Promoting lower secondary school attendance: The impact of the CESSP Scholarship Program in Cambodia

Preliminary results

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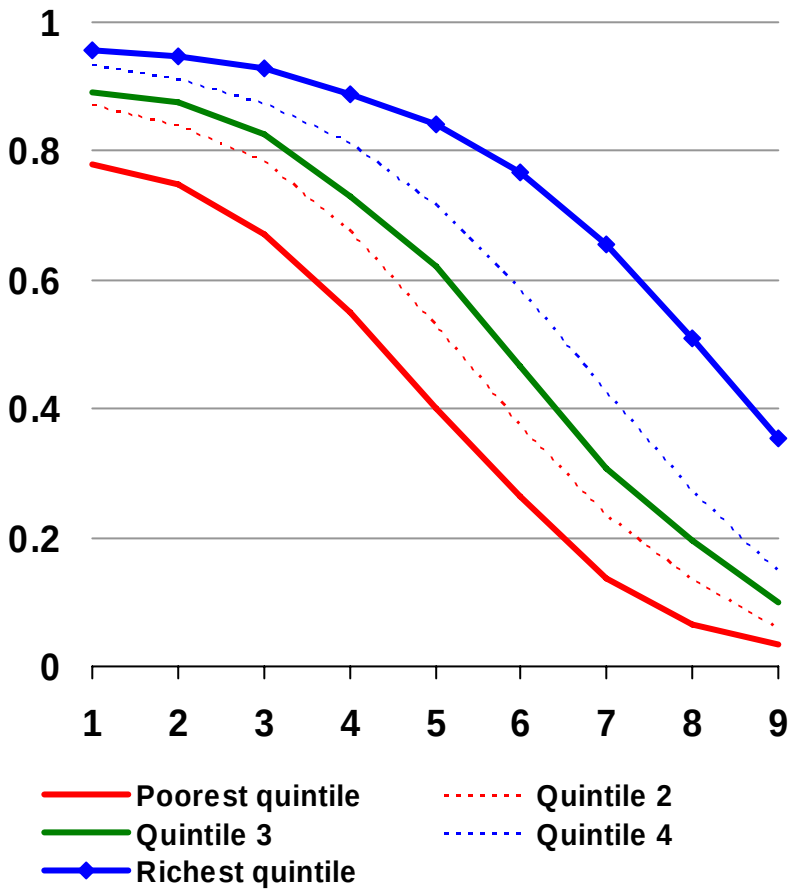
Context

- Grade attainment of youth 15-19



Source: CSES 2004

- Variety of scholarship programs *at the lower secondary level*
  - Government, Donor, NGO
- World Bank supported CESSP scholarship program

Overall structure of CESSP scholarship program

- Selected lower secondary schools (LMCs)
- All Grade 6 students from primary feeder schools fill out application form
- Applications forms are “scored” to generate a dropout risk for each applicant
- At the level of each LMC, applicants with
  - the highest dropout risk offered $60 scholarship;
  - somewhat lower dropout risk offered $45;
  - and others offered no scholarship.

Goals of evaluation of the year 1 implementation of the program

- Establish the overall impact of the program on school attendance and retention
- Establish the additional impact of $60 over and above the impact of $45
- Explore the impact on other dimensions, not just those foreseen by the program
- Assess the targeting performance of the program

Evaluating the impact of CESSP scholarships

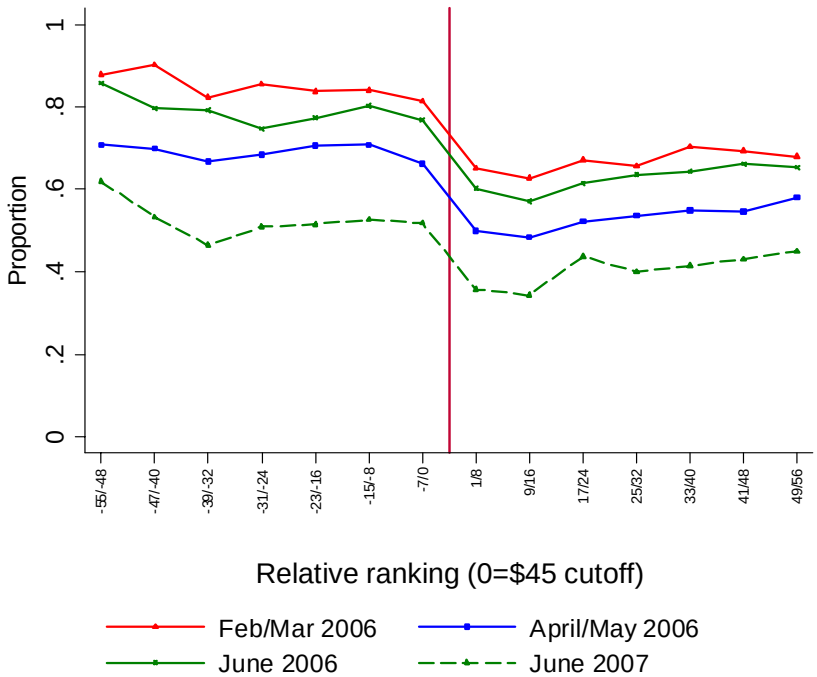
- Data sources:
  - 26,537 Application forms
    - May 2005
  - Prakas list of recipients (henceforth called “recipients” even if drop out and no longer receive payments)
    - November 2005?
  - Four school monitoring visits to program schools (100 schools+9 eligible alternative schools)
    - February/March 2006
    - April/May 2006
    - June 2006
    - June 2007
  - Household survey with extensive household and applicant survey in 5 provinces
    - October/November 2006

