

First comments on EE468 Policy Research Proposal

1. Strengthening social protection for children in Myanmar (Paing)

Good motivation and idea. Need to be more specific on (i) eligibility (how will the program identify eligible households as you don't observe their income at the start of the program, see PROGRESA program in health lecture for more), (ii) on the targeted area (is this nationwide or only target to some remote, poor areas?). You mention this intervention is a combination of social assistance, insurance and conditional cash transfer, how might this work? When will people get social assistance/insurance? How much is cash transfer, how regular it is and what might be the condition people need to meet to get this transfer? Overall, be more specific on your intervention. On the evaluation research, you might design RCE to evaluate the program.

2. Impacts of 30-baht health care scheme in Thailand (Chulalak)

You clearly have option to evaluate existing intervention and so propose to use existing available data to do so. And your proposed intervention is clearly one of the most successful interventions in our country, and has been used as role model for other countries, so good choice. But keep in mind though that grading guideline for this task also include innovative as one of the criteria. If you use existing intervention (and not the new one you develop yourself), you will not score well in this part. You should also keep in mind that this assignment is not a literature review of existing work. The objective is to propose a new study that should not exist somewhere just yet for the chosen intervention in the specific setting (in your case, this is 30-baht health insurance scheme in Thailand). Since I have seen many work done on this already, you might need to make sure in your study what yours will deviate from other existing ones, ok? This can be done by adding new research questions to the existing studies (I am sure you have seen them before).

3. Intervention to alleviate impacts of rice price variability on Thai farmers (Sawitree)

Good choice and very relevant intervention we need right now for Thailand. However, you first need to motivate this proposal better by first talking about how farmer welfare can be affected price variability and existing policies that had been implemented in Thailand and even the world (rice mortgage policy of many governments, income guarantee schemes, etc). You can then propose ONE intervention or a combination of interventions that you think will have good promise (again based on lesson learned from the past programs). The key are (i) be specific if you are considering program for rice price variability alone or shocks/risks in general (as the latter will include impacts of rainfall and disasters on rice production as well), (ii) what interventions (it is unclear now improvement in water system will help reducing impacts of price volatility), (iii) where will you implement this intervention (all over the country or one rice production system, e.g., irrigated Central plain or rain fed Northeast, etc.), (iv) who will be targeted and what can be used as eligibility criteria, (v) who will

finance the program, purely government provided or is this some kind of public-private partnership where farmers can also pay some insurance premium at the price that is already subsidized by government, etc. On the evaluation research, you might design RCE to evaluate the program or try to find existing secondary data set for this.

4. Entrepreneur/off farm employment training program (Chotika)

Good job in bring poverty trap theory to motivate the intervention. However, it is very unclear what kind of training program you plan to implement. A good intervention needs to be very specific, you can't implement all blanket of policies all in one time, as different policies will have different targeted beneficiaries and areas, etc. So please first choose whether you would like the training to be focused on entrepreneurship or off farm employment. Both will be good and very relevant policies, but please choose one for this assignment. You will then need to be more specific on (i) how to targeted participants, how to choose areas, basically what kind of available data (or data to be collected) you will use to identify eligible households and areas, (ii) what will training be about, is this on the job training, what's the role of community volunteer group in selecting trainer, why choose this specific training, are they fit to the labor market, (iii) a sense of how the trained households can get access to economic opportunity, is training enough or government also needs to provide start up grant to start business (in case you choose entrepreneur, etc.) or to migrate for work (in case you choose off farm employment, etc). All in all, the proposed intervention needs to be readily implemented, not abstract! On the evaluation research, you might design RCE to evaluate the program.

5. Nutrition program for children in Nepal (Pun)

You can surely use data from Save the Children, UNICEF, and other NGOs to motivate this work and the evidence should be specific for Nepal. The key is to be very specific on what the intervention is about, where it will be implemented, by who, who will be targeted beneficiaries and how you might go about identifying those targeted. You mention the intervention could be school lunch program targeted at school level, how do you select eligible schools? Are there enough data for you to identify schools that meet your eligibility criteria? Might there be a need to collect additional data for targeting purpose before implementing this intervention? Again the proposed intervention needs to be readily implemented by specifying exactly what will the intervention provide to what age of kids (e.g., iron supplementary program in Indonesia, iodine supplementary in Kenya, please refer to these works in reference reading). You use the wording "age-appropriate nutrition requirement and iron supplementary" please explain this specifically. It is very possible to propose a combination of intervention and perhaps this is it. All in all, please be very specific. On the evaluation research, you might design RCE to evaluate the program.

