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Evaluating the Impact of Cash Transfer Programmes in Sub-Saharan Africa[1]

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First- ***and Second-generation****
Cash Transfer Programme Impact Evaluations in Sub-Saharan Africa

- Malawi SCT
  - Mchinji pilot, 2008–2009
  - ***Expansion, 2012–2013****
- Kenya
  - CT OVC, Pilot 2007, 2009, ***2011****
  - ***CT OVC, Expansion, 2012–2013****
  - ***HSNP, Pilot 2010–2011****
- Mozambique PSA
  - Expansion, 2008–2009
- Zambia
  - Monze pilot, 2007–2010
  - ***Expansion and child grant, 2010–2013****
- South Africa CSG
  - ***Retrospective, 2010****
- Burkina Faso
  - ***Experiment, 2008, 2009, 2010****
- Sierra Leone
  - ***Pilot, 2011–2012****
- Ethiopia
  - PNSP, 2006–2010
  - ***Tigray SPP, 2012–2014****
- Ghana LEAP
  - ***Pilot, 2010–2012****
- Lesotho, CSP
  - ***Pilot, 2011–2012****
- Uganda, SAGE
  - ***Begins in 2012****
- Zimbabwe, SCT
  - ***Begins in 2012****
- Tanzania, TASAF
  - ***Pilot, 2010–2011****
- Niger
  - ***Begins in 2012****

The conditional cash transfer (CCT) revolution in Latin America and the Caribbean, beginning in the mid-1990s and continuing to this day, heralded a new prominence and acceptance of applying rigorous impact evaluations to social programmes. Beginning with the landmark impact evaluation of the Mexican PROGRESA programme in 1998, almost all programmes in this new generation of social programmes were accompanied by experimental, or non-experimental but rigorous, impact evaluations. These impact evaluations radically advanced the state of knowledge on CCTs, leading to improved implementation in their respective countries, but also pushing forward in terms of methodology, technique, design, sampling and analysis of impact evaluation data.

The Latin American experience in impact evaluation, however, may soon be rivalled. Sub-Saharan Africa has begun its own cash transfer (CT) revolution. And, more importantly for the discussion here, African countries have followed a similar pattern of rigorous impact evaluation. As can be seen in the table, rigorous impact evaluations, experimental and non-experimental, have been carried out or commissioned on government-run CT programmes in no fewer than 14 countries in the last few years.

Impact evaluation of cash transfer programmes in sub-Saharan Africa
The impact evaluation of CT programmes in sub-Saharan Africa is marked by a wide variety of designs, most of which respond to the particular challenges of conducting impact evaluations on existing or planned government-led programmes. While experimental design remains the goal of most evaluation frameworks in the region, non-experimental methods are often required, given the reality of programme implementation, particularly community-based targeting, which hinders perfect mimicking in targeting for controls.

The focus of the first generation of impact evaluations reflects the nature of the programmes themselves. Concern about vulnerable populations in the context of HIV/AIDS has driven the objectives and targeting of many of these programmes, leading to the emphasis in terms of target population on people who are ultra-poor, labour-constrained and/or caring for orphans and vulnerable children (OVC). The objectives of most of these programmes focus on food security, health, and nutritional and educational status, particularly of children; therefore, as would be expected, the accompanying impact evaluations concentrate on measuring these dimensions of programme impact.

The second generation of impact evaluations currently underway is exploring several new research questions and in some cases using innovative techniques to do so. First, inspired by the potential for cash transfers to mitigate HIV risk, a number of new evaluations are capturing information on sexual debut, partner characteristics, perceptions about peer behaviour, marriage and pregnancy. Second, related to mitigation of HIV risk, a number of new evaluations examine psycho-social status (PSS) and mental health, which have long been considered a factor associated with HIV risk among OVC.

The third evaluation question relates to the issue of conditionality, around which critical questions remain unanswered. The final set of new questions relates to the overarching issue of whether and how CT programmes can contribute to overall economic growth. A number of new evaluations contain detailed information on household income-generation activity, both on- and off-farm. Moreover, many are also collecting a separate business enterprise survey to model the programmes' effects on the local economy. However, a household's propensity to engage in risky ventures such questions to measure discount rates and to help identify the degree of risk aversion.

As new data emerge from these second-generation impact evaluations, there is substantial opportunity to enrich the evidence on the impacts of cash transfers in sub-Saharan Africa and to better understand the effectiveness of design and implementation variations in the region. Furthermore, this second generation promises to advance the types of evidence available on cash transfers globally and contribute to new evaluation methodologies.

Note:

1. Davis, B. et al (2012) Evaluating the Impact of Cash Transfer Programmes in sub-Saharan Africa: an Introduction to the Journal of Development Effectiveness Special Issue. Journal of Development Effectiveness, Vol. 4(1): pp.1-8.

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