

2014 Call for Impact Evaluation Proposals on Early Childhood Development
Promoting the cognitive and socio-emotional development of children ages 3-6

The Strategic Impact Evaluation Fund (SIEF) pleased to announce a Call for Proposals for impact evaluation of programs to improve early childhood development (ECD). This call is financed by the British government's Department of International Development and the London-based Children's Investment Fund Foundation. SIEF is a multi-donor trust fund at the World Bank promoting evidence-based policy making in areas critical for human development.

SIEF is seeking applications for rigorous impact evaluations of new or ongoing early childhood development programs, as well as longitudinal impact evaluation follow-ups of early childhood development programs. Impact evaluations of World Bank supported programs are welcome, but no program affiliation with the World Bank or the funding organizations is required. Programs to be evaluated can be government or non-governmental. While the call is focused on the impact of programs for low-income countries, research in middle-income countries will be considered as long as results will be clearly relevant to low-income countries. Specifically, SIEF is interested in innovative proposals that will inform the following question:

Which early childhood programs – whether a single intervention or a combination of interventions – improve the cognitive and socio-emotional development of young children, especially ages three to six, including their readiness for school; and how can these programs be delivered at scale in low- income countries?

The deadline for applications is **Friday, January 30, 2015 at 6 pm (1800h) Eastern Standard Time (EST)**. All applications should be submitted [online](#). Please click [here](#) to visit the [Call for Proposals website](#). Note that the application must be submitted by a World Bank staff member partnering with the impact evaluation team. Detailed information on the application process, requirements and SIEF priority research areas are available in the full Call for Proposals. The information is also on the [SIEF website](#). This call is open to researchers worldwide and no affiliation with either the World Bank or the funding organizations is required.

Website: www.worldbank.org/SIEF

Email: SIEFimpact1@worldbank.org

Application Details, Frequently Asked Questions, and Background Information

The Strategic Impact Evaluation Fund is soliciting applications through its 2014 Call for Proposals. This call is focused on impact evaluations of early childhood development programs. SIEF is allocating approximately \$4.5 million (U.S. dollars) to supporting rigorous impact evaluations of innovative programs that will provide critical evidence for improving lives through effective programs and policies.

SIEF is interested in innovative proposals that will inform the following question:

Which early childhood programs – whether a single intervention or a combination of interventions -- improve the cognitive and socio-emotional development of young children, especially ages three to six, including their readiness for school, and how can these programs be delivered at scale in low- income countries?

Funding priority will be given to impact evaluations that meet SIEF research priorities in terms of (A) program design, (B) evaluation design, (C) geographic coverage, (D) timeline, and (E) applicant eligibility. Applications will be measured in regards to how well they meet the SIEF's priority interests for this call and the potential for policy impact, both locally and globally. Impact evaluation teams are expected to demonstrate a strong commitment to policy outreach and selected teams will be expected to coordinate communications and outreach with the SIEF team.

(A) Program Design. SIEF will give priority to the following:

- Impact evaluations that will improve the evidence base for understanding the effectiveness and sustainability of **programs implemented at-scale and of pilot programs now being taken to scale.**
- Impact evaluations of programs that focus on supply-side design features such as,
 - **Modes of service delivery.** For example, home-based compared with center-based service delivery, public versus non-state actor service delivery, as well as complementarities between different modes of services delivery.
 - **Incentives for endline providers.**
 - **Intervention intensity.** This includes the frequency and duration of the service delivered.
- Impact evaluations that seek to measure the possible **drivers of quality and the context**, including provider qualifications and training (for teachers or social workers, for example), group size, curriculum, parent involvement, incentives, and monitoring programs.
- Impact evaluations that provide evidence on how effective early childhood development programs can be delivered in ways that **target the most disadvantaged groups and promote equity and social inclusion.** Proposals can include considerations of equity, social exclusion, class, race, mother tongue language and language of instruction, and other factors that may affect demand-side behavior.

