



Concept Note: Seventh Transfer Project Research Workshop
Social Protection, Cash Transfers and Long-Term Poverty Reduction
April 2, 3 and 4, 2019
Arusha, Tanzania

Purpose of the meeting

In early 2019, the Transfer Project will organize a workshop on “Social Protection, Cash Transfers and Long-Term Poverty Reduction”, exploring the concept of graduation and linkages to other key services for sustainable poverty reduction. Under this theme, the workshop will discuss the role of the political economy in social protection and demonstrate how cash transfer programming responds to long-term social and economic inclusion. This includes concerns related to ‘graduation’, and underscores the importance of ongoing, permanent research agendas to inform policies, enhance protection and livelihoods.

As African governments scale-up social protection interventions, researchers are responding to questions around the long-term contribution of cash transfers to poverty eradication and social and economic inclusion, and their role within broader, nationally owned social protection systems in helping to achieve the SDGs. With the common goal of improving how integrated social protection systems can sustainably contribute to the wellbeing, productivity and resiliency of the poorest and most vulnerable households, this workshop will provide space for an honest discussion among researchers, policymakers, and development partners to deliberate these challenges.

Background

The Transfer Project

For over a decade, the Transfer Project (<https://transfer.cpc.unc.edu/>) has accumulated a robust body of evidence on social cash transfers in sub-Saharan Africa. Since 2008, this innovative research initiative has been led by UNICEF, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC), working together with key national partners - namely, governments and local research organizations - to advocate for research utilization to inform the design and scale-up of national social cash transfers. The aim of the project is to help governments create better policies and programmes related to social protection by undertaking long-term, multi-country impact evaluation research across the region.

Evidence generation

Thus far, the project has provided evidence on how predictable social cash transfers have contributed to reducing poverty and addressing social and economic factors, such as income inequality, protection and social exclusion, for programme participants, as well as for the local economy. Furthermore, governments in partnership with the project have demonstrated that nationally-owned programmes can be cost-effective and provide a wide range of long-term benefits for children and households.

New challenges

Although evidence from the Transfer Project has contributed to strengthening nationally-owned social protection systems, questions remain regarding the long-term sustainability of cash transfers and how to integrate them with other government policies to optimize their social and economic impacts in

addressing structural poverty and vulnerability. Beyond rigorous research, the project recognizes that an enabling environment is needed for stakeholders to invest in social transfers, both for long-term gains and for the recognition of rights and international commitments to social protection floors. Creating an enabling environment necessitates continuous feedback of new and existing evidence, combatting prevalent myths about misuse and unintended effects of cash transfers¹, and contributing to policy dialogues.

One area of growing interest among governments, researchers and development partners are 'graduation approaches.'² This interest, in part, comes from debate about the ability of social transfers alone to sustainably reduce extreme poverty. Nevertheless, the evidence around graduation programmes is largely limited to resource-intensive short-term, NGO-run programming, with little translation to government implementation. Moreover, there is limited link of these programmes with medium- or long-term strategies for economic inclusion. Evidence of long-term impacts of both cash transfers and graduation approaches is still limited. A widely referenced study of the sustained success of the graduation approach, was conducted only one year after interventions ended.³

At the same time, limitations of cash transfers should also be situated within the context of transfer value, reliability of transfers, financial inclusion, and the broader environment related to access to and quality of markets, schools and health facilities. These factors contribute to how effectively cash transfers can lift households out of poverty. Despite the limited evidence of the long-term impacts of cash transfer programmes, new evidence on intergenerational impact is emerging from more mature programmes in Latin America. This includes evidence that investments in health and education at younger ages affect later employment, income, and related outcomes.

Thus, an evidence-informed discussion is needed around the following questions:

- What do we know and understand about graduation approaches, including their limitations, and how they compare to cash-only, cash plus(+) programmes, economic inclusion programming and others?
- What are the current systematic challenges around social protection and realizing sustained long-term impacts?
- How do we ensure sustained financing of programmes to meet the requirements of a comprehensive social protection system?
- What are the opportunities to implement integrated programming to increase access to and quality of essential services?
- How do we ensure productive gains for households while simultaneously boosting households' immediate consumption and protection needs in the short-term?

¹ Handa S, Daidone S, Peterman A, Davis B, Pereira A, Palermo T, Yablonski J on behalf of the Transfer Project (2018). [Myth-busting? Confronting Six Common Perceptions about Unconditional Cash Transfers as a Poverty Reduction Strategy in Africa](#). *World Bank Research Observer*, 33(2): 259 – 298.

