

Transfer Project's 3rd Annual Research Workshop, April 23-25th, 2013

The Transfer Project's 3rd annual workshop was held at the Chaminuka Lodge, just outside of Lusaka, Zambia, on April 23-25th, 2013. The workshop featured evaluation results from nine cash transfer programs in Sub-Saharan Africa. Topics included health and nutrition, HIV prevention and adolescent development, consumption, local economy and productive effects. Presentations, selected papers and the participant list are available on the Transfer Project website.

The 3rd Annual Transfer Project Workshop –“Evaluating the impact of social cash transfers in sub-Saharan Africa”

Social protection interventions, including social cash transfer (SCT) programs, are increasingly recognized by many African governments as crucial components of poverty alleviation and inclusive growth policies. There is a growing body of evidence to support policy makers in African countries in designing effective SCT programs to achieve country and program specific goals. In an effort to further this discussion, each year the Transfer Project hosts a research workshop, bringing together evaluators, IGOs, NGOs and government officials to have discourse on impact evaluation of SCTs in Sub-Saharan Africa.

This year's workshop, held from *April 23rd – 25th 2013 at Chaminuka Lodge, Zambia*, was coordinated and sponsored by FAO, UNICEF, Save the Children (UK), and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.



The workshop aimed to provide researchers, donors and governments with a forum to share experiences on evaluation design and implementation to increase evaluation rigor, disseminate the latest research results of cash transfer evaluations and build lines of communication among evaluators, clients, and governments. Participants came from nine countries and included representatives from four African governments (Ghana, Lesotho, Malawi, Zambia), IGOs, NGOs, and research organizations. Evaluation results from Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe were discussed, along with upcoming evaluations in Kenya, Malawi, Somalia, Uganda, and Zimbabwe. The full agenda and select workshop presentations and papers are available at the bottom of this page. Below are some key points that emerged during the workshop:

The state of the evidence in sub-Saharan Africa

- Rigorous evaluations and ongoing advocacy are needed to provide clear evidence to influence policy makers in African governments and enable them to make the most effective decisions based on their specific goals and contexts. Key concerns for governments are cost-effectiveness, sustainability and scalability.
- There is now a large evidence base on the impacts of SCT programs, including positive impacts on a range of indicators including consumption, health, sexual behavior, schooling, food security, household assets and production. Additionally, simulation models show that SCT programs have community-level and local economy effects; these multiplier effects need to be quantified and presented as part of telling the complete story of the impacts of SCT programs. A paper will be produced on the impacts of social cash transfer programs in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- Recent evaluations have provided evidence of impacts in new areas, such as local economy effects, credit constraints, time preference and risk aversion, and happiness.
- We need a more robust exploration of the disaggregated effects of social cash transfers, in particular the gender effects.

Impact evaluation methodology & dissemination of findings

- Mixed method evaluations need to be integrated into SCT program design from the start to build an understanding of the nuances of program impacts. Qualitative studies should inform quantitative surveys and the findings from both should be integrated into a holistic set of conclusions and explanations for policy makers. Some governments have done this quite effectively, to their credit.
- Researchers need to strike a balance between presenting raw findings and making policy recommendations—interpreting results to explain potential policy implications is an area where they can support governments in coming to their own, well informed decisions. Evaluators should be careful not to aggressively recommend specific programs or policies.
- Often there are several SCT evaluations in the same country, and sometimes they are even for the same program. There needs to be a concerted effort to consolidate the findings from the wealth of impact evaluations into unified reports so that policy makers can understand the big picture. Country briefs should be a priority, and thematic and

regional briefs would also be an important contribution to the body of work on SCTs. Several briefs are forthcoming over the next year.

Program implications

- The effectiveness and quality of implementation affects SCT outcomes. For example, challenges such as irregular payments and low transfer size affect the impact of social cash transfers and, overall, evidence shows that countries could use additional support and capacity building for program implementation.
- Evidence shows that when SCTs reach children at an earlier age and there is continuity of coverage over time, the better the outcomes for those children. Evidence is still unclear on whether cash transfers in various contexts are more or less effective when they are conditional v. unconditional.
- The country and policy context, including location specific complimentary interventions (health, education and economic considerations) influence the overall impact on household well-being and production, as well as local economy impacts.