

Evidence at Your Fingertips Series

Can Safety Nets Reduce Gender-Based Violence? How?

Summary

1. A growing body of evidence finds that cash transfers reduce intimate partner violence (IPV) in various contexts, even when the cash transfer was not designed to do so. The effects are comparable with standalone violence-prevention interventions and consistent with various forms of IPV (physical, emotional, controlling behavior).
2. Researchers hypothesize that safety nets curb gender-based violence (GBV) via three impact pathways: by reducing poverty and food insecurity, empowering women, and increasing women's social capital.
3. Average results mask heterogeneity; some groups of women are at higher risk of GBV than others. For example, women whose partners have low levels of education and abuse alcohol tend to be at greater risk of GBV.
4. There is little systematic evidence on how specific design features, such as size and frequency of transfers, affect GBV. Existing evidence suggests that digital payments may be more convenient for women and more likely to allow them to retain control over the transfers, reducing risk of GBV.
5. Evidence also suggests that, when cash transfers are combined with group-based accompanying measures, they are more likely to reduce IPV, even if GBV prevention is not an explicit objective of the accompanying measures.

Introduction

A growing body of evidence finds that cash transfers reduce violence against women and children—even when the cash transfer was not designed with violence prevention in mind.

Research on social protection and GBV¹ has focused on the impacts of cash transfers on IPV.² A few studies have examined impacts on violence against children and adolescent girls. Overall, the evidence finds that the effects of cash transfers in curbing violence against women and children are overwhelmingly positive and comparable with standalone violence-prevention interventions.

There is limited systematic evidence on how specific cash transfer design features affect GBV.

Most impact evaluations do not distinguish the effects of specific design and implementation features or consider subsets of households with specific characteristics, but they find that, on average, cash transfers reduce multiple forms of GBV in various contexts. Qualitative evidence suggests that there are opportunities to enhance these impacts through program design and implementation choices (Botea et al. 2021).

Key Questions

1. **What are the pathways through which cash transfers affect GBV?**
2. **How do cash transfers affect different kinds of GBV? How do different types of cash transfer programs (e.g., public works, economic inclusion programs) affect GBV?**
3. **What do we know about specific design choices in relation to GBV?** Who should receive the benefit? How should it be transferred? How do transfer size, frequency, and duration affect GBV? What is the role of accompanying measures?

1 **Gender-based violence** is an umbrella term for any harmful act perpetrated against a person's will and based on socially ascribed (that is, gender) differences between males and females. It includes acts that inflict physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering and threats of such acts, coercion, and other deprivations of liberty.

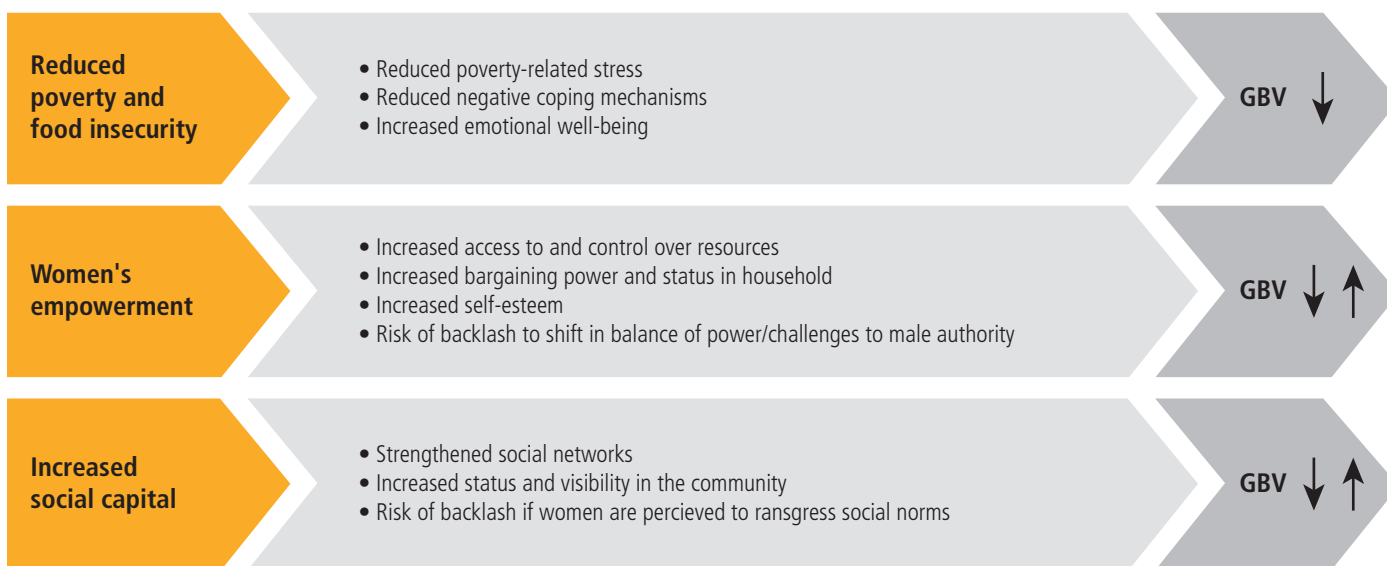
2 **Intimate partner violence** refers to violence that a current or former spouse or partner in an intimate relationship commits against the other spouse or partner.

