



IMPACT EVALUATION

CASH-BASED TRANSFERS AND GENDER WINDOW: PRE-ANALYSIS PLAN



WFP
World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

Does Combining Cash-based Transfers with Food Assistance for Assets support Women’s Autonomy?

SUMMARY

This brief presents a first window-level pre-analysis plan (PAP) under the Cash-Based Transfers (CBT) and Gender Impact Evaluation Window, developed and implemented jointly by the World Food Programme’s (WFP) Office of Evaluation (OEV), WFP’s Gender Office, the Cash-Based Transfer Programme team, and the World Bank’s Development Impact Evaluation (DIME) department.

The impact evaluations under this pre-analysis plan in the window attempt to experimentally answer the following question across multiple countries: *Does targeting women with work opportunities outside the household and receiving a salary affect women’s autonomy across dimensions including earnings, time use, agency, attitudes, norms, and well-being?*

Impacts will be analysed for each country individually as well as jointly to enhance generalizability of results. Data will be collected from households in at least three waves: before, during, and after payment transfers.

This Impact Evaluation Window will provide rich data and robust evidence on the effectiveness of cash-based transfer schemes on alleviating poverty and the potential to increase women’s autonomy.

What is an Impact Evaluation?

The WFP Evaluation Policy (2016-2021) defines impact evaluations as assessments of the positive and negative, direct, or indirect, intended, or unintended changes in the lives of affected populations in receipt of WFP interventions. OEV expanded on this definition by specifying that impact evaluations measure changes in development outcomes of

interest for a target population that can be *attributed* to a specific programme or a policy through a credible *counterfactual*. Impact evaluations are useful in answering cause and effect questions to understand whether interventions have had an impact (for example, on consumption or empowerment), to assess the extent of the impact, and to understand how it came about. WFP defines the *counterfactual* as estimating what would have happened in the absence of the intervention, thereby establishing what outcomes would not be present. The counterfactual is often created by randomizing aspects of the intervention to establish comparison groups.

What is an Impact Evaluation Window?

Impact Evaluation Windows are OEV-managed portfolios co-funded by WFP’s country offices and donors, that generate evidence in priority areas. Windows create opportunities for WFP offices to access technical support for their impact evaluations. Each window is guided by one or more pre-analysis plans (PAP), which focus multiple impact evaluations on a similar study design, thereby increasing the predictive power and generalizability of evidence. We currently implement three impact evaluation windows: “cash-based transfers and gender”, “climate and resilience”, and “school-based programming”.

What does the CBT and Gender Impact Evaluation Window Focus on?

The CBT and Gender Impact Evaluation Window seeks to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent do CBTs affect autonomy and gender equality and women empowerment (GEWE) outcomes? Under what conditions?
2. How do programme design features mediate or mitigate the impact of CBTs on GEWE outcomes?
3. How does exclusively targeting women with work opportunities outside the household and direct CBT impact outcomes including food expenditure, human capital development, and nutrition? Does targeting expose women to increased violence or any other unintended negative risks?

The first PAP in the window focuses primarily on the 1st and 3rd questions.

WOMEN'S AUTONOMY

Jejeebhoy and Sathar define autonomy as “the control women have over their own lives – the extent to which they have an equal voice with their husbands in matters affecting themselves and their families, control over material and other resources, access to knowledge and information, the authority to make independent decisions, freedom from constraints on physical mobility, and the ability to forge equitable power relationships within families.”¹

Women in low-income countries commonly have less autonomy than men, affecting women's labour market participation, decision-making power, and risk of gender-based violence.² Economic development, gender equality in labour market opportunities, and autonomy are all strongly linked, but the direction of causality is unclear. For WFP, the [pursuit of gender equality and women's empowerment](#) is central to fulfilling its dual mandate to end global hunger and save lives.