Evaluating the impact of CESSP scholarships

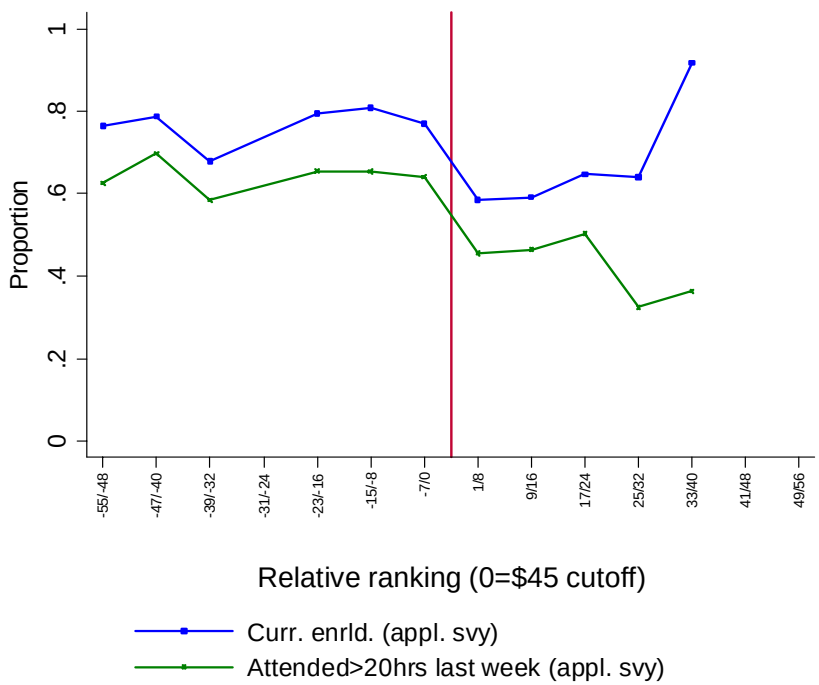
- Method used
  - Regression Discontinuity Design ("RDD")
- Intuition:
  - For each LMC, the applicants "just above" and "just below" the cutoff for the scholarship are virtually identical, except for the fact that one received a scholarship and the other did not.

Basic results:
Attendance by relative ranking within school:
0 = cutoff for $45 scholarship

- School visits



- Household survey



Basic results: Impact of scholarship on attendance

	Overall average	Non-recipient	Recipient	Raw difference	RDD estimate
School visits					
Feb/Mar 2006	72.7	71.3	83.6	12.4	19.5
April/May 2006	57.9	56.5	68.1	11.6	19.1
June 2006	70.7	70.0	77.8	7.8	19.9
June 2007	48.4	48.3	51.3	3.0	16.4
Household visits					
Currently enrolled	69.7	61.5	77.7	16.2	15.7
Attended >20 hours past week	56.1	46.0	64.7	18.7	18.4

→ **Result 1: Large positive impact of program on attendance**

Basic results:
Impact of $60 over and above $45

	RDD estimate: Impact at $45	RDD estimate: Impact at $60	Difference	Attendance increase per dollar: first $45	Attendance increase per dollar: next $15
School visits					
Feb/Mar 2006	18.9	21.7	2.8	0.42	0.19
April/May 2006	17.8	22.0	4.2	0.40	0.28
June 2006	19.1	21.4	2.3	0.42	0.15
June 2007	15.5	17.4	1.9	0.34	0.13
Household visits					
Currently enrolled	16.5	21.2	4.7	0.37	0.31
Attended >20 hours past week	18.9	23.7	4.8	0.42	0.32

→ **Result 2: First $45 is much more cost effective**

Other dimensions of impact: Did scholarships have any impact on learning?