Impact Pathways

Researchers have proposed several direct and indirect pathways through which cash transfers can affect the prevalence of violence against women and children. Figure 1 presents three direct pathways through which

cash transfers affect GBV: poverty reduction, women's empowerment, and social capital accumulation. Although most impact evaluations focus on IPV, cash transfer recipients may also be at risk of other forms of violence that are not the focus of this note, including sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment.³

Figure 1: **Pathways for Effects of Cash Transfers on Gender-Based Violence**



Reducing Poverty and Food Insecurity

The first pathway through which cash transfers curb violence within households is reducing poverty and food insecurity. Violence within households is often associated with food insecurity, poverty, unemployment, and excessive alcohol use or drug addiction. Violence rates rise as the mental health of household members deteriorates or as men feel unable to fulfill their socially prescribed role as providers. Men who

experience work- or unemployment-related stress are more likely to be depressed and use violence against their partners (Dooley et al. 2019). Cash transfers reduce poverty-related stress and improve emotional well-being, reducing violence in the household (Barrington et al. 2022; Buller et al. 2018; Ellsberg et al. 2015; Peterman, Valli and Palermo 2021; Vyas and Watts 2009). Greater access to cash, particularly in extremely poor households, can ease intrahousehold conflict by reducing arguments over use of scarce resources and daily spending decisions (Buller et al. 2018). Predictability and regularity of transfers are important for this pathway to take effect.

³ **Sexual exploitation** includes any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust for sexual purposes, including but not limited to profiting monetarily, socially, or politically from the sexual exploitation of another. **Sexual abuse** includes any actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions. **Sexual harassment** includes any unwelcome sexual advance; request for sexual favor; or verbal or physical conduct or gesture of a sexual nature that might reasonably be expected or perceived to cause offence or humiliation if such conduct interferes with work, is made a condition of employment, or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

Empowering Women

Cash transfers can empower women, reducing GBV.

There are gender gaps in income and asset ownership in most regions. Women are often the designated recipients of cash transfers because of their instrumental role in human development outcomes for children. Transferring resources to women may also increase their bargaining power. In focus group discussions among beneficiaries of the Bangladesh Jawno Program, women reported improvement in status and treatment by husbands and mothers-in-law as a result of receiving transfers (Ali and Kuttner 2020). Greater access to own resources reduces women's dependence and the need to ask for money, which may eliminate conflicts. In focus group discussions with beneficiaries of Bangladesh's Employment Generation Program for the Poorest, women reported that intimate partners were likely to be more cautious about verbal harassment after the women had become income earners (Ali and Kuttner 2020). Similar findings were reported in Ghana (Peterman, Valli, and Palermo 2021). Women's increased bargaining power may reduce their tolerance for violent behavior and increase their ability to exit violent relationships.⁴

Nevertheless, empowerment may come with risks of backlash, particularly for the most vulnerable.

A shift in the balance of power toward women can lead to backlash by men, including violence (Eswaran and Malhotra 2011). If transfers to women elevate their status in the household, men may feel threatened and use violence to reassert authority and control. This is especially likely in patriarchal contexts when women start contributing more to household finances or take jobs that defy traditional social norms (García-Moreno et al. 2005; Hautzinger 2003; Hughes et al. 2015), but mitigation measures such as ensuring that norm holders in the community support women's participation in cash-transfer programs can reduce the risk of backlash. It is important to balance the risk of backlash with the risk of reinforcing unequal gender norms that are at the root of GBV and persistent gender gaps.

Increasing Women's Social Capital

Cash transfers can reduce GBV by strengthening women's social networks and social capital.

Accompanying measures, such as group-based training and behavior change sessions, can help reduce GBV. Interacting with service providers can increase access for underserved communities. Participating in training sessions not only builds skills, but also reinforces social bonds and support networks. These activities tend to boost self-esteem and self-efficacy, especially if life skills are taught, which can increase women's ability to communicate and negotiate effectively for their priorities. Participating in group activities may also make violence more visible and therefore "costly" to men, increasing the risk of public exposure and social sanctions for misbehavior (Brody et al. 2015; Pavanello et al. 2016; Stets 1991; Van Wyk et al. 2003).