WFP has been expanding its [Food-Assistance-for-Assets](#) (FFA) programmes which are reaching 10-15 million people annually. FFA is an effort to move away from food aid and dependency towards food assistance and development. In FFA, participants receive food assistance (in-kind or cash transfer) in exchange for building or improving assets, such as constructing a road, rehabilitating degraded land, creating kitchen gardens, or building livestock pens – all aiming to improve livelihoods by creating healthier natural

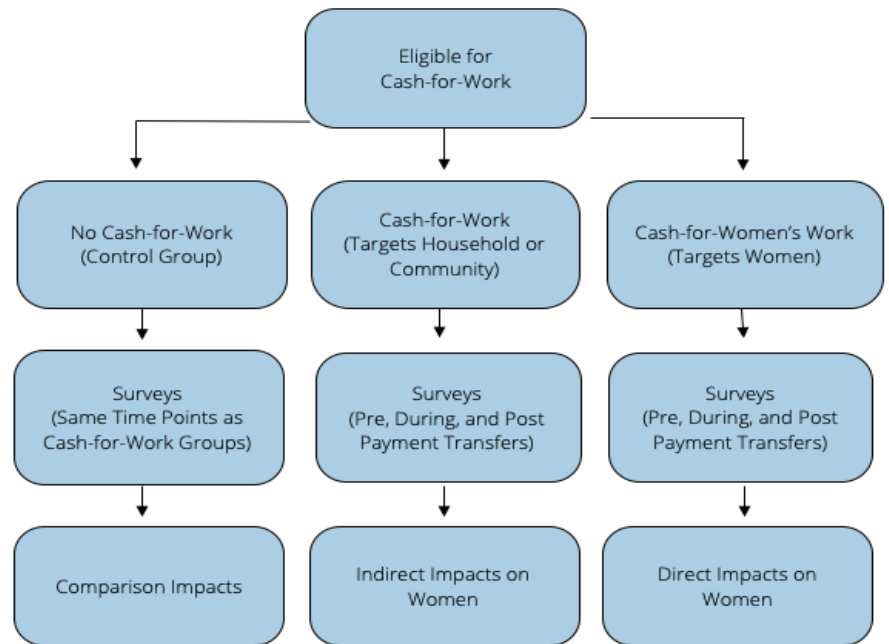
environments, reducing risks and impacts of shocks, increasing food productivity, and strengthening resilience to natural disasters. [WFP's Gender Office underscores](#) the importance to “[e]nsure that both women and men have equal opportunities to participate in the implementation and management of FFA programmes (including access to and control of the assets created)(...)”

WFP's FFA programmes provide an opportunity to understand women's autonomy and empowerment better, along with ways to improve it. Through increased earnings, public works programmes are an effective tool for economic development.³ However, there is less causal evidence on the autonomy impacts of specifically targeting women to participate in FFA.⁴

CBT AND GENDER IMPACT EVALUATION STRATEGY

To fill the evidence gap, we are working in partnership with WFP country offices to implement two experimental treatment arms, focusing on FFA delivered assistance in the form of cash transfers, and then comparing them to a control group.⁵

Figure 1: Research Design Overview



To be included in the study, households must contain both a man and a woman who are willing and able to work, and the household must also satisfy FFA participation criteria. From

¹ S. Jejeebhoy & Z. Sathar. 2001. Women's Autonomy in India and Pakistan: The Influence of Religion and Region. *Population and Development Review* 27(4): 687.

² S. Jayachandran. 2015. The Roots of Gender Inequality in Developing Countries. *Annual Review of Economics* 7(1): 63–88.

³ G. S. Adjognon, D. van Soest, & J. Guthoff. 2020. Reducing Hunger with Payments for Environmental Services: Experimental Evidence from Burkina Faso. *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/ajae.12150>.

J. Gazeaud, E. Mvukiyehe, & O. Sterck. 2019. Cash Transfers and Migration: Theory and Evidence from a Randomized Controlled Trial. CSAE working paper WPS/2019-16.