- Data source:
  - Household based test in the middle of Year 2 (October-December 2006)
    - All applicants in household survey
    - Mathematics, Vocabulary

Did scholarships have any impact on learning?

- Results:
  - Raw difference: Recipients score worse than non-recipients
  - IE estimate: Recipients score no worse, but also *no better* than non-recipients despite the boost in attendance

→ *scholarship students are more likely to attend school but don't perform any better on a test*

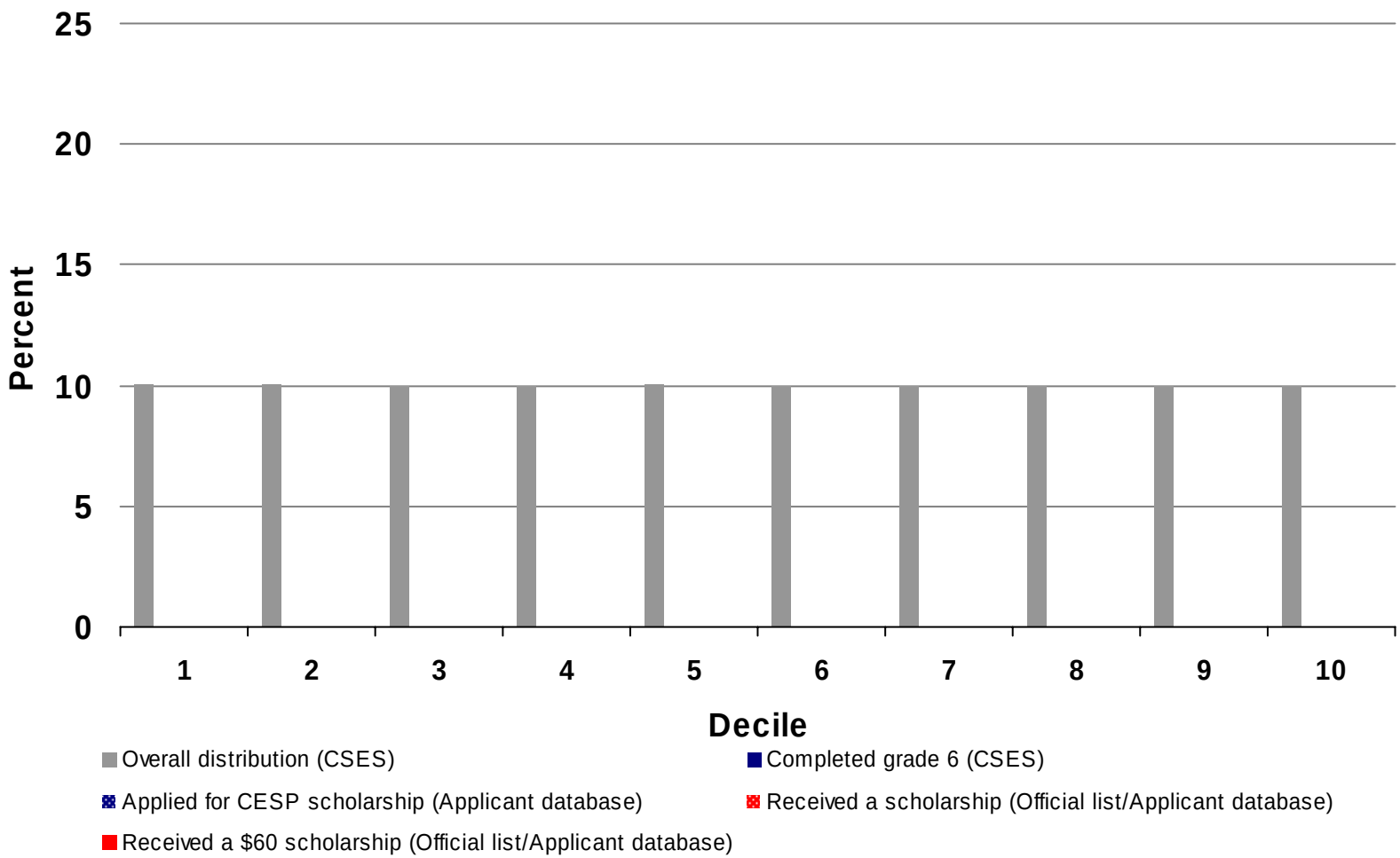
Did scholarships have any impact on learning?