- **Specific interventions** designed to improve the cognitive and socio-emotional development of young children **may be narrowly focused or holistic**.
- Programs to be evaluated can **be governmental or non-governmental**. Impact evaluations of World Bank-supported programs are welcome, but no program affiliation with the World Bank is required.
- In the case of proposals that focus on relatively small pilot interventions, priority will be given to programs with high potential for cost-effectiveness and a clear articulation of the pathway to large-scale implementation.

(B) Impact evaluation design. The elements that guide SIEF's research priorities include the following:

- Primary outcomes of interest are **the cognitive and socio-emotional development of young children aged three to six years**, including their readiness for school. Gender-disaggregate indicators are required.
- **Only rigorous impact evaluation designs** will be considered. This means having a well-identified and statistically powered comparison group. *Usually this will mean a prospective randomized control trial (RCT)*, although SIEF will consider impact evaluations based on rigorous non-experimental designs.
- Inclusion of **a research component that seeks to understand the mechanisms** linking intervention activities with child outcomes, including collection of *relevant intermediate outcome data capturing service delivery* and capturing *contextual settings level information*. Mixed method research and interdisciplinary collaboration is encouraged.
- Inclusion of an **operationally-focused research component** exploring approaches for successful implementation and affordable scale-up of programs. The impact evaluation design should pay attention to the affordability of the program for successful implementation and/or scale-up. *Each evaluation is required to capture cost data.*

(C) Geographic Coverage. SIEF is interested specifically in impact evaluations of programs that:

- Aim to improve our understanding of the types of policies, programs, and mechanisms that are effective in improving early childhood development outcomes in **low-income countries**.
- Focus on poor populations from **middle-income countries if results will be relevant to low-income countries**.
- Focus on **fragile and conflict affected states**.

(D) Timeline for application, awards and completion of impact evaluations.

- January 30, 2015: Applications must be submitted via the [online portal](#) by 6 p.m. Eastern Standard Time.
- March 16, 2015: Seed-funding recipients will be announced.
- June 1, 2015: Final deadline for submission of full technical proposals. Early submissions welcome.
- June 2015 – September 2015: Winners announced.
- December 31, 2019 – Closing date for all evaluations. All funded impact evaluations must have final results complete by this date.

(E) Applicant eligibility.

- Impact evaluation research teams from around the world are eligible. No prior affiliation with the World Bank or the funding organizations is needed.
- However, to submit an application, **the impact evaluation team must partner with a World Bank staff member** (“task team leader,” known as TTL) who will, if the application is successful, manage the SIEF grant by providing fiduciary responsibility, liaising with World Bank regional and sector teams, and supporting policy outreach. The World Bank staff member can also act as an investigator on the project.
- **The application must be submitted electronically by the partnering World Bank staff member (TTL).**
- **To identify potential World Bank TTLs**, we encourage interested researchers to reach out to World Bank staff in the country office where the evaluation will take place. Working relationships at the country level are key for the success of the research projects. Interested applicants can also liaise with sector and regional colleagues at the World Bank. The SIEF team welcomes inquiries from impact evaluation teams seeking assistance to identify a World Bank staff member (TTL) to partner with. To enable sufficient time, inquiries must be received by **December 15, 2015**. Please contact: siefproposals1@worldbank.org.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Can I get technical support in designing the evaluation? We suggest that applicants reach out to the impact evaluation research community at large. For World Bank projects, the SIEF core team (siefproposals1@worldbank.org) may also be able to suggest some researchers who can provide guidance.

Are there any other requirements to receive SIEF funding? Evaluations must comply with requirements stated in the announcement of the call for proposals, including:

- Adhering to research ethics principles and protection of human subjects enumerated in Annex 1 below.
- Adhering to data storage and access requirements enumerated in Annex 1 below.

- Developing and implementing a dissemination and engagement strategy (technical report, policy note, final dissemination event, details of other engagement with government and other stakeholders).

How does the review process work? Proposals submitted by the January 30, 2015 deadline will first be assessed independently by teams of technical experts from the World Bank, as well as from DFID and CIFF. Next, these assessments, alongside the proposals, provide the basis for the seed funding decisions, which are made by a panel of senior managers.

