

# From fees to free: User fee removal, Maternal Health Care Utilization and Child Health in Zambia

**Yohan Renard**

Université Paris-Dauphine, CNRS, IRD, LEDa, DIAL

## **Abstract**

Despite recent progress, about 295,000 women in the World still die each year from pregnancy-related causes, of which 99% live in developing countries. In 2006, the Zambian government removed user fees in publicly supported health facilities in 54 out of 72 districts, and then extended this policy to rural parts of unaffected districts one year later. I exploit the staggered implementation of the policy and birth histories to assess its impact on maternal health care utilization and child mortality. Using a difference-in-differences estimation strategy, I find a 38 percent increase in the probability to give birth in a medical facility and a 31 percent increase in the probability of being assisted by a health professional during childbirth. However, the results suggest no effect on child mortality risk.

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