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Tools to Improve Parental Recognition of Developmental Deficits in Children
A Randomized Controlled Trial

IPA is a nonprofit that discovers and promotes effective solutions to global poverty problems.



Growth charts for children's home

Policy Issue

According to recent estimates, 40% of children under-5 in Zambia are stunted. Stunting is an indicator of chronic malnutrition that can have negative long-term effects on children's cognitive development as well as later life outcomes.

There are three major challenges in addressing child malnutrition in rural areas in Zambia:

- 1) Widespread poverty and lacking (food) resources
- 2) Lack of parental knowledge of appropriate nutrition and feeding practices
- 3) Lack of parental recognition of developmental delays in early childhood: given that stunting is very common, it may be hard for parents to recognize that their children are not developing to their full potential.

Project Design

This project assesses the impact of two interventions designed to improve child nutrition and growth by increasing parental awareness of developmental deficits in children. 550 children between 6 and 24 months of age were randomized into three groups at the village level:

- 1) **Intervention 1- Provision of growth charts:** To enable parents to monitor their children's health and development, households were provided with a single growth chart wall poster. The full-sized growth charts allow parents to directly compare their children's height to the expected height range for children of the same age and provide parents with information regarding the most suitable local foods.
- 2) **Intervention 2-Community-based monitoring:** To directly provide parents with information about their children's height and weight, parents are invited every 3 months to attend a community meeting where children are measured and parents are informed if their children are below the reference measures established by the World Health Organization. Stunted children under the age of two are provided a small amount of supplemental food. Parents are also reminded about the importance of a balanced diet for children.
- 3) **Control group, no intervention given:** A baseline survey was conducted in September 2014. Endline will be conducted in September 2015 and results of the study will be available soon after.



Community-based monitoring in Chipata District

Overview

RESEARCH QUESTION
Can improving parents' awareness of their children's physical development increase children's physical growth and overall development?

RESEARCHERS
Gunter Fink, Harvard University
Peter Rockers, Boston University

PARTNERS
The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

LOCATION
Chipata District, Eastern Zambia

SAMPLE
550 children 6-24 months old in 127 villages

TIMELINE
2014-2015

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Innovations for Behavior Change in Health: Evidence from Zambia

This seminar addressed the "last-mile" problem of uptake in health: products and services are available, people are aware of their effectiveness, and yet uptake remains low. Rachel Levenson of IPA-Zambia presented evidence from research on innovations based on behavioral economics and behavior-centered designs that address behavior change working with emotions, non-monetary incentives, and social and status pressure to trigger shift in behavior and norms.

City

Lusaka

Country

Zambia