THE PREVENTION COLLABORATIVE

EVIDENCE BRIEF

CASH TRANSFERS AND INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE:

FINDINGS FROM A REVIEW OF QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE STUDIES IN LOW- AND MIDDLE-INCOME COUNTRIES

SUMMARY

- Cash transfers to poor households reduce intimate partner violence (IPV) in over 70% of the 22 rigorous quantitative and qualitative studies reviewed. Within the quantitative evidence, reductions are strongest for physical and/or sexual IPV, while the evidence is less clear for other types of abuse, such as emotional IPV and controlling behaviours.
- Even small reductions in IPV achieved through individual programmes may be meaningful, given the widespread coverage, scalability and cost-effectiveness of cash transfers.
- Impacts are primarily achieved through three pathways: a) increased economic security and emotional wellbeing; b) reduced intra-household conflict; and c) increases in women's empowerment.
- Programme design and framing are potentially important to programme impact. Design issues include whether the programme provides cash directly to women, whether messaging around the transfer directly challenges gender norms, and whether the programme includes complementary activities that build social capital, knowledge, skills or self-efficacy.
- More research is needed across diverse settings to determine how reductions in IPV can be sustained beyond the programme period and to understand which design features will maximise beneficial impacts.

BACKGROUND

Social safety nets, including cash transfers, have become increasingly popular tools to reduce poverty and economic inequality and improve the lives and livelihoods of poor and vulnerable individuals in low- and middle-income countries. According to the World Bank's State of Social Safety Nets (2015), over 1.9 billion people worldwide were enrolled in some form of social safety net, with over 718 million people covered by cash transfer programmes specifically.

Such programmes have demonstrated a range of positive impacts on outcomes such as education, food security and poverty reduction. However, while evidence increasingly suggests that cash transfers may also help to reduce IPV, little is known about how they do so, or how to design programmes to maximize reductions in IPV while mitigating any potential adverse impacts.

A recent study (Buller et al., 2018) reviewed 22 qualitative and quantitative studies across 13 low- and middle-income countries in Latin America, Africa and Asia, representing all of the studies of cash transfers that included IPV as an outcome that were available as of early 2018. Of the 22 studies examined, 73% (16 studies) provided evidence that cash transfer programmes decreased IPV, two showed mixed impacts (9%), and four showed no impact (18%).

REVIEW OBJECTIVES

1. Review quantitative and qualitative evidence linking cash transfers and IPV, focusing on impacts and underlying mechanisms.
2. Build a programme theory linking cash transfers and IPV.
3. Propose promising programme design features and identify research gaps needed to further understand the potential of cash transfers for violence reduction.

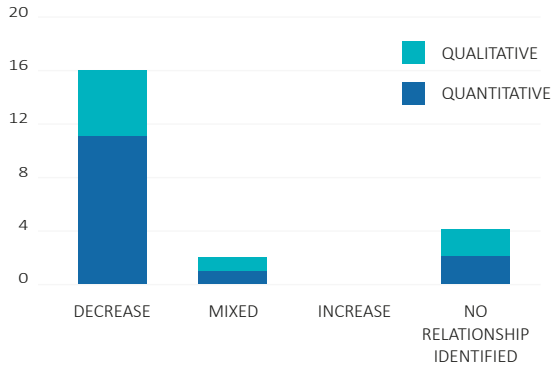
KEY FINDINGS

Quantitatively, studies demonstrated stronger impacts of cash transfers on physical and/or sexual IPV and weaker impacts on emotional IPV and controlling behaviours: 44% of studies assessing physical and/or sexual IPV demonstrated a significant reduction in violence, as compared with only 8% of those assessing emotional violence and 38% assessing other outcomes (e.g. controlling behaviours).
For more information on the details of the methodology for selecting and reviewing studies, please see the full paper.

Over 70% of studies find that cash transfers decrease IPV through changes in economic security, intra-household conflict, and women's empowerment.

