

DISCUSSION PAPER

THE EFFECT OF CASH-BASED INTERVENTIONS ON GENDER OUTCOMES IN DEVELOPMENT AND HUMANITARIAN SETTINGS



No. 31, November 2019

CLAIRE A. SIMON

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SUMMARY

Cash transfers are often considered a gender-sensitive development tool because women have traditionally been the target for large social cash transfer programs. However, targeting women does not automatically yield favorable outcomes for women and girls. While there is emerging evidence from the development sector to suggest that cash transfers can positively impact women and girls across an array of protection and empowerment dimensions, the results are often mixed and poorly understood. The evidence base on gender and cash in humanitarian settings, where the use of cash is on the rise, is even more limited. Without

proper gender considerations, there is a concern that cash transfers may fail to reach those left furthest behind, potentially limiting rather than generating opportunity for greater gender-transformative change.

This paper begins by presenting an overview of the latest research on cash transfers, gender protection and empowerment outcomes. It continues by discussing some of the program design features to consider when seeking to improve gender outcomes. Finally, the paper concludes with a set of research questions that can help shape future research and practice in this area.

RÉSUMÉ

Les transferts en espèces sont souvent considérés comme un outil de développement sensible au genre car les femmes ont traditionnellement été les cibles de vastes programmes sociaux de transferts en espèces. Toutefois, le ciblage des femmes dans ce domaine ne donne pas automatiquement des résultats positifs pour les femmes et les filles. Si le secteur du développement montre de plus en plus clairement que les transferts en espèces peuvent impacter positivement les femmes et les filles en termes de protection et d'autonomisation, les résultats sont souvent mitigés et mal compris. Les résultats probants en termes de genre et d'argent en espèce dans les situations humanitaires, où l'utilisation de l'argent en espèce augmente, sont encore plus limités. Si l'on ne prête pas suffisamment d'intérêt à la

question de l'égalité des sexes, il est à craindre que les transferts en espèces n'atteignent pas les personnes qui accusent le plus grand retard, ce qui pourrait limiter les évolutions positives en termes d'égalité des sexes au lieu de créer de nouvelles possibilités.

Ce document commence par présenter un aperçu des dernières recherches sur les transferts en espèces, les résultats en matière de protection et d'autonomisation des femmes. Il débat ensuite de certains éléments de conception du programme afin d'envisager quand chercher à améliorer les résultats en matière d'égalité des sexes. Ce document conclut finalement par un ensemble de questions qui pourraient aider à façonner les pratiques et recherches futures dans ce domaine.

RESUMEN

Las transferencias monetarias, en general, están consideradas una herramienta de desarrollo sensible al género, pues las mujeres han sido tradicionalmente las destinatarias de los grandes programas de transferencias monetarias de carácter social. Sin embargo, orientar las transferencias a las mujeres no arroja automáticamente resultados favorables para las mujeres y las niñas. Si bien crece el número de evidencias provenientes del sector del desarrollo que sugieren que las transferencias monetarias pueden tener un efecto positivo para las mujeres y las niñas en numerosas dimensiones de la protección y el empoderamiento, los resultados a menudo son variados y no se comprenden adecuadamente. La base empírica sobre las dimensiones de género y las transferencias monetarias en escenarios humanitarios, donde este tipo de dispositivo se usa cada vez con mayor frecuencia, es aún más limitada.

Si no se consideran apropiadamente las dimensiones de género, las transferencias monetarias podrían no llegar a las personas que han quedado más atrás, lo que potencialmente limitaría —en lugar de generar— las oportunidades para un cambio más transformador desde el punto de vista de la igualdad de género.

En este artículo se comienza por presentar las generalidades de la investigación más reciente sobre transferencias monetarias, la protección de género y los resultados en materia de empoderamiento. A continuación se discuten algunas de las características del diseño de los programas que es necesario considerar al momento de mejorar los resultados de género. Por último, el artículo concluye con un conjunto de interrogantes de investigación que pueden ayudar a darle forma a investigaciones y prácticas futuras en esta área.

OVERVIEW

This paper examines the evidence regarding the effects of cash-based interventions (CBIs) on protection and empowerment outcomes. While the review includes evidence from both the development and humanitarian sectors, its primary purpose is to serve as a starting point to document the existing research at the intersection of CBIs, gender and humanitarian response. Cash transfers are often considered a gender-sensitive development tool because women are frequently the target for large conditional cash transfer programmes. However, targeting women does not automatically yield favourable outcomes for them or for girls. The effect of CBIs on gender outcomes is, in fact, under-researched and not adequately understood. While there is some rigorous evidence on gender outcomes emerging from within the development sector through the study of large social cash transfer programmes, evidence from the humanitarian sector is more limited and mixed.

This review presents findings from a literature search that included a combination of peer-reviewed articles, programme evaluations and monitoring reports. The key findings from both the development and humanitarian sectors are summarized and presented below, categorized into three broad outcome areas: poverty, health and education; protection; and women's empowerment.

Poverty, Health and Education

- In the development context, there is consistent and extensive evidence that cash transfers can reduce the depth and severity of poverty and improve access to and use of health facilities. Few studies show sex- and age-disaggregated data for these outcome areas, and those that do have found no statistically significant differences between genders.

- In the humanitarian context, there are few sex- and age-disaggregated data sets available to assess results in the outcome areas of poverty, health and education.

Protection

Intimate partner violence

- In the development context, cash transfers are largely associated with reductions in reported physical violence against women by a male partner. How cash transfers affect emotional violence, however, remains less understood.
- In the humanitarian context, there is little substantive research on the relationship between cash transfers in emergency settings and gender-based violence. The evidence that does exist is mixed and mostly anecdotal. None of the studies reviewed approach issues of gender-based violence in a

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