



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

International Journal of Educational Development

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/ijedudev



The role of cash transfers in maximising schools' protective effects for children in extreme settings: An ecological approach[☆]

Nicola Jones, Fiona Samuels^{*}

Overseas Development Institute, 203 Blackfriars Road, London SE1 8NJ, UK

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Cash transfers
Conflict
Schooling
Social accountability

ABSTRACT

Given growing attention to inequities and hardest-to-reach children, there is increasing interest in how to support children in extreme settings, including through schooling. We focus on cash transfer programmes – poverty reduction initiatives aimed at human capital development – and adopt an ecological focus, considering children in informal and formal settings in households, schools, communities and broader polities. Using qualitative methodologies we explore how cash transfer programmes can facilitate schooling in Kenya, Palestine and Peru. We argue it is critical to consider both demand and supply side challenges and entry-points. We conclude that involving communities in programme design, monitoring and evaluation is essential to promote greater transparency and accountability, and ultimately child wellbeing outcomes.

© 2014 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Cash transfers (CTs), as one of the most widely employed social protection instruments in the developing world, are increasingly seen as an effective approach to tackle children's multi-dimensional poverty and vulnerability at scale (Fiszbein and Schady, 2009; Barrientos et al., 2013). Cash transfer programmes can be conceptualised not only as being protective (protecting a household's level of income and/or consumption and ability to invest in their children), but also as preventative (preventing households from resorting to negative coping strategies that are harmful to children such as pulling them out of school and involving them in child labour), and promotional (promoting children's development through investments in their schooling, health and general care and protection) (Holmes and Jones, 2013; Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler, 2004; Handa et al., 2010). In this paper we draw on our primary research on cash transfer programmes in Kenya, Palestine and Peru, to explore the effects that CTs have on extremely poor and vulnerable children's schooling experience and how this plays out in terms of their broader present and future wellbeing.

To understand this dynamic, our starting point is that we need to unpack both the demand and supply side aspects of social protection programming, and specifically cash transfers. Cash transfers – small and regular cash stipends aimed at reducing income poverty – came about as a response to the growing recognition that even when basic services were free, extremely poor and excluded populations were still not accessing them (Barrientos and Hulme, 2008). As a demand side incentive, cash transfers not only help to keep children enrolled in schools and provide them with an education, but can also have a broader spill-over effect on their individual and relational wellbeing, with potential life-course and inter-generational dividends. This said, commensurate attention is needed on the supply side, especially as demand side initiatives are likely at least in the short term to put strain on resources, including staffing and infrastructure. While in middle-income country contexts there has been some progress in terms of strengthening teacher capacities, this has tended to be technocratic and less about creating a more child-friendly environment. For example, in Peru while there has been a concerted national effort to improve maths and science skills following a very poor international ranking, problems of teacher absenteeism, violence and sexual abuse, remain significant concerns (Jones and Villar, 2014; Aragon and Vegas, 2009).

Given growing global attention to inequities and the need to reach the most excluded children, there is increasing interest in how best to support children in extreme settings, including through schooling. One approach to understanding these dynamics is to focus on schools and pupil and teacher interactions as the unit

[☆] The authors wish to acknowledge funding from the UK Department for International Development which enabled the fieldwork in Kenya and Palestine; funding was also provided by UNICEF State of Palestine for the fieldwork in Palestine.

^{*} Corresponding author at: Social Development, Overseas Development Institute, 203 Blackfriars Road, London SE1 8NJ, UK. Tel.: +44 020 7922 0391.

E-mail address: f.samuels@odi.org.uk (F. Samuels).

of analysis. A second complementary approach, however, is to adopt a more ecological focus and consider the child in both informal and formal settings in his/her household/family, school, community and broader polity. This paper focuses on the latter and takes a micro, meso and macro approach, exploring also the intersections between these levels. In other words, we investigate the linkages between individual children within the family, school and community contexts and how such linkages are mediated through cash transfer programmes as well as through wider national social protection and education sector policy frameworks and strategies.

The paper is organised as follows: after a brief review of key debates around social protection, cash transfers and education for the most vulnerable (Section 2), we present an overview of our research methodology and situate the cash transfer programme case studies within the political economic histories of their respective countries (Section 3). Section 4 presents our empirical findings and explores demand and supply side considerations, including service governance deficits, and their role in shaping children's schooling and broader wellbeing in extreme settings. Section 5 concludes and reflects on possible policy and programme entry-points.