- Note: results from Cambodia are similar to those found in Kenya and Mexico:
  - no effect of program on test scores—either in the short run, or the long run

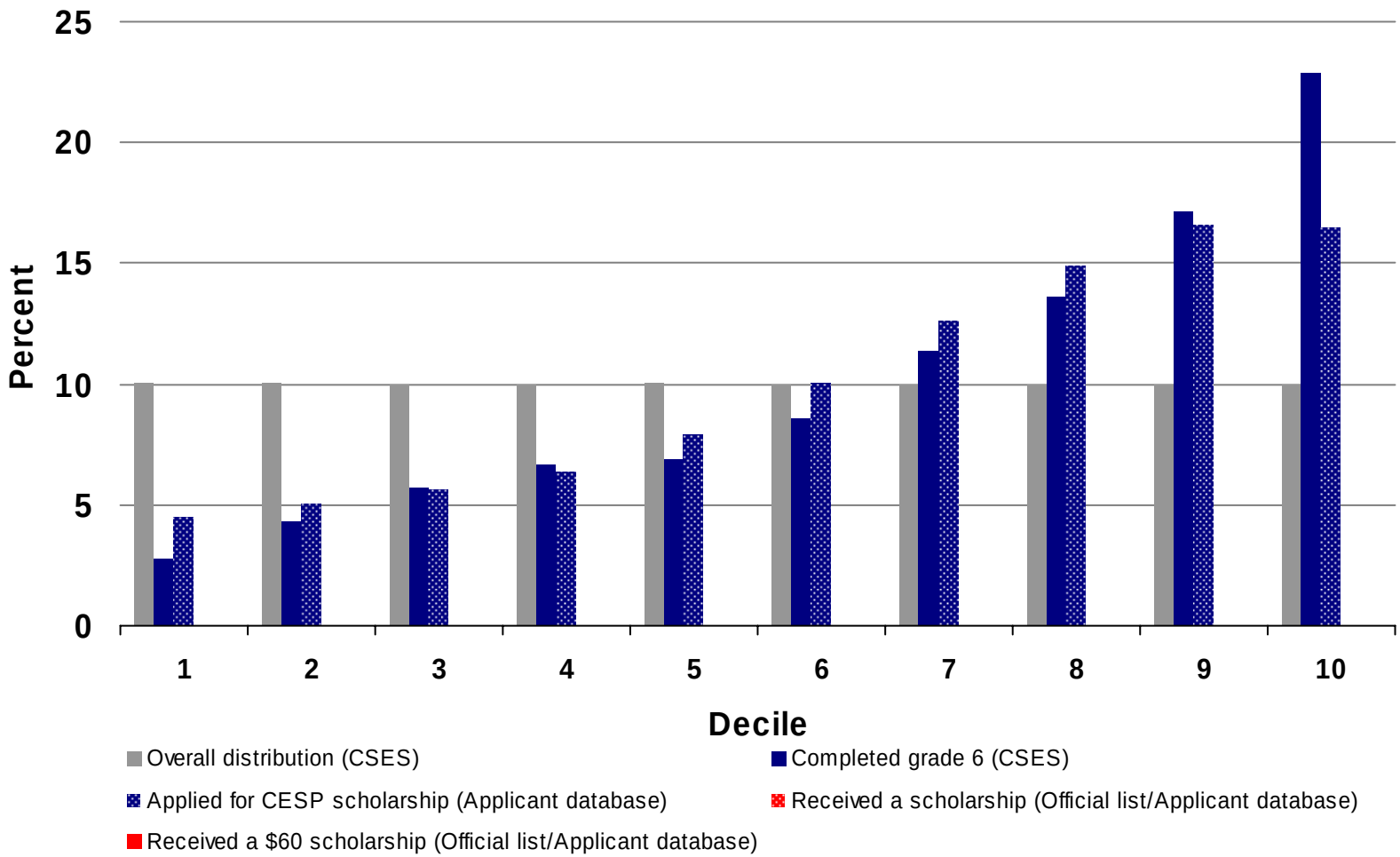
→ Result 3 … questions:

- Is this nothing to worry about (recipients are doing as well as others)?
- Are scholarship programs bringing into school children who are **so disadvantaged** in other ways that the amount of learning that takes place is limited?
- Is the **quality of schooling so low** that children are learning very little—in spite of the additional years of schooling attained?