How much funding can I receive? The exact amount of funding will be determined by the particulars of each evaluation proposal.

Does SIEF pay for the costs of the intervention being evaluated? No, funding is only available to cover the costs of the evaluation.

Annex I: Requirements

All evaluation teams must agree to the following requirements:

1. Ethics Principles

SIEF evaluation teams must adhere to the highest standards of research ethics. They are expected to uphold the Ethics Principles for Research and Evaluation established by the United Kingdom's Department for International Development, which have been adopted by SIEF.

ETHICS PRINCIPLES FOR RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

- 1. Researchers and evaluators are responsible for identifying the need for and securing any necessary ethics approval for the study they are undertaking.** This may be from national or local ethics committees in countries in which the study will be undertaken, or other stakeholder institutions with formal ethics approval systems.
- 2. Research and evaluation must be relevant and high quality with clear developmental and practical value.** It must be undertaken to a sufficiently high standard that the findings can be reliably used for their intended purpose. Research should only be undertaken where there is a clear gap in knowledge. Evaluations might also be undertaken to learn lessons to improve future impact, or in order to meet DFID's requirements for accountability.
- 3. Researchers and evaluators should avoid harm to participants in studies.** They should ensure that the basic human rights of individuals and groups with whom they interact are protected. This is particularly important with regard to vulnerable people. The wellbeing of researchers/ evaluators working in the field should also be considered and harm minimized.
- 4. Participation in research and evaluation should be voluntary and free from external pressure.** Information should not be withheld from prospective participants that might affect their willingness to participate. All participants should have a right to withdraw from research/ evaluation and withdraw any data concerning them at any point without fear of penalty.
- 5. Researchers and evaluators should ensure confidentiality of information, privacy and anonymity of study participants.** They should communicate clearly to prospective participants any limits to confidentiality. In cases where unexpected evidence of serious wrong-doing is uncovered (e.g. corruption or abuse) there may be a need to consider whether the normal commitment to confidentiality might be outweighed by the ethical need to prevent harm to vulnerable people. DFID's fraud policy will apply if relevant.
- 6. Researchers and evaluators should operate in accordance with international human rights conventions and covenants to which the United Kingdom is a signatory, regardless of local country standards.** They should also take account of local and national laws.
- 7. DFID-funded research and evaluation should respect cultural sensitivities.** This means researchers need to take account of differences in culture, local behavior and norms, religious beliefs and practices, sexual orientation, gender roles, disability, age and ethnicity and other social differences such as class when planning studies and communicating findings. DFID should avoid imposing a burden of over-researching particular groups.
- 8. DFID is committed to publication and communication of all evaluations and research studies.** Full methodological details and information on who has undertaken a study should be given and messages transmitted should fully and fairly reflect the findings. Where possible, and respecting confidentiality requirements, primary data should be made public to allow secondary analyses.
- 9. Research and evaluation should usually be independent of those implementing an intervention or program under study.** Independence is very important for research and evaluation; in fact evaluations in DFID can only be classified as such where they are led independently. Involvement of stakeholders may be desirable so long as the objectivity of a study is not compromised and DFID is transparent about the roles played. Any potential conflicts of interest that might jeopardize the integrity of the methodology or the outputs of research/ evaluation should be disclosed. If researchers/ evaluators or other stakeholders feel that undue pressure is being put on them by DFID officials, such that their independence has been breached, this should be reported to the Head of Profession for Evaluation, who will take appropriate action

10. All DFID funded research/ evaluation should have particular emphasis on ensuring participation from women and socially excluded groups. Consideration should be given to how barriers to participation can be removed.