C. Imbert & J. Papp. 2015. Labor Market Effects of Social Programs: Evidence from India's Employment Guarantee. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 7(2): 233–263.

⁴ A [non-experimental evaluation](#) commissioned by WFP found that FFA has had an empowering effect on women's social networks, freedom of movement, and influence on household budget decisions.

⁵ P. Christian et al. 2021. Gender Gaps in Earnings and Economic Empowerment: Experimental Evidence from 6 Countries. <https://doi.org/10.1257/rct.5933-2.3000000000000003>. AEARCT Registry.

included households, a subset will be randomly sampled to participate in one of three groups.

- The first treatment group is WFP's regular FFA programming, which mainly targets men. This treatment group allows researchers to estimate the impacts of households participating in FFA (regular FFA relative to the control group).
- The second treatment group is a modified version of FFA which encourages a woman of the household to participate in FFA for which she will be the direct recipient of the cash transfer. This group allows researchers to measure impacts of this modality on GEWE.
- The third group is the control group which does not receive the FFA intervention (or receives it with a delay).

Households from all three groups complete surveys before, during, and after payment transfers are made. When possible, in addition to the participating woman, the household's male primary decision maker is also surveyed.

Window Scale: We aim to examine the impacts of FFA in up to six countries. Both conflict-affected and not conflict-affected countries will be included. To date, four countries have been selected: Kenya, the Syrian Arab Republic, El Salvador, and Rwanda.

Between 1,000 and 2,000 households will participate in each individual impact evaluation, and the time between the first and last survey in each country will be approximately ten months. The scale of the project will provide rich data, which should enable robust policy recommendations, both for the participating countries and beyond, through a pooled analysis of results.

OUTCOMES AND SURVEY QUESTIONS

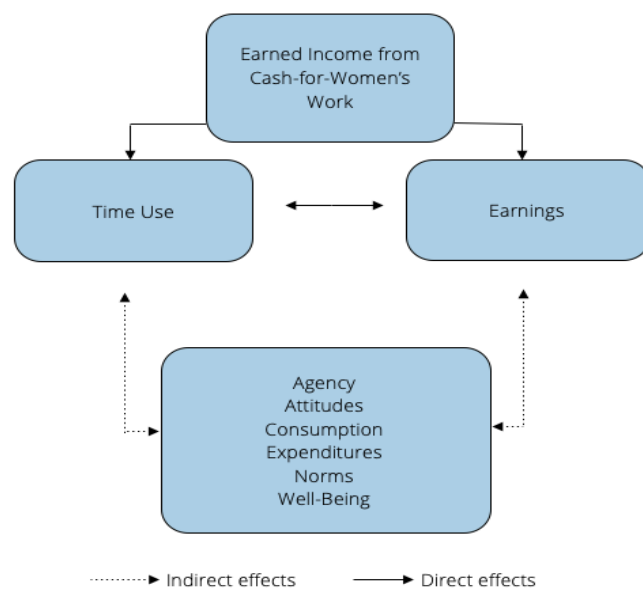
Direct Versus Indirect Impacts: The main objective is to estimate the impacts of women participating in FFA programmes that provide cash-based transfers (cash-for-women's work) on their autonomy, compared to households participating in "regular" (cash-for-work) programming. Outcomes are therefore primarily measured at the household level.

Regular FFA programmes can increase households' participation in asset development, with labour provided by either men or women depending on the programme. Targeting women as the recipients of cash-based transfers and encouraging their participation in FFA increases both the households' participation *and* women's participation specifically. The random group assignment ensures there are no systematic differences among households. This design will allow researchers to isolate the direct effects of women's participation in work and receiving wages beyond the regular FFA programme's impact on women.