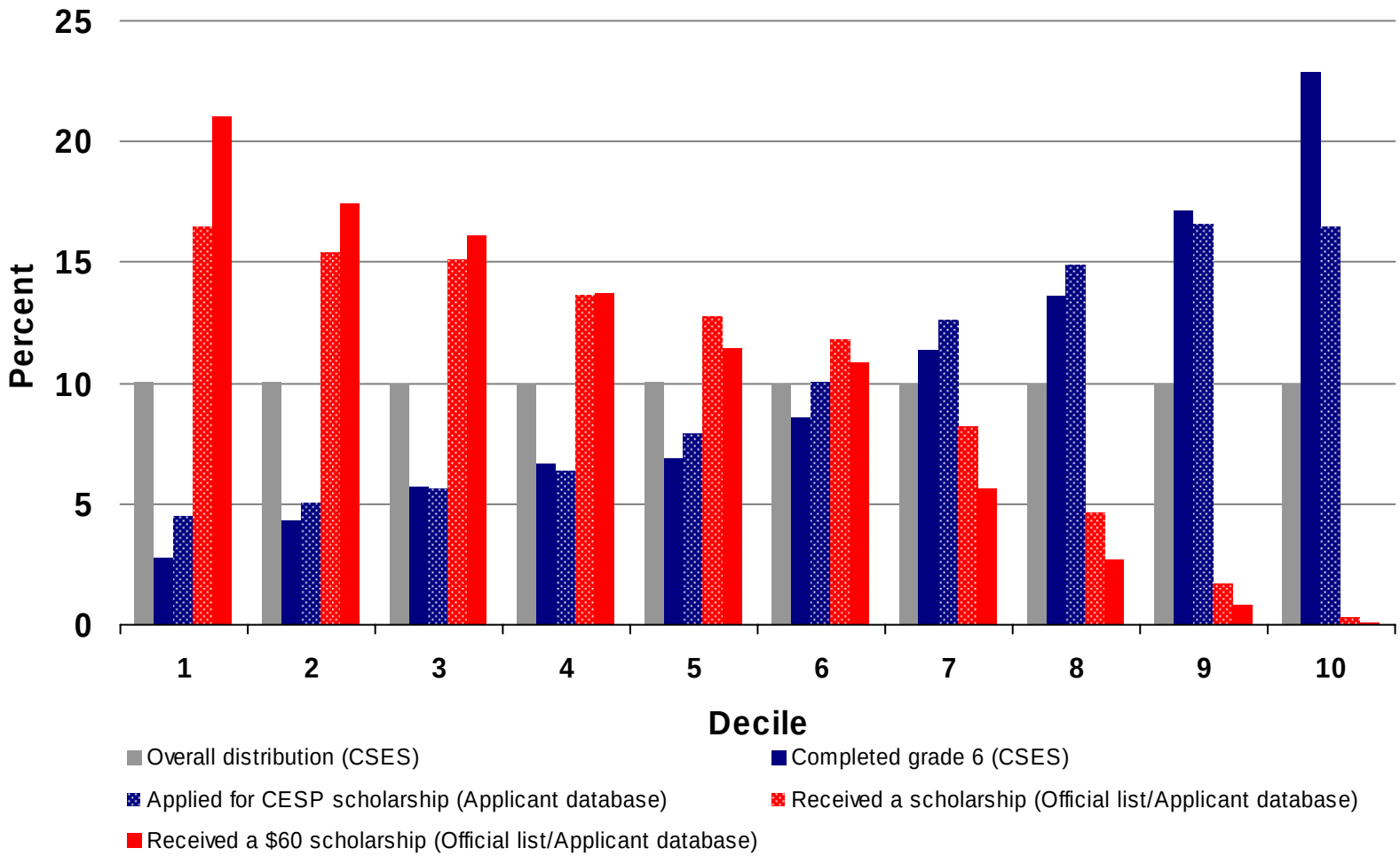
Distribution of various populations



Distribution of various populations



Distribution of various populations



Targeting of scholarship program

- Results:
  - Program is not regressive—and has a decent amount or progressivity
  - But the program has a substantial amount of mis-targeting if assessed as a poverty alleviation program

→Result 4: Targeting lower levels in the education system would potentially better target the poor

Summary of results

- The program had large positive impact of on attendance
- The first $45 is much more cost effective at increasing attendance than the additional $15
- Limited impact on learning—is this due to limited capacity to learn (among the poorest) or low school quality?
- The program manages to target poor applicants—but it does not reach the poorest, and covers a substantial number of non-poor applicants