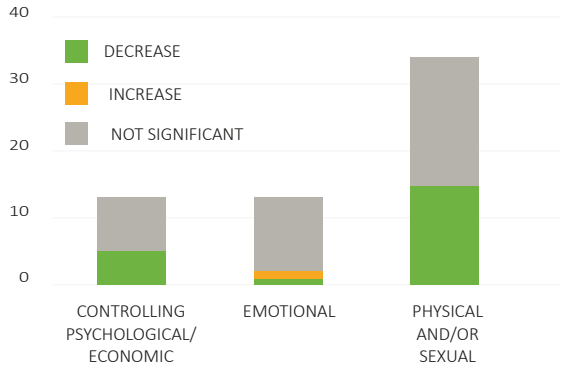
HIGH-LEVEL RESULTS: **OVERALL REDUCTION IN IPV**

IMPACT OF CASH TRANSFER ON IPV [22 studies]



11 of 14 quantitative and **5 of 8** qualitative studies showed decreases; **2** studies with mixed results

QUANTITATIVE INDICATORS [56 by IPV type]



Impacts ranged from **11% to 66%** reduction in IPV outcomes

LINKAGES BETWEEN **CASH TRANSFER PROGRAMMES AND IPV**

While many studies theorise mechanisms through which cash transfers may affect IPV, few have tested these pathways empirically or analysed the ways in which complementary activities (including trainings or linkages to health services) may create synergistic or independent impacts on IPV. In addition, few studies have investigated sources of potential increases in IPV, particularly contextual factors such as laws, norms and structures that perpetuate gender inequality, male authority over women's wellbeing and women's economic dependence on men. Drawing on analysis of the reviewed studies and related literature, the authors put forth a "programme theory" that proposes three main pathways through which cash transfers may affect IPV risk. For each pathway, they examined what evidence exists in the wider literature to support each step in the hypothesised pathway.