6. An urban microcredit experience: assessing the impact of the access to the credit market on intrahousehold discriminations in Khlong Toei slum (Piotr)

This is a really promising research with good motivation and evidence. Well done. The key forward is to be very specific on (i) what are the loan terms (group vs. individual, interest rate relative to existing loan products, repayment periods, collateral, etc.), (ii) who should we target, what livelihoods (you mention this is the loan for starting small business, how do we make sure that the loan is linked with business start up? Should the loan be offered with some business training?), (iii) who will offer the loan product (NGO? Bank?) and (iv) how might this loan product differ from other existing products these slum people get access to? Please note that there are many credit sources that urban Thai poor might get access to already, e.g., local moneylenders, small bank, e.g., ION that offer microloan to poorer people. Please do a bit of research on this a priori and make sure you build your research from these existing products and address how your proposed intervention can be deviated from existing ones (of course in a good way). See the research work by Banerjee et al. in urban slum in India (they introduced MFI (Spendana) loan to urban slum households and use RCE to evaluate the impact). Adding analysis on intrahousehold effects once loan is extended to women will be very interesting part of your proposed work. Good job.

7. Teacher and household education intervention to improve quality of learning and accessing higher education among rural Thai households (Juliette)

Good review on education system in Thailand. Yes, quality is still the key problem of students' learning and the incentives of teachers as well as learning environment at home are among the very key impediments in the rural areas. The key clarification is whether you will focus on achieving good learning outcomes or improved access to higher education (what level?) or both. While accessing higher education could be relevant for development purpose, increasing access (especially for university level) would rather depend on other and a lot more factors beyond what could be addressed by your proposed intervention, for example, accessing to critical educational finance (which is already proven to be largely unequal and disproportionately distributed to the poor), availability of job opportunity for the university graduate in comparison to other technical education, etc. In any case, think carefully on the key policy objective before designing specific intervention, OK? There are nothing wrong with the choice of policy objective but intervention will be different for different objectives and you don't need to design a policy to address many objectives at the same time. It could be very good if you can do but that will be too challenging! Another key is for the intervention to be as specific as possible. You mention compensatory program, interventions to change teachers' incentive and behavior and change family characteristics' influence on student learning. Think and propose specific action for those perhaps in relation to existing educational interventions already implemented in the country (e.g., tablet, best teacher award, best school rewarding system, etc.). On the design of RCE, you might consider having 4 randomized groups: no intervention, teacher intervention along, household behavior intervention alone and both intervention. Another challenge you will face is how to measure/observe the policy outcomes

empirically, especially when you might not be interested in 'quantity' of the education but 'quality' one. Might standardized test be needed for this?

8. Intervention to reduce uninsured drought risk among poor farmers in Chinat, Thailand (Monpanai)

So far you have motivated this proposed intervention well. Make sure to come up with some statistics (e.g., frequency of droughts, farmers' loss from droughts, etc.) that are specific for your targeted areas. So far you propose two interventions: weather index insurance and commitment saving. In order to be as specific and as focus as possible, I suggest that you focus on one most promising intervention. So choose one...as for each, you really need to be very specific how the product works, how can farmers get access to the product, who will offer the product (government, insurance company, Bank of Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives, etc.) and more importantly the mechanism how the product can be acceptable in the market, affordable by farmers and so can help farmers reduce uninsured drought risk and help them get out of poverty trap (what you motivates your proposed intervention at the first place). If you choose weather index insurance, the product should be crop specific but you can consider several different products designed for different crops to be offered at the same time. Alternatively, you might propose to pilot product specific to one particular main crop and choose areas where such crop is the main livelihoods, e.g., rice, maize. Commitment saving is not crop specific and can be available to everyone. Since these products are already available (and/or piloted) in Thailand, be sure to refer to existing evidence (whether it works or how to make it works) in relation to developing your proposed intervention, ok? You should also use RCE to evaluate the impacts of this intervention. See this Friday's lecture for more information.