



Qualitative Research and Analyses of the Economic Impacts of Cash Transfer Programmes in Sub-Saharan Africa

by Benjamin Davis and Pamela Pozarny, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

The From Protection to Production (PtoP) project aims to identify the productive impacts of cash transfer programmes on household economic decision-making and the local economy. It takes advantage of ongoing impact evaluations of cash transfer programmes in seven sub-Saharan African countries to analyse the impact of these programmes on broader household economic activities, including labour supply and risk-sharing mechanisms and networks, as well as the local economy. The project is led by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and uses a mixed-methods approach, combining econometric analysis of impact evaluation data, simulation modelling of the village economy and qualitative methods.

Qualitative research guide. The research guide on qualitative methods (OPM, 2012) provides an overview and guidance on four thematic areas of research, training, fieldwork preparation and research process to be implemented in each case study country. The guide introduces participatory tools used to collect and analyse information and includes guidance for conducting key informant interviews (KIIs) and facilitating focus group discussions (FGDs).

Key evaluation questions and hypotheses. For each of the four main thematic areas of the research, the guide presents hypotheses and corresponding research questions:

- **Household economy:** The introduction of a small but predictable flow of cash income improves livelihood choices and productive investments, although vulnerable households will be more constrained in their decision-making on how to use additional cash.
- **Local economy:** The whole community, including non-beneficiaries, will benefit from the injection of cash through multiplier effects on local goods, services and labour markets, although this will be mediated by the political, economic and social context.
- **Social networks and economic impacts 1:** Cash transfers increase beneficial risk-sharing arrangements and economic collaboration underpinned by social capital.
- **Social networks and economic impacts 2:** Changes in social networks linked to cash transfers positively affect the most vulnerable and least powerful members of a community by improving their inclusion in decision-making processes and increasing their entitlement set and livelihood choices.
- **Operational issues:** Cash and in-kind transfers can be improved through a better understanding of likely household and local economic impacts.

The research process, step by step. To ensure a degree of commonality across countries and communities, the guide presents a simple and clear research 'roadmap', broadly outlining the sequencing and timing of the research process, from preparation to report writing. Guidance is also provided on ethical considerations and general behaviour, including community entry, obtaining consent, respect and confidentiality and stressing the research teams' independence. The guide provides practical advice on recording and organising data and analysis,

including during daily debriefings. In all cases, flexibility and adaptation to local contexts are recommended.

The fieldwork phase is planned for 20 days in each country, including training of the field team, finalisation of logistics and sampling (with government counterparts), piloting of research methods, collection of data in the field, and a final debriefing with government and development partners. The fieldwork data collection covers four communities: two from two different districts. In each district, the team splits into two sub-teams which cover each 'treatment' community for four days. On the fifth and final day of fieldwork, both sub-teams converge and work together in a selected nearby 'control' community. The team conducts daily debriefings and at the end of the five days of fieldwork organises a 'consolidation and synthesis' to generate a draft field report with the main points of analysis under each of the four research themes. As part of an ethical approach to field research, and to validate findings and preliminary conclusions, a feedback session is conducted with community members in each district at the end of the fieldwork.

The two principal qualitative methods used in the field are FGDs and KIIs. Participatory tools used during FGDs include:

- social mapping and community well-being analysis with a group of key informants on the first day in each treatment community, to identify the social characteristics, main actors and institutions in the community, as well as the distribution of well-being among community members;
- household income and expenditure analysis;
- livelihood analysis with non-beneficiary groups, particularly to identify occupational groups and their importance; and
- institutional mapping with beneficiary and non-beneficiary groups.

FGDs are conducted separately with men and women, sometimes stratified by age or other grouping criteria. According to the context and programme characteristics, these core FGDs are often complemented by other group discussions, based on social groupings, networks and livelihoods. KIIs are conducted with a variety of key informants, including community leaders, non-governmental organisation workers, religious leaders, health workers, teachers, elders, local traders and farmers.

Ascertaining the economic impacts of cash transfer programmes is a new area of research for impact evaluations of cash transfer programmes. It has important implications for policy, given the increasing popularity of cash transfer programmes in sub-Saharan Africa. The time is ripe for understanding the full impacts—intended and unintended—of these programmes. This in-depth qualitative type of research, as part of a mixed-methods approach, can further inform understanding and ongoing policy debates by documenting the full contribution of cash transfer programmes to hunger reduction, poverty reduction and inclusive growth, addressing concerns about the sustainability and productive and economic contributions of social assistance.

Reference:

Oxford Policy Management (OPM) (2012). 'Qualitative Research and Analyses of the Economic Impacts of Cash Transfer Programmes in Sub-Saharan Africa', *IPC-IG Working Paper*, No. 100. Brasília, International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth.

