

# In Cambodia, any preschool found better than none

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We know that children who attend formal preschool programs in industrialized nations benefit in many ways. But what about the impact of similar programs in developing countries? A new longitudinal study carried out in Cambodia has found that some types of preschool are better than others, but any type is better than none at all.

The study was done by researchers at the University of Hong Kong, Universiti Brunei Darussalam, Beijing Normal University, Cornell University, and California Polytechnic State University. It is published in the journal *Child Development*.

"Given current interest in developing [preschool programs](#) globally, evaluation research that considers the costs and benefits of such programs in [developing countries](#) is timely," according to Nirmala Rao, professor in the faculty of education at the University of Hong Kong, who led the study. The research is one of the first to compare types of preschools in a low-income Asian country.

Researchers measured outcomes associated with three major preschool programs in [Cambodia](#)—state preschools, community preschools, and home-based programs. In so doing, they looked at a randomized sample of 880 5-year-olds from six mainly rural provinces of the country; the [children](#) attended one of the three programs or no program, and the study assessed their developmental gains at the start and end of a school year.

The study found that the effects of the preschool experience on children's development at age 6 depended on the type of preschool they attended. But children who went to any of the three types of programs did significantly better than children who didn't go to any preschool. Children attending state preschools improved more than those attending the other two types of programs. This may be because state preschools tend to have more qualified teachers than community preschools and more resources (including learning materials) than both community preschools and home-based programs.

Provided by Society for Research in Child Development

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