



UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

and

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present a seminar on

When Communities Participate in Primary Health Care: A Randomized Controlled Trial of a Community Health Worker Program in the Philippines

by

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4:00-5:00p.m. – Rm 303

Abstract

In many developing countries public health systems are confronted with a significant shortage in professional health workers, which is recognized as a major constraint to economic development and poverty reduction. In 2013, more than 7 million health workers were missing worldwide, based on WHO estimations. Community Health Workers (CHWs) have been suggested as a cost-effective, inclusive solution to address the enduring shortage. CHWs are members of the underserved communities who work as support health personnel in their neighborhoods after receiving a short training. With their close relationship to the communities they serve as a bridge between their peers and the public sector allowing them to not only widen the supply of health services, but also to actively influence demand-side restrictions in health care utilization, such as informational or behavioral constraints. In recent years, microfinance institutions (MFIs) have increasingly implemented small-scale health programs with CHW components. So far, little is known about the impacts and implementation barriers of these initiatives. In this paper we evaluate an MFI-led CHW program in the Philippines using a cluster-randomized controlled trial design. We find evidence for positive effects of the intervention on the dissemination of information and health monitoring. Acceptance of the program in the communities is a key driver of program success. Apart from the CHW's motivation, her social networks in the neighborhoods and the existing alternative health infrastructure are the strongest determinants of program awareness and take-up by the community. Interestingly, we find evidence for potential complementarities between the CHW program and public primary health care facilities in the impoverished neighborhoods. Based on our results we discuss potential extensions and derive policy recommendations for community-based health programs in similar contexts.

About the speaker

Roman Hoffmann is research assistant at the Wittgenstein Centre for Demography and Global Human Capital (IIASA, VID/ÖAW, WU) in Vienna, Austria. Since 2012, he is a PhD candidate in economics at the University of Vienna, where he was employed at the Department of Economic Sociology before moving to the Wittgenstein Centre. He holds a degree in sociology and economics from the University of Munich. From March-May 2015 he was visiting researcher at the UP School of Economics in Manila, the Philippines. In his research Roman focuses on issues related to poverty, health, and the environment in low and middle-income countries. In particular, he is interested in factors influencing the health and living condition of poor households and in the potential impact of policies and interventions in achieving sustainable improvements. In his dissertation, Roman studies the impact and utilization of an integrated community health program in the Philippines using a randomized controlled trial design. Besides his research on health and poverty, he is involved in projects on climate change and migration, environmental perceptions and behavior, the integration of refugees in host country labor markets, and the emergence of trust and reputation in networks. Among others, Roman has conducted empirical studies in cooperation with UNIDO, the City of Munich, as well as several non-governmental organizations. Besides his academic work, Roman is serving as national coordinator for the Regional Academy on the United Nations in Austria.



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