2. Protection of Human Subjects

If your proposal is successful and selected by SIEF in 2015 for seed-funding to develop a full technical proposal, then (and only then) SIEF will require:

- A description of the human subjects protocol and a plan for securing ethical clearance in the technical proposal.
- Principal investigators and research coordinators must provide evidence of human subjects training within the last two years. Technical proposal should include a list of the ethical research training taken by the principal investigator and co-principal investigators. The National Institute of Health (NIH) online course (<http://phrp.nihtraining.com/users/login.php>) includes a test and will produce a certificate number that can be used for this purpose.
- Principal investigators will be responsible for securing in-country ethical clearance or providing an official memo from client counterparts stating the absence of a local ethical review board. In case the country of study does not have a review board, the evaluation team will be required to contract an external review board.

3. Data Storage and Access

In accordance to the World Bank's Open Data and Open Knowledge Initiative, all datasets must be fully documented. Datasets should be in compliance with international good practices and with the Data Documentation Initiative (www.ddialliance.org).

To promote broad and diverse use of the data, and to ensure transparency and credibility of the results, microdata will be made **publicly accessible** within **two years** from the submission of the final evaluation report. Data and documentation will be stored and documented in the World Bank Data Catalog within six months of completion of data collection.

The Importance of Early Childhood Development

The early childhood period from conception to age six is a time of rapid growth and development in four areas: physical, cognitive, linguistic, and socio-emotional. For children to achieve their full potential and ensure their future productivity, they must be healthy, well-nourished, form strong attachments to, and interact with, caregivers, siblings and peers, and develop language and other cognitive and behavioral skills.

Research in developed and developing countries has documented large returns of investing in early childhood. There are large returns to individuals— who benefit from increased schooling, labor participation, wages, and general economic and socio-emotional well-being— and to societies because of higher productivity leading to economic growth, lower inequality, and a more participatory citizenry (Heckman and others 2007, Walker and others 2011). Research also shows that early childhood investments can improve equity in society because the benefits are greatest among the poorest and most vulnerable (Alderman and others 2010; Walker and others 2011).

SIEF Impact Evaluations on Early Childhood Development

SIEF aims to improve our understanding of the policies, programs, and mechanisms that are effective in improving early childhood development outcomes, with an emphasis on those that can be delivered cost-effectively at scale in low-income countries and regions. SIEF-financed impact evaluations in this area are financed through the Early Childhood Development and Nutrition cluster, which is focused on children from in utero through age two (the first 1000 days), and through the Basic Education and Service Delivery cluster focused on ages three onward. Applications received through this call for proposals should focus on programs for children aged three to six.

SIEF's early childhood portfolio emphasizes integrated at-scale programs that package nutrition and stimulation interventions, often through multi-sectoral programs that combine early childhood development interventions with existing health, social protection, and sanitation programs. The early childhood development evaluations financed through SIEF's Basic Education and Service Delivery cluster evaluate programs that seek to increase the access to services promoting the cognitive and socio-emotional development of children ages three to six or to improve the quality of these services.

In the 2012-2013 Call for Proposals, SIEF funded nine impact evaluations of early childhood development and nutrition programs. SIEF also funded three impact evaluations focused on preschool-age children within the Basic Education and Service Delivery cluster. Through the 2013-2014 Call for Proposals, SIEF has provided seed funding for five impact evaluations focused on programs targeting the first 1000 days. The Basic Education cluster has provided seed funding to two impact evaluations focused on children of preschool ages.

List of Impact Evaluations Supported by SIEF in Early Childhood Development and Nutrition and Basic Education for Children Ages Three to Six

Impact evaluations funded under 2012-2013 call for proposals

Building Parental Capacity to Help Child Nutrition and Health: A Randomized Controlled Trial

Location: Bangladesh

Principal investigator: Julia Lane and Johannes Bos, American Institutes for Research

Timeline: March 2013 to March 2015

Evaluation: In **Bangladesh**, malnutrition among children in poor rural areas leads to high incidents of stunting and poor health, delaying development. Supporting mothers to help their children has shown some positive results, but less is known about how to engage fathers. Researchers will evaluate low-cost integrated interventions, which will target pregnant women and parents with children under age three with programs for nutrition and child stimulation.