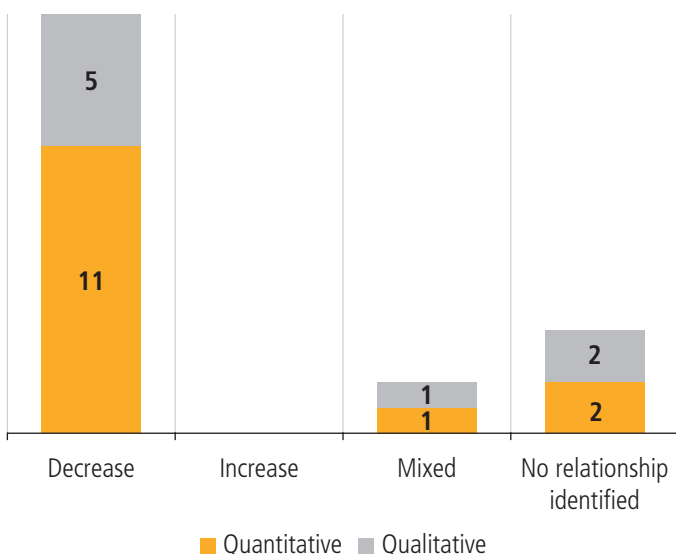
Evidence Overview

Effects of Cash Transfers on GBV

A growing body of evidence from a cross-section of low- and middle-income countries finds that cash transfers have significant potential to reduce violence against women and children, even if GBV prevention is not an explicit program objective. A review of 22 studies in low- and middle-income countries found reductions in IPV of 11 percent to 66 percent (Buller et al. 2018). A mixed-methods review found that 11 of the 14 quantitative studies (79 percent) found declines in IPV attributable to the program, one found mixed impacts (decreases and increases depending on the type of IPV measured), two found no impacts and five of the eight qualitative studies found a reduction in IPV after receipt of cash transfers; one showed mixed results, with IPV decreasing in some households and increasing in others; and two found no clear effect of cash transfers on IPV (Figure 2).

⁴ Some men may become less violent so that their partners choose not to exit the marriage, although it is unclear whether the transfer amounts are sufficient to constitute a credible threat to exit marriage (Farmer and Tiefenthaler 1997; Tauchen, Witte, and Long 1991).

Figure 2: Overall Effects of Cash Transfers on Intimate Partner Violence (Combined Results of 22 Studies)



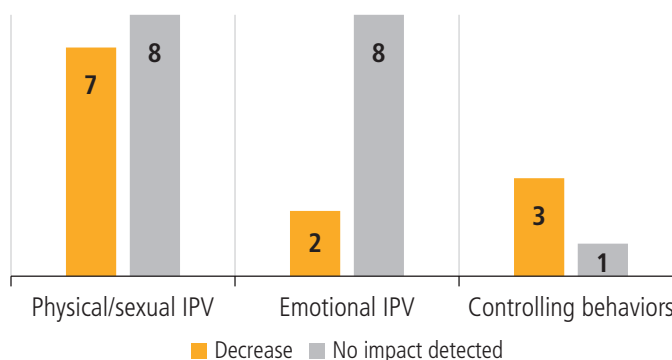
Source: Buller et al. 2018.

Effects of Cash Transfers on Different Types of IPV

Overall, the impact of cash transfers on prevalence of IPV is consistent for various forms of IPV. A recent meta-analysis found a significant reduction, ranging from 2 to 4 percentage points, in physical (including sexual) and emotional violence and controlling behaviors as a result of cash transfer interventions (Figure 3).⁵ Of the 14 studies that directly examined the relationship with IPV, none found that

cash transfers were associated with a significant overall increase in IPV. Seven of the 14 studies found significant declines in physical or sexual IPV,⁶ and the remainder found no significant impact. The direction of the effects in most of the studies that examined emotional IPV also suggested a decrease; two of 10 studies produced statistically significant estimates. Four studies reported results for controlling behaviors, for instance, the husband restricting the woman’s contact with her family; three of the four found that cash transfers significantly reduced this type of behavior.⁷ More-recent research has found similar results.⁸

Figure 3: Effects of Cash Transfers on Different Types of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) (Combined Results of 14 Studies)



Source: Baranov et al. 2021.