² "The so-called 'Graduation Approach' thus may be defined as (i) reaching a state in which one has exited/escaped (extreme) poverty, based on a given poverty metric and, therefore, can be considered ready to 'graduate' from the interventions dedicated to enable this transition; or (ii) the act of going through a set of phased-in and overlapping interventions meant to improve the well-being of their participants". Source: The International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth. (2017). [Debating Graduation](#). *Policy in Focus*, 14(2).

³ Banerjee, A., Duflo, E., Goldberg, N., Karlan, D., Osei, R., Parienté, W., ... & Udry, C. (2015). A multifaceted program causes lasting progress for the very poor: Evidence from six countries. *Science*, 348(6236), 1260799.

Learning exchange

As with the previous gatherings, the 2019 Transfer Project Workshop will bring together governments, researchers and development partners to provide an opportunity for regional learning and exchange on social protection and cash transfers. Countries with similar evidence needs will be able to discuss approaches and gain insight from others' experiences, strengthening social protection strategies through south-south learning. The workshop will capture the momentum for cross-country learning in Africa, recognizing the growth of social protection across the continent, and the international development debate around the role of these systems for extreme poverty reduction.

Objectives and Topics

1. *The workshop aims to:*
 - Provide key stakeholders, including policymakers and donors, with the space to explore the challenges of integrating cash transfers within broader social protection systems, including their articulation with sector policies and programmes geared towards poverty reduction
 - Share the latest research evidence on social cash transfers in Africa and discuss its strategic utilization in informing and sustaining holistic social protection systems as they evolve across the region
 - Identify the broader social protection system requirements and linkages needed to sustainably achieve long-term poverty reduction
 - Build a cadre of media influencers with a strong understanding of social protection and cash transfers, and an ability to translate that understanding for non-specialist audiences
2. *Topics include:* Debating the long-term contribution of cash transfers and social protection for poverty eradication, such as:
 - What is the role (and limitations) of graduation approaches within a comprehensive social protection system? How can cash-only programmes be maximized? How do cash plus(+) interventions contribute to sustainable poverty reduction?
 - How can research evidence address the dynamics and challenges of the sustainability of cash transfers within the political economy of social protection programming?
 - How can investments in social protection be optimized, including for outcomes related to economic and production inclusion, youth and adolescent transitions, mental health and wellbeing, and gender equity?
 - What are the lingering myths around cash transfers that hinder their long-term sustainability?

Outputs

The workshop will result in the following outputs:

1. Publicly available presentations (and papers) from social protection and evaluation experts on the core topics of the meeting
2. Key conclusions and action-oriented recommendations for policymakers, researchers, media influencers, and programme implementers

Organizational aspects

1. *Coordination:* Colleagues from UNICEF, FAO and UNC will lead the coordination and organization of this meeting. The Transfer Project will reserve the option of having a targeted call for proposals or direct invitations to specific sessions to other development partners outside of the Transfer Project, particularly from multilateral and bilateral agencies, research institutions and other relevant organizations.
2. *Logistics:*
 - 2.5 days
 - Date: April 2, 3 and 4, 2019
 - Location and venue: Arusha, Tanzania – [Mount Meru Hotel](#)
 - Language: Meeting will mainly be held in English, with French and Portuguese translation services available for plenary sessions
 - Each country delegation should be limited to no more than five individuals – ideally comprising government, UNICEF, and FAO
 - Additional details will be provided to participants in an administrative note
3. *Invited participants:*
 - Country and Regional/ HQ (maximum of 1 per country; 1 per office) colleagues from conference organizers (FAO, UNICEF)
 - Government partners/ officials – specifically technical staff plus senior managers/ decision makers – implementing or planning to implement a cash transfer programme (or include a cash component as part of a broader social protection system) and willing to develop a research agenda around impact and effectiveness (including where relevant statistics offices, and Ministries of Agriculture, Social Policy, Planning and/or Finance)
 - Development partners (e.g. UN Agencies, NGOs, research institutes/ universities, etc.)
 - Additional organizations and researchers that are part of the national social protection, household and child wellbeing, and agricultural policy dialogue
4. *Content:* The meeting will prioritize a comparative perspective, to maximize cross-country and regional insights.
 - The conference will consist of keynote presentations in plenary, ‘talk-shows’/panels, and breakout sessions to facilitate engagement among specific stakeholder groups
 - Session formats will be designed to encourage interaction among participants, including: panels, roundtables and small group discussion

For more information, including highlights from previous workshops, please visit [the Transfer Project website](#). For inquiries, please contact Michelle Mills (mmills@unicef.org), Christopher Kallaghe (ckallaghe@unicef.org) and Fulvio Cenci (Fulvio.Cenci@fao.org) with CC to your Regional Advisor in the case of UNICEF staff.