



Social transfers and child protection in the South



Armando Barrientos^{a,*}, Jasmina Byrne^b, Paola Peña^a, Juan Miguel Villa^a

^a Brooks World Poverty Institute, University of Manchester, UK

^b UNICEF Office of Research—Innocenti, Florence, Italy

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 21 February 2014

Received in revised form 2 July 2014

Accepted 21 July 2014

Available online 1 August 2014

Keywords:

Child protection
Social protection
Social transfers
Poverty

ABSTRACT

Most low and middle-income countries have implemented programmes providing transfers to families in poverty, often with a focus on children. The paper examines the potential effects of social transfers in these countries on child protection outcomes: the reduction of violence, exploitation and abuse of children, family separation and improved birth registration. The analysis is based on database including information on 79 impact evaluations in 28 countries, covering 45 medium and large-scale social transfer programmes. The paper identifies and evaluates three sets of effects: direct effects observed where social transfers have explicit child protection outcome objectives; poverty-mediated effects where the impact of social transfers on poverty and exclusion leads to improved child protection outcomes; and operational synergies arising from the implementation of social transfers. An extended report of this study, including full references can be accessed at: <http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/691>.

© 2014 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>).

1. Introduction

Since the turn of the century, many low- and middle-income countries have introduced or expanded programmes providing direct transfers in cash and/or in kind to families or individuals facing poverty and vulnerability (Barrientos, 2013). In middle-income countries, flagship social transfer programmes – such as Brazil's *Bolsa Família*, Mexico's *Progres a Oportunidades*, South Africa's *Child Support Grant*, India's *National Rural Employment Guarantee* and China's *Minimum Living Standards Scheme* – now reach large sections of the population. There is considerable diversity in the objectives, design and implementation of social transfers, but they share the overall objectives of reducing poverty and fostering economic and social inclusion. The fact that a majority of people in poverty in low- and middle-income countries are children is reflected in the share of programme participants who are children and often in the explicit objectives of programmes (Barrientos & DeJong, 2006). A growing body of evidence is emerging on the impact of these programmes on children, particularly on health, nutrition and education outcomes. Antipoverty transfer programmes have a variety of effects which enhance child survival, well-being and development. This paper examines the potential effects of these programmes on child protection outcomes understood as the prevention and reduction of the damaging exposure of children to violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect and family separation and improved birth registration.

The approach adopted is to identify and assess the known effects of social transfers on child protection risks and outcomes in low- and middle-income countries. The analysis is supported by a database of impact evaluation studies and programme information collected for this purpose. An extended report of this study, including full references can be accessed at: <http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/691>. The paper distinguishes three main channels through which antipoverty transfer programmes can impact upon child protection outcomes. First, there are direct effects which follow on from the explicit objectives of antipoverty transfer programmes. *Familias en Acción* in Colombia, for example, had a component explicitly designed to facilitate the reunion of families fragmented by displacement in areas affected by internal conflict. To the extent that the programmes achieved family reunion, this can be considered a direct effect. Second, child protection outcomes can be mediated by social transfer programmes' effectiveness in reducing poverty. Where transfers improve consumption levels among poor households they can help reduce the prevalence of child ill-health and child labour (Barrientos & DeJong, 2006). Third, there are effects associated with programme implementation synergies. The implementation of social transfer programmes often generates improvements in the capacity of public agencies with implications for the effectiveness of child protection agencies. Countries like Brazil, Chile and Colombia have pioneered a single registry of vulnerable households, greatly facilitating information across public agencies (UNICEF, 2012). Whilst the majority of the effects identified are positive, in some contexts these effects can be detrimental to child protection.

This paper is divided into four main sections. Section 2 reviews basic concepts and approaches in social transfers and child protection. This is important to facilitate an understanding across the two communities of practise. Section 3 assesses the effects of social transfer programmes on

* Corresponding author at: Brooks World Poverty Institute, School of Environment, Education, and Development, Arthur Lewis Building, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL, UK. Tel.: +44 161 306 6436.

E-mail address: a.barrientos@manchester.ac.uk (A. Barrientos).

child protection risk factors and outcomes. Section 4 summarises the main findings.

2. Social transfers and child protection: review of concepts and approaches

This section reviews key concepts and approaches in social transfers and child protection. This is important to facilitate a shared understanding across the two communities of practise.

2.1. Poverty and social transfers

Social transfers are regular, reliable and direct transfers in cash and/or in kind to households in poverty and deprivation. UNICEF defines social transfers as predictable direct transfers to individuals or households, both in-kind and cash to protect and prevent individuals and households from being affected by shocks and to support the accumulation of human, productive and financial assets (UNICEF, 2012). The main focus of social transfers is the reduction of poverty and social and economic exclusion. In recent international development policy discussions, the term 'social protection' is increasingly being used to describe anti-poverty or social transfers, a narrower definition than that in common use in high-income countries. In low- and middle-country context it is important to distinguish regular social transfers from humanitarian or emergency assistance. In this study we focus on the former.