Cash transfers can also significantly reduce nonpartner violence. A study in the Philippines examined the impact of cash transfers on different types

5 There is substantial overlap in the studies covered by Buller et al. (2018) and Baranov et al. (2021). In addition to the nine studies covered in both, Buller et al. (2018) included quasi-experimental and qualitative studies, and Baranov et al. (2021) included studies that had been published since Buller et al. 2018.

6 Another quasi-experimental study in Peru found a significant reduction in physical IPV, with the cash transfer program reducing the prevalence of physical IPV by 25 percent to 30 percent. This was attributed to reductions in alcohol consumption and alcohol-related aggression from male partners (Díaz and Saldarriaga 2021).

7 The 14 studies that Buller et al. (2018) reviewed examine 56 IPV indicators, including 34 measures of physical or sexual violence. Of the 56 outcomes, 20 (36 percent) were statistically significant and negative. Cash transfers had no significant effect on IPV in the remaining 63 percent. For significant reductions in IPV, the percentage varies according to category of violence examined, with a significant reduction in 44 percent of indicators of physical or sexual IPV and 38 percent of other outcome indicators (e.g., controlling behaviors), whereas there was a reduction in only 8 percent of emotional IPV indicators. The one case in which an increase was found in emotional IPV was in the Give Directly pilot initiative in western Kenya in a comparison of treatment and nontreatment households in the same villages (Haushofer and Shapiro 2016). Nine of these impacts were reductions of 30 percent or more, which is substantial given that most evaluations took place over the short or medium term.

8 Reductions: Heath, Hidrobo, and Roy (2020); Lees et al. (2021); Roy et al. (2019); WFP (2019) (qualitative in Bangladesh, the Arab Republic of Egypt, El Salvador, Jordan, and Mali). No impact detected: Haushofer, Mudida, and Shapiro (2019); Haushofer and Shapiro (2018); Litwin et al. (2019).

of GBV: IPV, domestic violence by nonpartners (e.g., other relatives), and violence outside the home. Although it found no impact on IPV and violence outside the home, it found a measurable decline in nonpartner domestic violence. This is attributed to the same pathways described above—less stress because of higher income, empowerment, and stronger social networks (Dervisevic, Perova, and Sahay 2022). Another study in Tanzania found that cash plus interventions reduced female participants' experiences of sexual violence (not just by intimate partners) by 5 percentage points and male participants' perpetration of physical violence by 6 percentage points (Palermo, Prencipe, and Kajula 2021). This was attributed to a reduction in household poverty, an increase in women's self-esteem, and an improvement in men's attitudes.

Heterogeneous Effects of Cash Transfers on GBV

These encouraging average effects may nonetheless mask greater IPV risk for certain subgroups. Evidence from Latin America shows that, although average IPV prevalence among beneficiaries declined after cash transfers were delivered, the prevalence of some forms of violence increased in less-educated households. In Ecuador, for example, researchers found a decrease in controlling behavior on average but a substantial rise in emotional violence in beneficiary households in which women had less than six years of schooling and husbands had even lower levels of education (Hidrobo and Fernald 2013). In Mexico, if husbands had low educational attainment or no education and abused alcohol, aggressive behavior after drinking increased by 30 percent—increasing even more if the wives were younger (Angelucci 2008). These studies suggest that there may be greater risk of backlash when men have low levels of education. Such violence may stem from a sense of powerlessness or insecurity,

especially if they feel unable to meet the roles socially assigned to them (Jewkes 2002).

Effects also differ based on household structure.⁹

For instance, Mali's national unconditional cash transfer program had no systematic effects on IPV in monogamous households but had large, significant reductions in polygamous households. In particular, violence decreased against second and later wives, who had faced the highest rates of violence before the program. Conversely, in Ghana, reductions in IPV were observed only in monogamous households, with no reductions in any domain of IPV in polygamous households (Peterman, Valli, and Palermo 2021). The conflicting findings of these two studies may reflect the different sex of the transfer recipients—men in Mali and women in Ghana—although more research is needed to establish patterns. In the case of Zambia's Social Cash Transfer Program (providing support to woman-headed households, a large number of whom were older widowed women), qualitative research revealed that the risks of GBV arose mainly from adult sons. If vulnerabilities related to age and sex intersect, different risk-mitigation strategies may be needed (Kuttner and Nkonkomalimba 2020).

Effects of Cash Transfers on Violence Against Children

There is some evidence that cash transfers reduce violence against children.¹⁰ The drivers of violence against women and children overlap, so the impact pathways can be expected to show parallels (Fulu et al. 2017). A systematic review of 14 studies in low- and middle-income countries found that there were statistically significant reductions in violence against children according to approximately 20 percent of indicators (Peterman et al. 2017). The most promising evidence was related to sexual violence that female

⁹ Polygamous households in Burkina Faso were analyzed to see how variations in household structures, intrahousehold dynamics, division of responsibility, and resource allocation may mediate outcomes (Guilbert and Pierotti 2016).