THREE MAIN PATHWAYS

1
ECONOMIC SECURITY AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

HOUSEHOLD LEVEL IMPACT

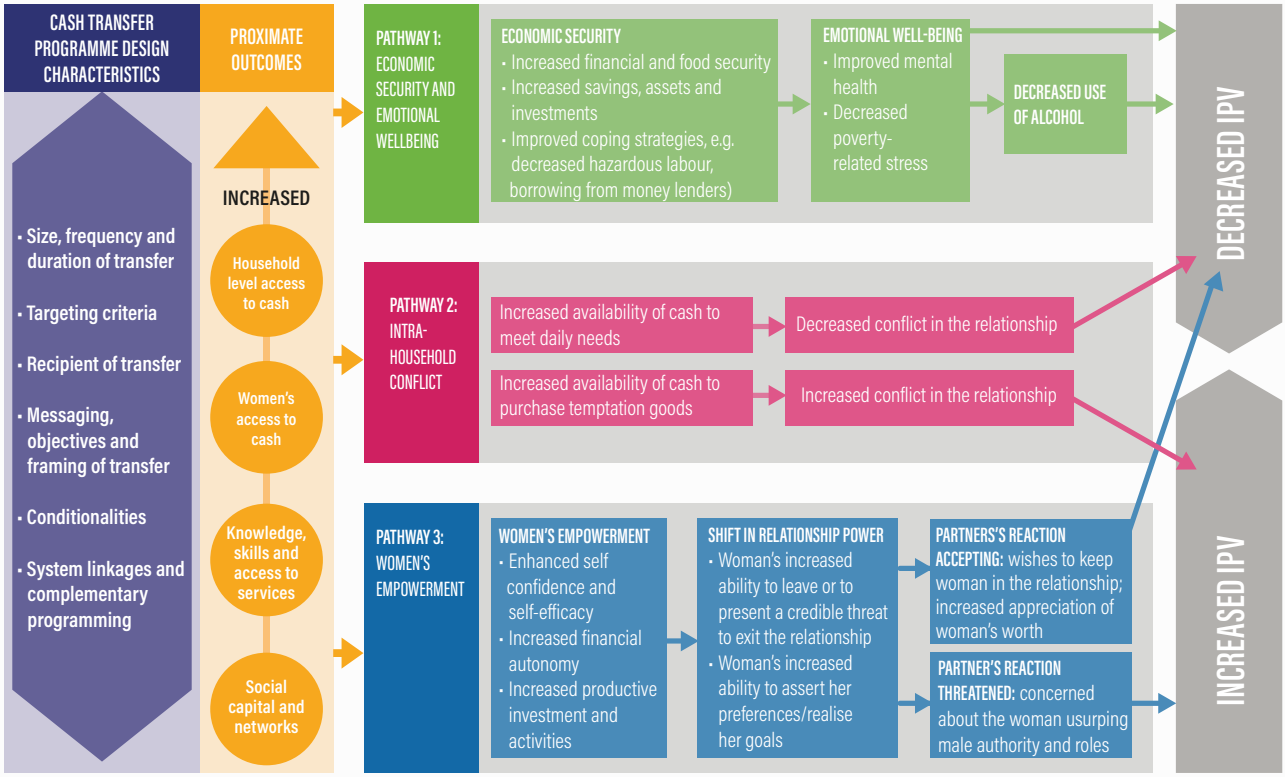
2
INTRA-HOUSEHOLD CONFLICT

MARITAL DYNAMIC IMPACT

3
WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

WOMAN-SPECIFIC IMPACT

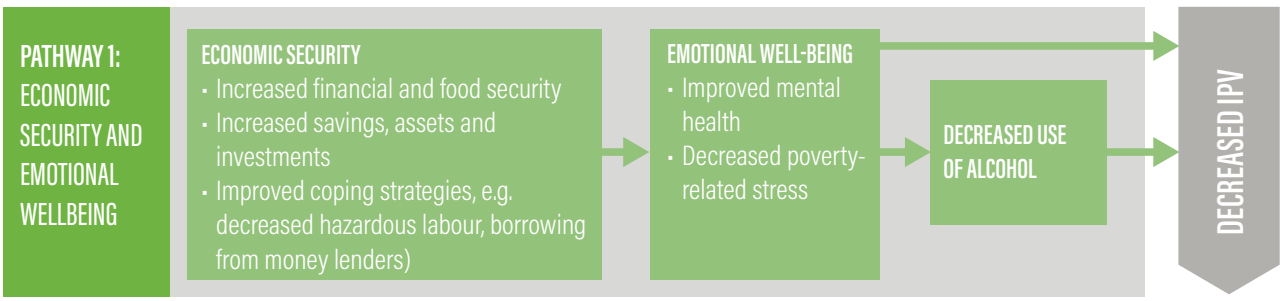
FIGURE 1: PROGRAMME THEORY LINKING CASH TRANSFERS AND INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE



Thus far, there is some evidence for each of the three pathways proposed except for the potential of transfers to increase risk through increased consumption of temptation goods. Cash transfers appear to reduce risk of IPV on average, even though some women may be at greater risk of violence if their partners react negatively to the women's increased economic agency.

PATHWAY 1: ECONOMIC SECURITY AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

A significant number of the qualitative and quantitative studies, as well as a large body of rigorous literature, suggest that cash transfers improve a household's overall economic standing, reduce poverty-related stressors, and increase emotional well-being and overall mental health. These positive effects may either lead directly to decreases in IPV or may work indirectly through decreases in the use of alcohol or other negative coping mechanisms in response to poverty and financial pressures.



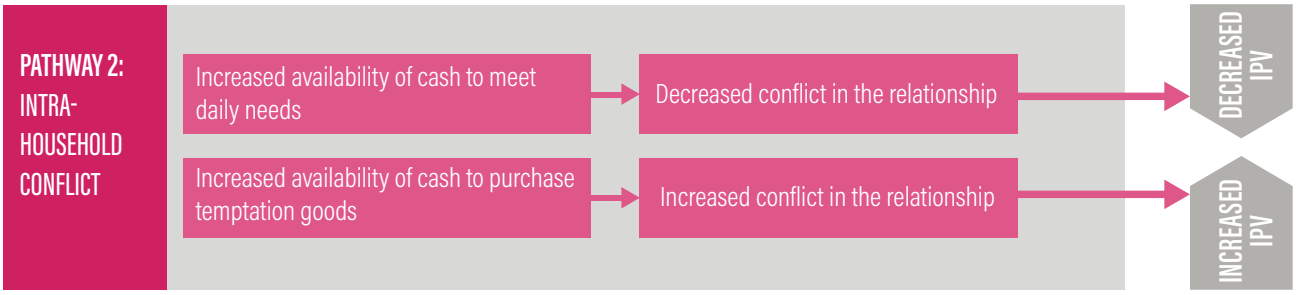
PATHWAY 2: INTRA-HOUSEHOLD CONFLICT

In the context of poverty, conflicts over lack of money and tight household budgets have been identified as a trigger for IPV. Particularly when women must negotiate each day for the money to buy food and other household essentials, tensions around money become a common flashpoint for arguments. Numerous studies show that cash transfers can reduce these types of arguments and conflict, especially among very poor families.

Alternatively, if the extra funds are used for expenditures that do not benefit all household members (for example, for gambling or purchasing alcohol, tobacco or other drugs) or if partners disagree on how the money should be spent, cash could theoretically create new sources of marital conflict. Existing programme evaluations, however, do not find evidence that cash transfers increase consumption of "temptation goods"; therefore the evidence for this hypothesized pathway is limited.

