

Social Protection Evaluation Synthesis

UNICEF Evaluation Management Response

Evaluation title: Social Protection Evaluation Synthesis

Year: 2015

Office and person in charge for management response: Programme Division (Ted Chaiban, Director)

Overall response to the evaluation: *The meta-evaluation usefully brings together the growing body of evidence generated within UNICEF showing the multiple positive impacts of social protection interventions, in particular cash transfers, and sets out useful lessons and recommendations, including those addressing the need to expand the scope of what is measured in this area. While the review necessarily focuses on UNICEF-supported evaluations, similar evidence of positive impact is available from a host of external studies, including many from regions not covered by the evaluations reviewed here. Our further work to strengthen the impact on children of social protection measures, as well as their coverage, must build on the full body of evidence. At the same time, the evaluations included in the synthesis pay scant attention to the specifics of UNICEF's programme efforts in each case; these efforts need to receive further attention and to be reflected in our planned actions.*

Planned use of evaluation: *The synthesis findings will be used, together with the substantial external literature, to make the case globally for further investment in child-sensitive social protection, including by incorporating these findings regularly in UNICEF's public communications, at country, regional and global levels. The findings will likewise be used to improve the quality of social protection programming supported by UNICEF in order to strengthen results achieved for children based on the lessons learned to date. This will include making more explicit the potential for improved results in most social sectors and further incorporating the use of social protection interventions in programme strategy. The possibility of additional impacts, both in sectors where the impact has not yet been measured as well as through additional social protection interventions, will also be tested and evaluated. The findings will help inform the Midterm review of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2014-2017, and will be used as the basis for building further external partnerships.*

Evaluation Recommendation 1: Increase programme and evaluation attention to ‘Cash Plus’ interventions.

The positive effects of ‘cash only’ transfers are increasingly clear. Less well known are the effects of cash transfers combined with other complementary interventions. Such ‘Cash Plus’ interventions include, for example, cash plus service extension, cash plus market enhancements, cash plus fees elimination, and cash plus insurance. The review evidence has identified powerful examples of such combinations. More of these combinations need to be established and measured, not just as isolated experiments but as parts of integrated social protection systems. They also offer useful opportunities to tailor approaches to sections of the population that have received little or no analytic attention to date, such as migrants.

Management Response: (Agree, Partially Agree, Disagree): Agree

If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report reasons:

Actions planned	Responsible office/person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not Started Underway Completed Cancelled	Actions taken	Supporting documents
Identify country offices (COs) already supporting government to combine social protection interventions and improvements in service delivery and 1) identify good practice, including where/how social protection systems ensure better delivery for children; and 2) identify opportunities to evaluate outcomes.	Programme Division-Social Inclusion and Policy (PD-SIP), regional offices (ROs)	June 2016	Underway	Pilot of CO mapping completed, full mapping to begin Q3 2015.	Country office pilot survey questions.
Produce review of existing evidence and gaps around the effect of non-cash social protection interventions, including in combination with cash transfers (‘Cash Plus’) on key child outcomes, e.g., health, education, child protection, working with PD sections and external partners (United Nations, World Bank (WB), research institutes and policy think tanks).	PD-SIP and Office of Research (OoR) working in conjunction with PD sections	March 2016	Not started		

Evaluation Recommendation 2: Consider integrating the cash transfer (or ‘Cash Plus’) modality into programming, addressing each of the outcome areas articulated in UNICEF’s Strategic Plan.

The evaluation synthesis has presented convincing evidence that cash transfers make a direct contribution to a wide range of sectoral outcomes around education, early childhood development, health, etc., and that they help advance progress towards equity goals. Therefore, programme managers across sectors should pay increased attention to cash transfers (or ‘Cash Plus’) as programming options.

Management Response: (Agree, Partially Agree, Disagree) Agree – Please note that the efforts in response to this recommendation should extend beyond programming to include UNICEF’s global advocacy, communication and partnerships.

If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report reasons:

Actions planned	Responsible office/person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not Started Underway Completed Cancelled	Actions taken	Supporting documents
Highlight evaluation findings on the broad cross-sectoral impacts of cash transfers with UNICEF’s global leadership, (Regional Management Teams (RMTs) in all regions, one Senior Staff Meeting, one Global Management Team (GMT) to promote increased use of the approach in programming.	Programme Division Director’s Office (PDDO) and PD-SIP, with support from the Office of the Executive Director	Ongoing, beginning with next round of RMTs.	Not started		
Develop communication plan to profile the positive impacts for children of social protection, including cash transfers, as a successful approach to addressing inequity and to reach a wider external audience, including the general public and development practitioners; implement this through UNICEF’s global-, regional- and country-level communications and through partnerships.	Division of Communication and Division of Data, Research and Policy (DRP)	January 2016	Not started		

Lead process with sectors (including field staff) to develop guidance on: a) using national cash transfer programmes and ‘Cash Plus’ to support sectoral and multi-sectoral outcomes. b) linking sectoral/multi-sectoral work with national social protection programmes (cash and ‘Cash Plus’) and systems, to more effectively achieve sectoral/multi-sectoral objectives.	Social Inclusion section, under leadership of PDDO.	Consultation and agreed timeline with sectors by March 2016. Draft programme guidance by September 2016	Underway	Existing guidance with HIV. Work underway with Child Protection section towards joint guidance.	
Ensure evaluations findings and recommendations feed into the midterm review of the Strategic Plan.	PDDO, PD-SIP	March 2016	Not started		
<p>Evaluation Recommendation 3: Update the technical guidance on evidence of impact to be measured through evaluation and research, and on implementation measurement.</p> <p>The technical guidance on the evidence to be sought in social protection programmes should be updated to include the range of impacts across several sectors now shown to be influenced by cash transfers. This recommendation is also meant to include the guidance on designing and measuring the implementation approaches that influence the level of impacts achieved. The technical guidance also needs to be easily accessible in a single location for users in any office and in any location.</p>					
<p>Management Response: (Agree, Partially Agree, Disagree): Agree</p>					
<p>If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report reasons:</p>					
Actions planned	Responsible office/person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not Started Underway Completed Cancelled	Actions taken	Supporting documents
Development of technical guidance and web-based resource page on impact evaluation methodology, including applications to social protection interventions.	OoR and PD-SIP	January 2016	Underway	Impact evaluation methodological briefs available at OoR website; two webinars on impact evaluation methodology completed.	See OoR website: www.unicef-irc.org/KM/IE/