¹⁰ Although evidence of impacts on other household members is limited, social assistance is expected to reduce neglect and abuse of these members, including children, by reducing poverty-related stress, enhancing psychological well-being, and improving caregiving.

adolescents experienced in Africa, whereas there was less-clear evidence for other regions and for young child measures, including harsh discipline. Similar to IPV, reductions in violence against children are thought to be mainly the result of an increase in economic security leading to less need for negative coping mechanisms, such as transactional sex, access to education, a reduction in poverty-related stress, and a reduction in intrahousehold conflict. Recent evidence from Tanzania bolsters these findings by showing that participation in a cash-plus intervention among adolescents reduces sexual violence against girls and physical violence perpetrated by boys.¹¹ Another study in the Philippines found that parenting interventions as part of a cash-transfer program reduced violence against children, measured as a reduction in overall child maltreatment, emotional abuse, physical abuse, and neglect (Lachman et al. 2021). These findings were sustained at one-year follow-up.¹²

Public Works

The work requirement in public works schemes may affect women’s empowerment and GBV in certain contexts. Public works schemes transfer cash (wages) conditional on provision of labor. In Bangladesh, public works programs have been found to be more effective than direct-transfer programs in empowering women, precisely because of the work requirement (Ahmed et al. 2009). Greater decision-making power in the households of female participants was attributed to a sense of pride for the income earned. Husbands respected their wives more if the wives became income earners, whereas there had been little appreciation of women’s unpaid domestic work. Based on evidence from India, depositing wages directly into women’s bank accounts

can strengthen the empowerment effect of public works, particularly for women without prior experience of working outside the home and whose husbands disapprove of their work (Field et al. 2019).

The empirical evidence of the impact of public works on IPV is mixed. In India, an increase in female labor participation as a result of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme was initially associated with a weakly significant increase in domestic violence (Amaral, Bandyopadhyay, and Sensarma 2015). More recently, researchers found that participation in the scheme mediated the adverse effect of drought on domestic violence by reducing poverty-related stress within the household (Sarma 2020). Similarly, evidence from Sierra Leone, found that physical IPV declined as a result of a public works program,¹³ but in Laos, although participation in public works was linked to an increase in empowerment, there was no impact on IPV (Dervisevic, Perova, and Sahay 2021; Perova et al. 2021). Context is key, and evidence suggests that the husband’s employment status often mediates the relationship between women’s empowerment and IPV. Women’s employment was associated with greater vulnerability to physical violence when their husbands’ employment was less secure, regardless of overall income, educational attainment, or rural or urban residence (Agarwal and Panda 2007). More research on the impact of public works on IPV is needed (Christian et al. 2022).

Economic Inclusion

Empirical evidence on the impact of economic inclusion programs on GBV remains limited, despite a growing body of research on the effectiveness of

11 Based on analysis presented by Lusajo Kajula, Tia M. Palermo, and others at the virtual Cash Transfer and Intimate Partner Violence Research Collaborative–Intimate Partner Violence Initiative workshop on October 29, 2020.

12 The study also found significant effects on reductions in dysfunctional parenting, child behavior problems, and IPV and greater parental efficacy and positive parenting.

13 Additional analysis based on data collected by Rosas and Sabarwal (2016).

the programs in improving employment, earnings, and other well-being outcomes for women.¹⁴

Few impact evaluations of economic inclusion programs measure impacts on IPV. In Afghanistan, a multifaceted program was found neither to increase nor decrease IPV among female participants (Corboz et al. 2019). In Burkina Faso, a comprehensive livelihoods intervention insignificantly decreased physical IPV (Ismayilova et al.

2018). An asset transfer and microfinance intervention in Uganda similarly found no impacts on IPV (Green et al. 2015). A livelihoods training program in South Africa failed to achieve a significant change in IPV experienced by women, despite a decrease in the reported perpetration of IPV by men (Gibbs et al. 2017). The subsequent section provides an overview of the evidence for specific design decisions, summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: **Summary of Impact of Design Decisions**

Design decision	Evidence on impact
Sex of transfer recipients	Research does not show any systematic differences in GBV when men versus women receive the transfer, although giving transfers to women can close other important gender gaps (e.g., bank account ownership) and improve other outcomes, including women's bargaining power and investment in children's human capital.
Transfer modality (cash, in-kind, voucher)	Although the evidence is limited, studies comparing transfer modalities have found no difference in impact on IPV.
Manual vs digital payments	Although research is limited, digital payments may be less burdensome and more likely to allow women to maintain control over resources.
Size and frequency of transfers	The evidence is inconclusive as to whether smaller, more-frequent or larger lumpsum transfers are better for prevention of GBV. Predictability of transfers (on-time payments) appears to be important for reducing IPV.
Accompanying measures	When cash transfers are combined with group-based accompanying measures, they are more likely to reduce IPV, even if GBV prevention is not an explicit objective of the activity.