Closing the Early Learning Gap between Roma and Non-Roma Children in Bulgaria through Pre-School Participation: Inclusive Outreach and (Un)conditional Support Approaches

Location: Bulgaria

Principal investigators: Elise Huillery, Science Po; Joost de Laat, World Bank; Paul Gertler, University of California, Berkley;

Timeline: June 2013 to June 2015

Evaluation: In **Bulgaria**, the early learning gap between Roma and non-Roma children is a challenge for parents and policymakers. While more than 75 percent of all children aged three to six nationally are enrolled in school, the majority of Roma children are not. To address this challenge, the Trust for Social Achievement, a Bulgarian NGO supported by the America for Bulgaria Foundation, will implement a program in more than 230 poor communities that seeks to address preschool participation in a variety of ways: encouraging active outreach to parents by local NGOs and authorities, offering free preschool for selected beneficiaries, and providing a conditional financial grant for some selected communities. Researchers will measure the effectiveness of the components - jointly and independently - in order to help policymakers understand how they can boost the number of Roma children attending preschool and improve children's cognitive and socio-emotional development.

The Medium Term Effects of a Home-based Early Childhood Development Intervention in Colombia

Location: Colombia

Principal investigator: Orazio Attanasio, University College London, Institute for Fiscal Studies

Timeline: June 2013 to December 2014

Evaluation: In **Colombia**, researchers will evaluate the medium term effects of a home-based early childhood development intervention. The program seeks to improve nutrition and development in the first two years of life through home visits to encourage children's psycho-social development and use of micronutrient supplements. The findings will be used to help policymakers and others understand the extent to which nutrition and parental involvement at an early age carry lasting effects into the medium term and how such programs can be scaled up effectively.

Piloting the First Integrated Nutrition/Workfare Social Safety Net in Djibouti

Location: Djibouti

Principal investigators: Stefanie Brodmann, World Bank; Florencia Devoto, Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab; Emanuela Galasso, World Bank

Timeline: December 2011 to June 2015

Evaluation: In **Djibouti**, malnutrition, unemployment, and extreme poverty are key human development challenges. To address malnutrition among children younger than 24 months old, the Government of Djibouti piloted a safety net intervention that combines temporary employment (one beneficiary per household) with a component to promote better nutrition through informational classes. Researchers will examine the effectiveness of linking child nutrition and workfare as a means of reducing malnutrition in young children.

Making Integration the Operative Concept in the Indian Integrated Child Development Strategy

Location: India

Principal investigators: Harold Alderman, World Bank; Jed Friedman, World Bank

Timeline: November 2013 to July 2017

Evaluation: In **India**, researchers will measure the cost and impact of nutrition services and child stimulation in low-income settings by evaluating a package of services currently being offered to the youngest children in a nationwide child development program.

Early Childhood Nutrition, Availability of Health Service Providers and Life Outcomes as Young Adults: Evidence from Indonesia

Location: Indonesia

Principal investigator: John Strauss, University of Southern California

Timeline: November 2012 to June 2016

Evaluation: In 1989, **Indonesia** began a program to expand access to midwives in villages. By the time the program reached scale in 1998, 54,000 nurses had been trained in midwifery and placed in communities. Researchers will evaluate the effects of the midwife program on the educational decisions and outcomes, cognitive abilities, employment, and life satisfaction of the children (who are now young adults) of mothers who had access to midwives.

Addressing Chronic Malnutrition in Madagascar

Location: Madagascar

Principal investigators: Lia Fernald, University of California, Berkeley; Emanuela Galasso, World Bank; Christine Stewart, University of California, Davis; Ann Weber, University of California, Berkeley

Timeline: July 2012 to December 2015

Evaluation: **Madagascar** has one of the highest rates of childhood stunting in the world. Over half of children are chronically malnourished, and more than one-fourth are severely malnourished. Researchers will evaluate the impact and cost-effectiveness of combining different nutrition and child development interventions to help the government of Madagascar optimize the impact of its community-based nutrition program on nutritional and child development outcomes.

