

Report on Ph.D. Dissertation Defence

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Main referee	YAMAUCHI, Chikako
Referees	MATSUMOTO, Tomoya
	MUNRO, Alistair
	SONOBE, Tetsushi (Chairperson of the Ph.D. Committee)
	DOW, William H. (University of California, Berkeley)
Dissertation Title	Access to health facilities and maternal health: A tale of two countries in East Africa
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Date of committee meeting	July 13, 2015
Degree Title	Ph.D. in Development Economics

Result: Pass (subject to minor changes)

1. Thesis overview and summary of the presentation.

The thesis investigates the impact of the access to health facilities on maternal care usage as well as maternal and child health status in Uganda and Ethiopia. Using the subcounty and mother fixed effects model as well as dynamic model, it shows that, in Uganda, an additional higher-level health facility increased delivery at facility assisted by health practitioners and also increased the likelihood that new-born babies are weighted immediately after birth. Also, an additional lower-level facility is found to increase regular antenatal care use and decrease the probability for mothers to experience complications. These results indicate the importance of access to health facilities in promoting safe delivery and motherhood.

On the other hand, for Ethiopia, it is found that the number of deliveries carried out at facilities did not significantly increase after delivery care service became available,

though the utilization of antenatal care increased after the availability of antenatal care service became available. No impact was detected for postnatal care as well.

One of the explanations for these differences between the two countries might be the differential demand for delivery care. The Demographic Health Surveys for the two countries indicate that Ethiopian mothers who do not deliver at formal facilities consider facility delivery as unnecessary and uncustomary, while those mothers in Uganda cite distance and poor quality as the major reasons for not using facilities.

Overall, the empirical results from the two countries suggest that public policy ought to be tailored to the contexts of each country, which include the major barriers to the usage of maternal care and knowledge of and demand for such care.

2. Notes from the Examining meeting (including changes required to the thesis by the referees).

The referees agreed the thesis studies a relevant topic and provides interesting findings. However, they also pointed out some methodological issues that need to be discussed and/or revised. First, possible biases stemming from measurement errors in the indicators for access to care and complications during delivery need to be discussed. Second, a possible bias arising from recall bias needs to be discussed for the Ethiopian case. Third, other explanations for the differences between the results for the two countries should be explored. Fourth, other time-variant factors such as road conditions should be controlled.

The referees also provided suggestions to investigate heterogeneity in the impact of health infrastructure, its lagged impact, the impact on fertility and child mortality. Also, it is recommended to improve literature review particularly for the studies for Ethiopia. Furthermore, it is suggested to strengthen the concluding chapter, create a separate chapter on literature review, add the discussion on theoretical predictions, and correct grammatical errors, table/figure numbers and table/figure labels.

3. Confirmation by the Main Referee that changes have been done to the satisfaction of the referees.

Necessary changes have been made to the satisfaction of the referees.

4. Final recommendation.

It would be good to revise the dissertation chapters to submit them to international journals.