"There had been many fights. Because children needed many things that we could not have afforded. I asked my husband and he used to say there is no money. Then I used to get upset and started to yell. We had many fights because of poverty. Not only for us, for all poor, fights come from suffering"

Woman participant, cash transfer programme, Turkey
(Yildirim, Ozdemir and Sezgin, 2014)

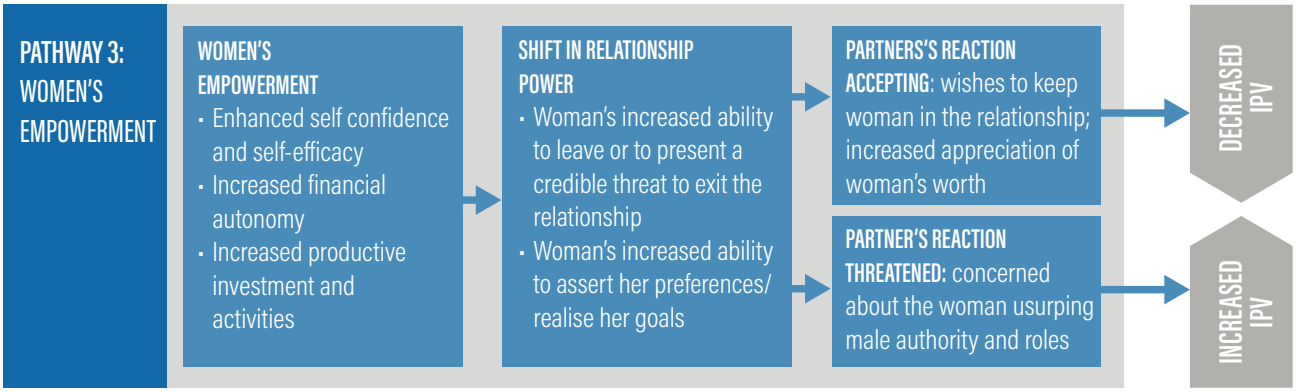


PATHWAY 3: WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Finally, studies show that cash transfers—particularly if given directly to women—may increase a woman's bargaining power, strengthening her self-worth and potentially increasing her perceived value to the household. Direct receipt of cash can also increase women's financial autonomy and contribute to enhanced self-efficacy and confidence, potentially shifting the balance of power between a woman and her male partner. However, this pathway may have mixed effects depending on a man's response to shifts in resources or power dynamics. For example, if men feel threatened by women's income earning, they may use violence as a means to reassert their authority.

"Earlier my husband would sometimes sell household items without consulting me. But now that I have my own money, I can have a say on how to spend income… With the money, a woman may buy seedlings for planting and hire an ox-plough or tractor or casual labour to dig for her"

Woman interviewee in UCT, Northern Uganda
(Nuwakora 2014)



IMPLICATIONS FOR **PRACTITIONERS**

As cash transfers are primarily used to respond to poverty and economic vulnerability, it is unlikely that large-scale government programmes will be designed with the primary objective of decreasing IPV. However, if small changes in programme design can facilitate decreases in IPV, this could result in substantial gains for women's well-being and gender equity.

Cash transfer programmes have been shown to have substantial reach at relatively low cost. Harnessing this potential to address IPV may realise significant gains across sectors and may do so without diverting the scarce resources available for violence-specific programming.

IMPLICATIONS FOR **PROGRAMME DESIGN**

There is a need to better understand how programme design features (such as who receives the transfer, the amount of money and duration of transfers) affect outcomes and pathways. Few of the quantitative studies examined in this review had the ability to measure and compare the impact of different design variations on IPV and none was able to test synergies between programme components. However, some guidance regarding programming design can be deduced from the review:

- **Recipient of the transfer**. To date, there is very little evidence on how different targeting strategies for transfers may affect their impact on IPV. The majority of studies included in this review transferred cash explicitly to women. Whilst many hypothesise that transfers targeted to women will benefit them more, there is little data on how transfers impact IPV when men are the main recipient, as is the case in many programmes in Africa.

- **Linkages/complementary activities.** The benefits of complementary activities such as trainings and group meetings are also likely to be a key factor shaping how a programme impacts IPV. Complementary activities could independently decrease IPV by empowering women through increased knowledge on nutrition, health, financial literacy and more, leading to improved self-esteem, social interaction and social capital. A study from Bangladesh suggests that complementary activities may be critical for sustaining programme impact (Roy et al., 2019).

