



CASH TRANSFER PROGRAMMING AND CHILD PROTECTION IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION:

Review and Opportunities to Strengthen the Evidence

Briefing Note | March 2019

INTRODUCTION

The use of cash transfer programming is growing in humanitarian action, and more must be done to achieve better results for children, especially as it relates to child protection. This review highlights gaps, needs, and opportunities that were found in the literature and confirmed by experts working across relevant areas of humanitarian action and international development. It summarizes the evidence for cash transfer programming and child protection in humanitarian contexts and recommends areas for action and further research.

Cash transfer programming and child protection outcomes: Evidence and gaps

There are a small number of well-designed studies that report on the relationship between cash and child protection outcomes. While this makes it difficult to definitively attribute causality, make inferences, or draw conclusions, the available evidence does offer lessons learned and clear direction for future programming and research:

- **Conditional cash transfers may be used to affect positive change**, notably where economic improvement can be tied to a behavior change such as stopping child labor or child marriage.
- **Cash transfers' effectiveness seems to vary** with the causes of the child protection issue; its link to financial strain; and the availability, quality, and affordability of services needed for change.¹
- **Cash modality may exert less influence on child protection outcomes** than other contextual and programmatic factors.

¹ Mishra & Battistin (2018); Thompson (2012); Key informant interviews, August 2018

- **Areas showing potential cross-sectoral benefits** include using cash to link reductions in child labor with improved education outcomes, using cash transfer programs to reduce intra-household tensions and violence, and improving wellbeing through cash transfers.
- **Cash transfer programming may be leveraged early in humanitarian responses** to support families' resilience and prevent child protection risks, as opposed to simply responding to them.

Strengthening the evidence: Needs and opportunities

Numerous opportunities are available to generate better evidence for child protection and cash transfer programming in humanitarian settings:

- **Strengthening the measurement of child protection outcomes** can enhance the evidence for cash transfer programming and child protection in general.
- **Child participatory and inclusive processes** support children's dignity and empowerment. To that end, evidence must be generated on the topic of children as direct recipients of cash transfer programs.
- **The sustainability of cash interventions** for complex child protection outcomes may depend on factors such as the root causes of the protection risk and pre-existing family and cultural attitudes and norms. More research is needed on best practices that support positive gains beyond the program/intervention.
- **Investments in capacity building, improved communication, and more effective dissemination of evidence** are needed to increase collaboration and strengthen cash-child protection programming.
- **Determining the transferability of cash evidence from development settings to humanitarian settings** can foster stronger linkages between the sectors and support research sharing and learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The existing evidence—and the gaps in evidence—provides opportunities for all those involved in humanitarian action to more intentionally engage with cash transfer/child protection programming:

- **Generate quality evidence and research** on cash's ability to achieve child protection outcomes.
- **Strengthen child protection prevention and response** through guidance development and cross-sectoral collaborations.
- **Address measurement-related gaps** by defining outcomes, measures, entry points, and theories of change.
- **Include children as recipients of cash transfer programming** based on evidence, not assumptions.
- **Strengthen communication, capacity building, and advocacy** to support cross-sectoral learning and joint programming.
- **Bridge the humanitarian-development nexus** to facilitate cross-context learning and application.
- **Advocate for supportive donor action** to mandate and fund child protection risk analyses, disaggregated individual-level data collection, longer-term follow-up, and improved child safeguarding in all cash and voucher programming in humanitarian action.

For the full report, click here. For more information, contact the Cash Task & Child Protection Task Force of the Alliance.