Note: GBV, gender-based violence; IPV, intimate partner violence.

Transfer Decisions

Sex of Transfer Recipients

Empirical evidence on the effect of a transfer recipient's sex on IPV outcomes is limited. While the evidence remains limited, it suggests no difference in development outcomes overall based on the sex of the transfer recipient (Haushofer and Shapiro 2018, Lees et al. 2021). A study in Kenya comparing male and female transfer recipients found that decline in IPV was significant regardless of the sex of the recipient but that the magnitude of the effect was larger if the transfers were directed

toward women. The authors concluded that their results were broadly consistent with the view that transfers to women boost the women's bargaining power (Haushofer and Shapiro 2018). Evidence for a program in Mali in which men were the recipients of cash transfers showed a reduction in physical IPV but no difference in terms of sexual violence or controlling behavior (Lees et al. 2021). More evidence is needed, particularly in more-conservative settings, in which the risk of backlash may be greater.

¹⁴ Economic inclusion programs are multidimensional interventions that support individuals, households, and communities so that they can increase their incomes and accumulate assets. They are also referred to as productive inclusion or graduation programs (Banerjee et al. 2015).

Transfer Modality (Cash, In-Kind, Voucher)

Although the evidence is limited, studies comparing different transfer modalities find no difference in impact on IPV. Results in Ecuador indicate that transfers reduce controlling behaviors and physical or sexual violence by 6 to 7 percentage points (approximately 19 percent to 30 percent) but that the impacts do not vary according to transfer modality (food, cash, voucher) (Hidrobo, Peterman, and Heise 2016). The study suggests that an increase in women's bargaining power, and a decrease in poverty-related stress reduced IPV. The consistency of effects across transfer modalities was attributed to the framing as a food security intervention that did not challenge traditional gender norms. In Bangladesh, cash and food transfers did not have any impact on IPV 6 to 10 months after the end of a program unless group-based behavior change measures were also implemented (Roy et al. 2019). Although transferring cash or food alone did not affect emotional or physical IPV, transfers of either, with accompanying measures, reduced physical violence by 7 percentage points for cash transfers and 6 percentage points for food transfers. A follow-on survey four years after the intervention found that IPV reduction was sustained for the treatment arm that received accompanying measures. See the brief on cash transfer modality for more insights on the topic.

Manual vs. Digital Payments

Although research comparing the effects of manual and digital payments on IPV prevalence is limited, it suggests that digital payments are less burdensome and more likely to allow women to maintain control over resources.¹⁵ A study in Niger randomly assigned women to receive transfers through mobile payments or physical cash transfers provided at central locations. The study did not consider impacts on GBV,

but it found that mobile money recipients spent less time traveling to payment points and waiting for the transfers, were generally more likely to be engaged in productive economic activities, and spent more on children than women who received physical transfers (Aker et al. 2016). Researchers hypothesize that women's enhanced ability to conceal mobile money transfers boosted their ability to align expenditures with preferences. This accords with research suggesting that female recipients are willing to receive a smaller transfer to maintain control over transfers and conceal them from their spouses (Almås et al. 2018). Although these studies focused on the ability to conceal as a pathway to better use of resources, concealing transfer amounts may, in some cases, also help prevent backlash. A study in Mexico found that, if beneficiaries received debit cards, the median distance travelled to access their accounts was reduced from 4.8 to 1.3 kilometers, reducing the risk of opportunistic GBV (Bachas et al. 2018). The series also included a separate evidence brief on payment mechanisms.

Size and Frequency of Transfers

The evidence is inconclusive as to whether smaller, more-frequent or larger lumpsum transfers are better for prevention of GBV. Initial research in Mexico suggested that large payments are more associated with violence than small payments (Angelucci 2008). This was thought to show that there was less incentive for men to use violence to extract smaller amounts than larger sums, but a study in Kenya comparing lumpsum with periodic transfers reported a significant increase in a women's empowerment index after a lumpsum transfer (Haushofer and Shapiro 2018). The index incorporates measures of the frequency of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse by husbands and the justifications offered for violence against women. Some qualitative evidence suggests that, with smaller transfer values, men are less threatened in their role as primary providers, and backlash therefore becomes less likely (CaLP 2018). Smaller transfers may also be more easily concealed. Nevertheless, a study in

¹⁵ See Garz et al. (2020) for an overview of evidence on the impacts of digital payments.

northern Nigeria that varied the frequency of transfers did not find any difference in women's control over resources (Bastian, Goldstein, and Papineni 2017).

