Symposium Title: Strategic Impact Evaluation Fund: Early Childhood Nutrition, Health, and Development Impact Evaluations

Symposium Justification
This symposium panel will provide an overview of the fourteen Early Childhood Development and Nutrition (ECDN) impact evaluations that are being financed through the Strategic Impact Evaluation Fund (SIEF), and discuss three evaluations in-depth, covering Bangladesh, Djibouti, and Nicaragua. SIEF is a multi-donor trust fund at the World Bank created in 2012 with the support of the British government’s Department for International Development (DFID). The fund currently focuses on four human development areas that are crucial to improving the lives of the world’s poorest and most vulnerable, including ECDN. SIEF partners with leading impact evaluation researchers and those who develop and implement innovative programs — both within governments and within non-governmental and other organizations. In the process, the program supports active engagement with key stakeholders to make evidence accessible and policy relevant.

The objective of SIEF’s ECDN cluster is to expand the evidence base on the impact of programs affecting the nutritional status and cognitive, physical, and socioemotional development of children between the ages of 0 to 2 years old in low income countries. The intervention types in the SIEF portfolio broadly align with those that are common in the sector, and are focused around three main sub-themes:

- **Nutrition**: micronutrient and/or macronutrient supplementation, nutrition education, breast feeding promotion, or responsive feeding
- **Early stimulation**: center-based day care, parent groups, individual parent counselling, or home visits
- **Health**: prenatal and postnatal care, malaria treatment, deworming

In the past 2 years SIEF organized two calls for proposals that have generated over 80 proposals in the ECDN cluster and resulted in a current portfolio of 14 impact evaluations across 12 countries: Bangladesh, Djibouti, Madagascar, Mozambique, India (2), Pakistan, Colombia, Indonesia, Niger, Nepal, Mali, and Burkina Faso. In addition, SIEF’s predecessor, the Spanish Impact Evaluation Fund, financed 5 evaluations in Cambodia, Chile, Mozambique, Nicaragua, and Jamaica. Ten of the programs currently being evaluated are government implemented. The proposals cover all areas and sub-themes of the ECD sector, with a heavy focus on nutrition. All 14 studies in the current portfolio contain at least one nutrition component, and investigate a variety of interventions and delivery mechanisms:

- Direct micronutrient supplementation (4 studies)
- Information and behaviour change education (12 studies)
- Breastfeeding promotion and responsive feeding (5 studies)

SIEF’s portfolio also includes several studies of programs that may have indirect effects on early childhood development, such as conditional cash transfers, household food security, and water, sanitation, and hygiene programs. In addition to spanning a variety of delivery platforms, the studies in SIEF’s portfolio also investigate the effectiveness of both home- and community-based delivery: of the 14 evaluations currently in the ECDN portfolio, four evaluate community-based...
interventions, four examine home-based programs, and six studies have treatment arms that use both community groups and home visits.

The studies also collect detailed data on intermediate outcomes, providing insight into the causal pathways, and program costs. The information collected during these evaluations will help answer questions about how changes in parenting behavior, maternal knowledge, intra-household allocations, and time use impact child development outcomes.