Additionally, we will take into account three household characteristics that are anticipated to alter the impact of FFA targeting women: (1) whether the female respondent previously worked for a salary, (2) the age gap between the female respondent and the primary male decision maker in the household, and (3) whether there are other women in the household. The first characteristic is included to distinguish impacts of participating in *any* paid work (where previously there was none), versus previously paid work. The second characteristic is included as recent evidence suggests wage shocks for women may differentially impact household decision making for households with larger age gaps (relatively older male spouses) between spouses.⁶ The third characteristic is included to test the possibility that women may shift their time use through sharing or delegating tasks to other women in the household.

Crucially, the impacts of an increase to women's time spent working outside the household and earnings may cascade into other domains of autonomy and empowerment. For example, through changes to (1) agency, (2) attitudes, (3) consumption, (4) norms, and (5) well-being (including exposure to intimate partner violence).

Figure 2: Self-Sustaining Impacts of Women's Participation in FFA



Following the end of women's participation in FFA, the theory of change posits that impacts across the above five domains will permanently shift women's earnings and time use as a result of continuing work outside the household. However, impacts may be diminished in contexts where labour markets are dysfunctional.

The standardized survey questions and outcomes for all countries are summarized here:

⁶ O. Folke & J. Rickne. 2020. All the Single Ladies: Job Promotions and the Durability of Marriage. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 12(1): 260–287.

For more information please contact the WFP Office of Evaluation (wfp.evaluation@wfp.org)

Corresponding authors: **Florence Kondylis** (Development Impact Evaluation, World Bank, fkondylis@worldbank.org), **John Loeser** (Development Impact Evaluation, World Bank, jloeser@worldbank.org), **Jonas Heirman** (Office of Evaluation, World Food Programme, jonas.heirman@wfp.org), and **Felipe Dunsch** (Office of Evaluation, World Food Programme, felipe.dunsch@wfp.org)

Consumption and Expenditures: Household consumption and expenditures, including expenditures over a standard period. Outcomes: predicted household consumption and women's preferred consumption.

Earnings: For each household member, earnings (both FFA components and any other paid work) over six months prior to each survey (before, during, and after payment transfers are made) will be recorded. Outcomes: men's and women's earnings.

Time Use: The female respondent will be asked to recall her time use from the previous two days. If possible, the household's primary male decision maker will also be asked. Otherwise, the female respondent will be asked to report his activities. Outcomes: information will be categorized into time spent (1) working in self-employment, (2) working for a salary, (3) doing activities outside the home, or (4) working on chores.

Agency: To assess agency, the female respondent will be asked how much her opinion would be considered in decisions including major household purchases, her health care, or working for a salary. Outcomes: standardized indices.

Attitudes: The female respondent will be asked how much time she *should* spend on three activities (working in self-employment, working for a salary, or working on chores). The female respondent will also be asked how much her opinion *should* be considered in the same set of decisions as the agency questions. When possible, the household's primary male decision maker's attitudes toward women's time use and agency will also be included. Outcomes: standardized indices.

Community Norms: Four questions about community norms will be directed toward female respondents: (1) how much time women spend on the above three activities, (2) how important the opinion of women is about these activities, (3) what the norms are over attitudes toward women's time, and (4) what the norms are regarding attitudes toward women's agency. Outcomes: standardized indices.

Well-Being: Questions about well-being will also be directed toward female respondents: (1) locus of control (degree to which respondent feels she has control over her life), (2) psychosocial well-being, (3) life satisfaction, (4) depression, and (5) intimate partner violence.

The female respondent will also be asked to report her preferences about: (1) household expenditures; and (2) time that she and the household's primary male decision maker spend working in self-employment, working for a salary, or

working on chores. Outcomes: locus of control score and standardized indices.

Because survey respondents will complete surveys before, during, and after payment transfers are made, we can evaluate both short-term and medium-term effects.

Ethical Considerations

All WFP evaluations conform to 2020 United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) ethical guidelines. CBT and Gender window impact evaluations are also subjected to institutional review board (IRB) approvals. Each impact evaluation ensures informed consent, privacy, confidentiality, cultural sensitivity, fair recruitment of participants, and that evaluation activities and results do not cause harm.

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