Disseminate the findings and lessons from the Transfer Project and other good practice in Cash Transfer/Social Protection evaluation.	OoR/PD-SIP and Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office	March 2016	Not started		
<p>Evaluation Recommendation 4: Make technical support available for an evidence-based approach early in the process. Given that technical expertise in transfer programme design and in the evidence requirements is often weak at the country office and counterpart level, UNICEF needs to promote access to properly skilled technical guidance within and outside the organization. Building on existing capacities will be the most efficient approach. Issues of particular emphasis include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making available sufficient technical support for good programming (based on evidence and analysis) in order to achieve desired results. • Arranging easy-to-locate access to experts both in programme design and in evaluation/research design. • Engaging with offices early enough so that poorly-evidenced designs and under-budgeting can be detected and corrected. • Paying attention to the entire evidence plan within which evaluation will be one part. 					
<p>Management Response: (Agree, Partially Agree, Disagree): Agree - Please note that many COs do have the technical capacity to support government partners in design and evidence generation. Nonetheless, increasing demand for UNICEF support from government and other partners challenges existing total capacity.</p>					
<p>If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report reasons:</p>					
Actions planned	Responsible office/person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not Started Underway Completed Cancelled	Actions taken	Supporting documents
PD/SIP to work with ROs to identify key internal technical capacity gaps and expertise on social protection, including support to transfer programme design and research, and priority actions. Develop and begin implementation of an action plan to strengthen capacity and make better use of internal expertise and source additional support required.	PD-SIP with ROs and Division of Human Resources	March 2016	Not started		

Expand partnerships with policy think tanks and capacity-building institutions (e.g. the International Policy Center for Inclusive Growth in Brazil, the Economic Policy Research Institute in South Africa, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean) to improve access to high-level expertise and to support horizontal cooperation.	PD-SIP with ROs	September 2016	Not started		
<p>Evaluation Recommendation 5: Take action to expand the social protection evidence base beyond cash transfers. This synthesis has drawn together the rich evidence on cash transfers. However, in reviewing the evidence base on social protection more generally, it became clear that the wider evidence base is relatively weak. Evaluations, research, studies and more generally data collection and analysis beyond cash transfers are scarce. UNICEF should therefore take action to expand and deepen the evidence base to cover other areas of social protection programming.</p>					
<p>Management Response: (Agree, Partially Agree, Disagree): Agree - Close link with Evaluation Recommendation 1.</p>					
<p>If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report reasons:</p>					
Actions planned	Responsible office/person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not Started Underway Completed Cancelled	Actions taken	Supporting documents
As outlined under Recommendation 1: Produce review of existing evidence around the effect of specific social protection interventions, including combinations and ‘Cash Plus’ on key child outcomes, e.g. health, education, child protection, working with PD sections and external partners (United Nations, WB, research institutes and policy think tanks).	PD-SIP and OoR working in conjunction with PD sections	March 2016	Not started		

Evaluation Recommendation 6: Develop the evidence base on effectiveness of cash transfer programmes in humanitarian action.

UNICEF has engaged in cash transfers in various humanitarian contexts and is considering scaling up such efforts further. However, little is known about the effectiveness of cash transfer modalities in these settings. Experience in non-humanitarian settings could offer important guidance about working successfully in humanitarian or fragile contexts. UNICEF should therefore invest in systematic assessments of the use of cash transfers in humanitarian contexts. Consideration should also be given to drawing evidence and approaches from cash transfer programmes outside the field of humanitarian action and also to ways of developing programming that links across different contexts.

Management Response: (Agree, Partially Agree, Disagree): Partially agree

If recommendation is rejected or partially accepted, report reasons: The necessary evidence is available from more working level documents as well as external evaluations and research, and supports the readiness for scale-up. This indicates a need to focus on technical support, capacity-building and internal operational learning. We agree however, that we should continue to monitor and evaluate in order to refine our approach and adjust to different contexts.

Actions planned	Responsible office/person	Expected completion date	Implementation stage: Not Started Underway Completed Cancelled	Actions taken	Supporting documents
Systematically incorporate monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in all cash and other social protection interventions in emergency contexts going forward.	Office of Emergency Programmes (EMOPS), PD-SIP and concerned COs/ROs	January 2016 to begin implementation	Underway	Have begun strengthening M&E in Nepal emergency cash response.	Mission report and project document.
Develop joint guidance, technical support and internal community of practice to support cash-based programming in humanitarian action, focused on scaling up and strengthening existing national social programmes and systems where feasible.	PD-SIP and EMOPS	March 2016	Underway	Joint initiative underway between EMOPS and PD-SIP to develop joint guidance, direct field technical support and community of practice. Initial scoping of needs and existing practice completed.	Presentation available on joint initiative and scoping of needs. Joint paper on existing practice and linkages.