2. Engaging with the debates

In order to situate our findings and discussion, we briefly engage with some debates around social protection and in particular cash transfers.

2.1. Defining social protection

At its core, social protection refers to social programmes that aim to tackle individual and household-level vulnerability. Such programmes typically target populations who are chronically poor as well as those who are vulnerable to falling into poverty – i.e. people who may easily fall below nationally defined poverty lines due to an inability to cope with shocks and stresses (CPRC, 2009). Poor households face a range of highly interconnected risks at the macro, meso and micro levels, including economic, socio-political, environmental and health-related shocks and stresses. To date social protection programming has largely addressed economic shocks and poverty, although attention is increasingly being paid to the intersection of economic vulnerability and socio-political risks and vulnerabilities. These risks and vulnerabilities are rooted in inequalities based on gender, ethnic minority or disability (Holmes and Jones, 2013; Baulch et al., 2010). In the case of children, social protection programming is progressively seeking to address not just problems related to economic poverty but also to promote measures that protect children's broader rights. These rights include protection from violence, exploitation and neglect, as well as the ability of children to have both voice and agency in their families, schools and communities, irrespective of age, gender, religion, ethnicity, race, class or (dis)ability.

Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler's (2004) emphasis on 'transformative' social protection and programming that addresses equity, empowerment, and social justice as well as material needs, marked a pivotal conceptual shift in the way we think about social protection. Such transformation can be promoted directly through programme design and implementation, or it can be linked to complementary interventions, including rights awareness campaigns, behavioural change communication efforts, and/or social equity measures such as the passage and enforcement of non-discrimination legislation (Holmes and Jones, 2013).

2.2. The cash transfer revolution

Cash transfers are one of the most widely favoured social protection instruments, as they have proved to be effective in

enhancing and smoothing household consumption and increasing uptake of basic education and health services across a wide range of developing countries at scale – in other words, reaching millions of very poor households (Fiszbein and Schady, 2009). The growing popularity of cash transfers owes partly to their fungible nature, but also to their ability to empower beneficiaries since beneficiaries can spend the income according to their own priorities. Conditional cash transfers (CCTs) have gained political acceptability, as they are contingent on beneficiary families accessing basic services, for example, sending their children to school and attending health clinics (Barrientos and Hulme, 2008; Handa et al., 2010). Evidence is still mixed, however, as to how important the conditional aspect of such programmes is, or whether positive effects are more related to general household economic strengthening (Attanasio et al., 2014; ILO, 2014). Given this, as well as informed by commitments to a rights-based approach, a growing number of programmes are unconditional (Jones and Samuels, 2013). That is, once a particular vulnerable group has been identified (either through poverty or categorical targeting), they are entitled to regular cash payments which they are able to spend as they see fit, i.e. there are no conditions attached to receiving the cash.

2.3. Moving the debate forward...

After more than a decade and a half of experience in cash transfers in developing country contexts, there is growing interest in a second generation cluster of issues relating to programme governance and accountability (Joshi, 2008; Hickey, 2011). Whereas the first generation focused primarily on questions of targeting and other programme modalities, analysts are realising the critical importance of issues of governance and accountability to citizens to ensure and support programme effectiveness. Similarly, there is growing recognition in the mainstream development arena that poverty and vulnerability are inherently political in nature – both in terms of underlying drivers as well as approaches to tackling entrenched poverty and marginalisation (Hickey and Bracking, 2005). For the chronically poor and most vulnerable, who are least likely to benefit from economic growth, politics and political change are often the key means by which such poverty can be challenged (Hickey and Bracking, 2005: 851). Moreover, the greater the level of fiscal constraint on a government, the more that government is likely to be influenced by political attitudes concerning who deserves support, and in what form (Graham, 2002: 25 cited in Hickey, 2007: 1).

Given these political dynamics, while social protection can make a critical contribution to the development of the state-citizen social contract, it is likely to be limited unless adequate provisions are made for accountability, citizen feedback and independent oversight of programme operations. Designed appropriately, social protection programmes provide a space to transform the social relationships that generate and entrench poverty and vulnerability. And in this vein, participatory components of programme governance and accountability can provide opportunities for social groups, who are often denied access to decision-making structures, to build social connections. These social connections can be both horizontal, with other community members, and vertical, with state actors, including education service providers, as we discuss in this paper.

3. Research methodology and country case study selection

3.1. Qualitative research methodology

This paper draws on primary research in three countries, Kenya, Peru and Palestine, undertaken in 2012 and 2013. While the aims

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/6841271>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/6841271>

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