Effects of Quality Improvement Strategies on Early Childhood Development in Community-Based Childcare Centers in Malawi: A Randomized Trial

Location: Malawi

Principal investigators: Lia Fernald, University of California, Berkeley; Berk Ozler, World Bank

Timeline: October 2011 to December 2015

Evaluation: Children's social and cognitive readiness for school is crucial for later success. In **Malawi**, the government seeks to improve child development outcomes through better child care centers. Researchers will study the effects of teacher incentives and training, parental education, and learning materials for children on their physical, emotional and cognitive development, and their readiness for primary school.

Randomized Impact Evaluation of Integrated ECD (Early Childhood Development) and Intensive Early Nutrition Activities among Vulnerable Communities in Mozambique

Location: Mozambique

Principal investigators: Marie-Helene Cloutier, World Bank; Sophie Naudeau, World Bank

Timeline: June 2012 to December 2016

Evaluation: In **Mozambique**, researchers will measure the effectiveness of two related programs that provide nutrition, early child stimulation, and parenting information sessions to children, pregnant women, and parents of young children. The project builds on a successful small-scale pilot intervention and will help experts in this field determine the scalability, cost-effectiveness, and sustainability of such projects, as well as the usefulness of integrating early childhood development and nutrition programs rather than pursuing them separately.

Evaluating the Impact of Information and “Framed” Unconditional Cash Transfer on Nutritional Outcomes

Location: Nepal

Principal investigators: Gayatri Acharya, World Bank; Prashant Bharadwaj, University of California, San Diego

Timeline: October 2012 to October 2015

Evaluation: Children under the age of five in **Nepal** suffer from one of the highest rates of malnutrition and stunting in the world. Moreover, pregnant women tend to have sub-optimal weight gain during pregnancy. The Government of Nepal seeks to rectify these problems by removing two barriers to good nutrition: lack of knowledge about nutrition and lack of income needed to make better nutritional choices. Researchers will evaluate the effectiveness of providing information alone, or information and cash, on improved nutrition for pregnant women and young children.

Cash Transfers, Parenting Training and Holistic Early Childhood Development in Niger

Location: Niger

Principal investigator: Patrick Premand, World Bank

Timeline: January 2012 to June 2015

Evaluation: In **Niger**, a large share of the population suffers from chronic food insecurity and 45 percent of children under age five are stunted. The Office of the Prime Minister of the Government of Niger is implementing a large-scale safety nets project. As part of the project, poor rural women receive a regular cash transfer, while also participating in accompanying measures that aim to improve a range of parenting practices. A team of researchers is working with project implementers to evaluate the effectiveness of the cash transfers and the value-added of the parenting training on nutrition, health and cognitive development of children under the age of five.

Impact evaluations under consideration for funding: 2013-2014 call for proposals

Impact evaluation of the ECD and nutrition component of Burkina Faso’s safety net project

Location: Burkina Faso

Principal Investigators: Damien de Walque, World Bank

Impact and cost effectiveness of an integrated parenting, nutrition and malaria prevention package to improve nutrition and early child development in infants and pre-school children (0-6 years): A randomized controlled trial in southern Mali

Location: Mali

Principal Investigators: Sian Clarke, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

An impact and process evaluation of the use of women's self-help groups to catalyze and strengthen convergence of health, nutrition, sanitation and food security programs in rural Bihar, India

Location: India

Principal Investigators: Purnima Menon and Neha Kumar, International Food Policy Research Institute

Early childhood development for the poor: Evaluating the impacts

Location: India

Principal Investigators: Costas Meghir, Yale University

SPRING: linking implementation strength, outcomes and lessons learned to inform scale up

Location: India and Pakistan

Principal Investigators: Betty Kirkwood, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

Encouraging multi-lingual early reading as the groundwork for education (EMERGE): A multilingual storybook evaluation in Kenya

Location: Kenya

Principal Investigators: Owen Ozier, World Bank

Comparing approaches to preprimary school provision in Sierra Leone

Location: Sierra Leone

Principal Investigators: Leigh Linden, University of Texas

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