Regularity and predictability of transfers are also important in reducing GBV risk. Research on a conditional cash-transfer program in Colombia demonstrated that a delay in payments was associated with an increase in violence because delays create an adverse emotional response (Camacho, Gaviria, and Rodríguez 2016); IPV rates declined by approximately 5 percent around the time of receipt of the transfer. In Brazil, cash transfers contributed to a daily reduction in IPV of 0.5 percent to 4.3 percent; these effects were stronger on the day after a withdrawal (Nour 2022). The series includes a separate brief on cash transfer values and frequency.

Accompanying Measures

Evidence suggests that, when cash transfers are combined with group-based accompanying measures, they are more likely to reduce IPV, even if GBV prevention is not an explicit objective of the activity. Most cash or in-kind transfer programs include complementary activities (also known as “cash plus”) to enhance outcomes through training or coaching. Although the content, frequency, and duration of these activities vary, they are usually delivered in group settings and cover topics such as health, hygiene, and feeding practices to improve nutritional outcomes or early childhood stimulation and care.

Group-based activities build social capital and networks that can increase women's confidence and social status, raise the costs of violence for men, help resolve conflicts, or provide support to women seeking to exit abusive relationships (Brody

et al. 2015; Stets 1991). In a randomized controlled trial of a cash-plus program in Bangladesh, sustained reductions in IPV were achieved only if transfers were combined with nutrition training sessions.¹⁶ The sustained impacts were attributed to the increase in social capital and reduction in tolerance of IPV of beneficiaries, the increase in social cost to men for the use of violence, and the strengthened support network in cases of IPV. Similarly, in northern Nigeria, cash transfers alone increased sexual IPV, whereas the transfers reduced overall IPV if they were combined with a whole-of-village livelihoods program. A likely explanation is that husbands and community members also benefited from an increase in income and consumption resulting from the livelihoods component, making the transfers to women appear less threatening to men.

Accompanying measures are more likely to reduce IPV if they are designed to increase women's self-esteem and self-efficacy and improve their communication skills. Some participants in a South African program reported that the increase in self-confidence and social support and improvement in communication skills improved partner communication, which helped prevent conflicts from escalating into violence (Kim et al. 2007). Similarly, interventions that build aspirations have been found to be effective in reducing IPV risk. Cash transfers in Kenya reduced IPV if they were shown a 20-minute video showing positive role models (Mahmud, Orkin, and Riley 2020). Neither the cash transfers nor the aspirational video alone affected IPV.¹⁷

Accompanying measures are increasingly engaging husbands and community members to change social norms and build support for women's economic empowerment. This has occurred largely because of the recognition that programs targeting women need to reflect the complex relationships of beneficiaries rather than regarding them as autonomous agents. Several

16 IPV did not differ between women receiving transfers and a control group 6 to 10 months after the program, although women who received transfers along with behavior change communication experienced 26 percent less physical violence (Roy et al. 2019).

17 In northern Nigeria, reductions in IPV were sustained only if cash-transfer programs included add-on measures linked to community-wide livelihoods support (Cullen 2020).

initiatives have improved outcomes for women by engaging men, including the United Nations Population Fund schools for husbands in Niger, CARE's couples training to build support for women's participation in savings groups, and Promundo's participatory couples discussions on topics such as gender, power, and masculinity.¹⁸

Considerations for Research and Operational Experimentation

Given the prevalence of GBV and its detrimental effects on human capital, cash transfers should be leveraged more systematically to prevent GBV. This is especially true given the expanding reach of cash transfers among the poorest. Key principles to follow while designing and implementing programs include:

- Consider how the program can increase women's access to and control over resources.
- Consider how the program can strengthen women's networks and skills by bringing them together for training and creating meaningful interactions among participants.
- Consider how the program might engage men to ensure their buy-in for women's participation and prevent backlash.
- Ensure oversight to understand any risks of GBV in the program and adopt mitigation measures to prevent those.

Qualified researchers with specialized training on ethical protocols for GBV data collection must collect data on GBV to ensure that no harm is caused. To avoid putting respondents at risk, data on GBV prevalence should not be collected directly as part of routine program monitoring. Projects are increasingly adapting their grievance mechanisms to record and respond to GBV in a survivor-centric manner.¹⁹ Additional resources, including an operational toolkit and e-learning course, are available at www.worldbank.org/safetyfirstresources.