- **Programme framing and objectives.** How a programme is "framed" may influence its impact on IPV via its influence on gender dynamics and its acceptability to male partners. Many existing programmes do not challenge traditional gender roles or norms; they are positioned as vehicles to improve household nutrition or child health. Money going to women for such purposes may be seen as consistent with women's domestic roles and therefore is non-threatening to men. It will be important to study whether transfers with a more explicit women's empowerment frame also reduce IPV and under what conditions.

- **Transfer amount, duration, and frequency.** Transfer amount, duration and frequency are core components to any cash transfer programme and ensure that support is substantial enough to have a lasting impact. Programmes that do not give benefits regularly over a sustained time period are unlikely to be effective. In terms of potential to affect IPV, more "acceptable" shifts might be achieved by making smaller, more regular transfers conducive to small household purchases that women manage, rather than large, lump-sum transfers.

- **Potential for gender transformation**. There is increasing interest in discerning whether and how cash transfer programmes can more directly empower women, without increasing their risk of violence. Programmes that frame their purpose explicitly in terms of female empowerment or women's economic strengthening should be monitored carefully for male backlash and evaluated fully to assess their impact. Efforts should be made to include complementary activities that specifically include critical reflection on gender, power and household decision-making.

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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- **Evaluations should use internationally validated measures of IPV** that are sensitive enough to capture programme impacts. Existing research, for example, reveals little about how cash transfers affect the frequency and severity of IPV.

- **Studies should move beyond simply measuring impact** to better understand the pathways through which cash and complementary programmes affect IPV. Mixed methods studies will advance our understanding of these links better than either quantitative or qualitative studies alone; however, to date few mixed-methods evaluations have been conducted.

- **More evidence is needed on programme design and complementary activities,** including add-on components with the ability to shift intra-household power relations. Promising components include group-based approaches that increase social capital and linkages to other financial services.

- **Studies should examine effects of transfers on other types of violence** in particular if cash has direct or indirect impacts on violence against children, adolescents and on other types of intra-household violence (e.g. from in-laws and co-wives). To date few studies have examined the impact of transfers on multiple types of violence within the family. However, one recent study in Mali (Heath et al., 2018) found that transfers given to men resulted in statistically significant reductions in IPV in polygamous households compared to largely no impacts in non-polygamous households, suggesting family context is important.

- **There are large regional and contextual gaps in our understanding,** with evidence skewed to Latin America and little evidence from Asia and the Middle East. Evidence from sub-Saharan Africa is scarce and is concentrated in Eastern and Southern Africa. There is also a need to better understand how dynamics may differ in humanitarian settings.

- **More information is needed on long-term impacts,** including how impacts may vary over time and whether impacts are sustainable after cash transfers end. One recent Randomised Control Trial (RCT) from Bangladesh found that reduction in IPV from cash transfers was only sustained in the group that was randomised to receive cash plus group-based nutrition trainings and home visits. The authors speculate that complementary activities that build social capital and knowledge may be necessary to maintain impacts after the transfers end (Roy et al., 2019).

- **Studies should evaluate how gender norms affect the trajectory of programme impacts,** or if cash transfers have the ability to shift power dynamics within the household.

SOURCE ARTICLE:

Buller, A. M., Peterman, A., Ranganathan, M., Bleile, A., Hidrobo, M., & Heise, L. (2018). A Mixed-Method Review of Cash Transfers and Intimate Partner Violence in Low- and Middle-Income Countries. The World Bank Research Observer, 33(2), pp.218–258. https://doi.org/10.1093/wbro/lky002

OTHER REFERENCES:

Heath, R., Hidrobo, M. & Roy, S. (2018). Cash Transfers, Polygamy and Intimate Partner Violence: Experimental Evidence from Mali. IFPRI Discussion Paper 01785.
http://ebrary.ifpri.org/utils/getfile/collection/p15738coll2/id/133031/filename/133244.pdf

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Roy, S., Hidrobo, M., Hoddinott J. & Ahmed, A. (forthcoming, 2019). "Transfers, Behavior Change Communication, and Intimate Partner Violence: Post-Program Evidence from Rural Bangladesh." Review of Economics and Statistics.

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

https://www.ifpri.org/project/cash-transfer-and-intimate-partner-violence-research-collaborative
http://www.cashlearning.org/

THE PREVENTION COLLABORATIVE

The Prevention Collaborative works to strengthen the ability of key actors to deliver cutting edge violence prevention interventions informed by research-based evidence, practice-based learning and feminist principles. For more information go to www.prevention-collaborative.org

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