Haque (2016)

Program: BALIKA

Methodology: Randomized Control Trial

Target Population: Bangladeshi adolescent girls, ages 12-18

Main Findings: This study evaluated the BALIKA project, which assigned communities to receive one of three interventions: education, gender-rights awareness training or livelihoods skills training. In BALIKA communities where girls received educational support or those where they received life skills training on gender rights and life skills, girls were 31% less likely to be married as children. In BALIKA communities where girls received livelihoods training, girls were 23% less likely to be married as children. The study also found that girls participating in the program were more likely to be attending school. If girls had received gender rights or livelihoods training, they were one-third more likely to be earning an income.

Unanswered Questions: N/A

The Impact of an Adolescent Girls Employment Program

Authors and Year: Franck Adoho, Shubha Chakravarty, Dala T. Korokayah, Jr., Mattias Lundberg and Afia Tasneem (2014)

Program: Economic Empowerment of Adolescent Girls and Young Women Project (EPAG)

Methodology: Randomized Control Trial

Target Population: Liberian women, ages 16-27

Main Findings: This study examined the EPAG program, which provided six months of classroom-based technical and life skills training, followed by six months of follow-up support to enter wage employment or start a business. The EPAG program increased employment by 47% and earnings by 80%. The findings also showed positive effects on several empowerment measures that included access to money, self-confidence and anxiety about circumstances and the future.

Unanswered Questions:
- Do the effects of the EPAG program persist into medium and long term?
- Does the EPAG program work with younger girls with a lower level of literacy?
- Does the EPAG program work in communities outside of Monrovia?
Gender and Youth Employment in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Review of Constraints and Effective Interventions

Authors and Year: Shubha Chakravarty, Smita Das and Julia Vaillant (2017)

Program: N/A

Methodology: Systematic review

Population: Youth in Sub-Saharan Africa

Main Findings: This study examines the barriers youth face in accessing employment in Sub-Saharan Africa and the ways in which young women’s employment is constrained beyond those faced by male youth. The study identifies key questions around constraints like skills, capital, family formation, occupational choice and networks and safety to create a possible research agenda moving forward.

Unanswered Questions:
• Which types of skills are most important for obtaining productive employment?
• What is the optimal sequencing of skills?
• Is the provision of skills or cash more effective?
• How do young women access capital to start businesses?
• How, when and for which subgroups does employment affect young women’s fertility?
• Does child care provision improve young women’s employment outcomes?
• How do child care markets function in rural and urban contexts?
• How can we expand the availability, quality, and use of child care?
• Does the time availability increase through child care provision?
• What trades should be promoted among young women, and in what socio-economic contexts?
• Which mechanisms will most effectively promote entry into new trades, and what are the strongest constraints here?
• How do networks help or hinder young women’s employment?
• Are safety concerns and experiences limiting young women’s labor market choices and productivity?
• Is mobility a constraint to employment in Sub-Saharan Africa?

A Systematic Review of Positive Youth Development Programs in Low- and Middle-Income Countries

Authors and Year: Gina Alvarado, Chisina Kapungu, Caitlin Moss, Daniel Plaut, Nicola Reavley and Martie Skinner (2017)

Program: N/A

Methodology: Systematic Review

Population: N/A

Main Findings: This study conducted analysis of existing evidence of positive youth development in low-and middle-income countries. As a result of the analysis, the study posits a positive youth development framework based on the domains of assets, agency, contribution and enabling environment.

Unanswered Questions:
• How do positive youth development programs affect positive youth development outcomes?
• How cost-effective are positive youth development programs?
Save the Children believes every child deserves a future. In the United States and around the world, we work every day to give children a healthy start in life, the opportunity to learn and protection from harm. When crisis strikes, and children are most vulnerable, we are always among the first to respond and the last to leave. We ensure children’s unique needs are met and their voices are heard. We deliver lasting results for millions of children, including those hardest to reach.

We do whatever it takes for children – every day and in times of crisis – transforming their lives and the future we share.