Poverty describes deficits in well-being experienced by individuals, households or communities considered to be unacceptable in a particular society. From this perspective, poverty is multidimensional in nature and cannot be reduced solely to deficits in income. Deficits in health care, education, housing and political voice are often associated with poverty and deprivation. Social and economic exclusion often go hand in hand with poverty and deprivation. To an important extent, poverty reflects the extent to which the relevant groups are unable to participate in the life of the community. In the context of social transfers, vulnerability is defined as the likelihood that individuals or households will be in poverty in the near future. Vulnerability is in fact 'vulnerability to poverty'. From this perspective, households currently in poverty are perhaps the most vulnerable. In child protection, on the other hand, risks are understood as the likelihood of an incidence of violence, abuse, and exploitation, whilst vulnerability is understood as openness or exposure to these risks. In this approach, child outcomes result from the particular interaction of risk and protective factors (WHO & ISPCAN, 2006).

It will be useful to classify social transfer programmes into three main categories: pure income transfers; income transfers combined with asset accumulation; and integrated poverty reduction programmes (For a description of social transfer programmes in developing countries see Barrientos, Niño-Zarazúa, and Maitrot (2010), available from http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1672090). *Pure income transfers* involve transfers in cash targeted at households in poverty, or categorical transfers targeted at groups facing acute vulnerability. Some pure income transfers are focused on households in (extreme) poverty. *Income transfers combined with asset accumulation* include programmes providing transfers in cash or kind, which are combined with, and facilitate, accumulation of productive assets. The term 'asset' is used here in its broadest sense, to include human, physical and financial assets. Linking direct transfers with interventions aimed at asset accumulation underlines the fact that programmes of this type aim to strengthen the productive capacity of households in poverty. This category includes two types of programme now common in low- and middle-income countries. The first group includes programmes which combine direct transfers with interventions facilitating household investment in human development, especially education and health. Mexico's *Progresa/Oportunidades* or Brazil's *Bolsa Família* are well known examples of this type of programme. The second group includes programmes which combine direct transfers with interventions facilitating physical asset protection and accumulation. Examples of this type of programme include India's *National Employment*

Guarantee Scheme (infrastructure or community assets) and Ethiopia's *Productive Safety Net Programme* (household and community assets). *Integrated poverty reduction programmes* are an important innovation in social assistance, combining a range of interventions focused on the poorest. Chile's *Chile Solidario* is an example of only a handful of programmes providing an integrated set of interventions addressing a range of deficits responsible for keeping households in poverty (*Chile Solidario* was replaced with Family Subsidy, *Ingreso Etico Familiar*, in 2012).

The basis for this classification is provided by the underlying understanding of poverty underpinning the programmes. Pure transfers rely on an understanding of poverty as largely to do with deficits in income or consumption. Transfers are expected to remedy these deficits and thus reduce poverty. Income transfers combined with asset accumulation share a broader understanding of poverty. They pay attention to deficits in income or consumption but, important as these are, they also aim to address deficits in productive assets. Integrated antipoverty programmes share the multidimensional perspective on poverty but in addition pay special attention to social exclusion.

2.2. Child protection

The UNICEF, 2008 Child Protection Strategy defines the aim of child protection as 'preventing and responding to violence, exploitation and abuse against children', which 'is essential to ensuring children's rights to survival, development and well-being'. Table 1 summarises child protection objectives, protective environment, and outcomes.

Child protection approaches have changed over time. In high income countries, particularly the Anglo-American countries, statutory systems were developed to respond to cases of abuse of children, and child protection was often understood in a narrow forensic sense. Since the mid-1990s there has been a gradual move towards a greater emphasis on early intervention, prevention and family support. This shift was brought about by recognition that not all families in contact with statutory services were at "high-risk" of child maltreatment and that a large number of families had more generic problems, such as financial difficulties, high levels of stress or substance abuse problems.

Unnecessary family separation, especially when it occurs due to conflict, natural disasters and reasons or poverty does not imply that violence, abuse and exploitation will occur. However, out-of-home care arrangements for a child who is not with his or her biological parent may sometimes lead to these violations, both in institutional or family type settings (kinship care or fostering). Birth registration is the right of all children and one of the key instruments that establishes the existence of the child under law and safeguards other rights, including the protection from child labour and exploitation.

In low- and middle-income countries, attention now focuses on developing more comprehensive child protection systems that comprise the set of laws, policies, regulations and services needed across all social sectors – especially social welfare, education, health, security and justice – to support prevention and response to violence, abuse and exploitation (UNICEF, 2008). In practical terms, this implies building high quality child welfare services, strengthening data collection and information management systems, development of service models and referral pathways and ensuring adequate financing (Wulczyn et al., 2010). Transnational co-ordination is essential to promote safe cross-border child migration, and address issues such as child abduction and child trafficking.

3. Social transfers effects on child protection

3.1. Research strategy to identify effects

The discussion in the previous section reviewed concepts and approaches informing social transfers and child protection. In this section, the focus will be on identifying and evaluating the effects of social transfers on child protection outcomes, based on information provided by 79 impact evaluation studies covering 45 social transfer programmes in 28

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/10311512>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/10311512>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)