Areas for Future Research²⁰

Impact of program design choices: Few studies isolate the impacts of design features or program components to determine, for example, whether transfer amount or frequency (e.g., larger, lumpsum vs smaller, more-frequent transfers) have different impacts on IPV, to evaluate the trade-offs between transferring cash to men versus women, or to determine whether in-person or digital payments are more likely to remain within the recipient's control.

Mechanisms: The mechanisms at play to bring about change are poorly understood because most studies are not designed to test them rigorously. Few studies use mixed methods to understand how or why of changes work.

Role of accompanying measures: Many questions remain about the impacts of accompanying measures. For example, what are the most-efficient and most-cost-effective "plus" interventions that could be implemented alongside cash transfers to prevent GBV?

18 See Doyle et al. (2018). Promundo introduced a program in Brazil as a companion to the Bolsa Família cash transfer to try to change gender norms and mitigate risk of violence. See "Bolsa Família Companion Program," Promundo, Washington, DC, <https://promundoglobal.org/programs/bolsa-familia-companion-program/>.

19 A survivor-centric approach means empowering GBV survivors by prioritizing their rights, needs, and wishes, which promotes recovery and reinforces their capacity to make decisions for themselves, including about whether and which support services to access. It means ensuring confidentiality, informed consent, and access to good-quality services, including health care, psychological support, security, and legal services as appropriate.

20 The evidence gaps were discussed during a virtual Cash Transfer and IPV Research Collaborative workshop on October 29, 2020. See Cash Transfer and Intimate Partner Violence Research Collaborative (dashboard), International Food Policy Research Institute, Washington, DC, <https://www.ifpri.org/project/cash-transfer-and-intimate-partner-violence-research-collaborative>, Intimate Partner Violence Initiative (dashboard), Innovations for Poverty Action, New Haven, CT, <https://www.poverty-action.org/program-area/health/intimate-partner-violence-initiative>.

Given what is known about the positive impacts of non-GBV-focused interventions, how do the impacts of similar interventions focused on general human development compare with interventions focused on changing gender dynamics and reducing GBV? Which specific program elements are responsible for the positive impacts of interventions explicitly aimed at norm change and GBV prevention?

Cost-effectiveness of proven interventions:

Cost-effectiveness studies should accompany impact evaluations to compare the impacts of programs of different GBV-focused and non-GBV-focused accompanying measures with cash-only transfers.

Heterogeneity of impacts: How do impacts on GBV vary based on sociodemographic or other characteristics? More research on heterogeneous effects (e.g., according to vulnerability, family structure, educational attainment of beneficiaries and their partners), particularly in regions other than Latin America, would help identify risk factors and inform mitigation measures.

Diversity in GBV typologies: How do cash-transfer programs influence violence other than IPV in beneficiary

households, such as violence against children or elderly adults, and GBV experienced outside the household while engaged in program-related activities?

Long-term impacts: Most studies assess GBV impacts during program participation or shortly after a program ends, but what are the longer-term effects? Are there intergenerational impacts?

Measurement: Which survey methodologies generate the most-accurate GBV prevalence data, and which factors influence accuracy? How might one control for a potential increase in GBV reporting as a result of the intervention that boosts the ability of participants to recognize forms of GBV that have become normalized? What are the ethical considerations in weighing research and measurement methods?

Context and external validity: Although context is an important confounding factor, few studies seek to determine the contribution of context (e.g., gender norms) to the relationship between GBV and participation in cash-transfer schemes. More research is needed to clarify the extent to which current evidence is generalizable to different cultural contexts.

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Evidence at Your Fingertips Series

This note is part of thematic briefs in the series including:

- Evidence Briefs on Cash Transfers: Overview and Ten Key Messages
- Cash transfer values: How much is enough?
- Cash Transfer Timing: How Transfer Duration and Frequency Contribute to Outcomes
- Payment mechanisms: Do outcomes vary according to payment type?
- Cash versus in-kind transfers: Do outcomes vary according to modality?

The series is launched with that aim that these be living documents. In that spirit, the team welcomes suggestions on materials and topics to be covered in the future series that can serve as useful, practical references for practitioners of social protection.

The series is a joint initiative by Innovations for Poverty Action and the World Bank's Social Protection and Jobs Global Practice comprising Nathanael Goldberg, Lauren Whitehead, Savanna Henderson, Ana Alatrisme Tamayo, Julie Kedroske, Ugo Gentilini, Yuko Okamura, Mohamed Almenfi, Hrishikesh TMM Iyengar, and Mia Blakstad.

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