



# CBT AND NUTRITION

The importance of cash-based transfers (CBT) as a mechanism for assisting vulnerable populations is steadily gaining attention among humanitarian and development actors worldwide. Consequently, there is growing interest in identifying the impact of CBT on nutrition.

There have been multiple recent efforts to collect and summarize findings around cash for nutrition. A 2016 systematic review conducted by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) concludes that, while there is evidence supporting a positive effect of cash-based transfers on uptake of health services and improvements in dietary diversity, there is relatively little evidence for positive impacts on anthropometric measurements<sup>1</sup>.

WFP has been involved in a number of studies to generate further evidence regarding the effectiveness of CBT on food security and nutrition outcomes, including anthropometric measures:

## Bangladesh

A 2-year study in partnership with IFPRI (2012-2014) comparing social safety net transfers found that, in the northern region of Bangladesh, a combination of cash and behaviour change communications had a statistically significant effect on the reduction of chronic undernutrition; height-for-age scores increased by 0.24 standard deviations and stunting was reduced by 7.3 percentage points. No other modality in the north, and no modality in the south, had any impact on chronic undernutrition.

## Niger

A 2011 study in partnership with Epicentre and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) to compare the effectiveness of combined distributions of cash and specialized nutritious foods found that a combination of food and cash was more effective than either food or cash alone for preventing acute malnutrition.

A 2011-2012 study to compare cash, food and vouchers found that 'there is no one right transfer modality' and that effect depends strongly on context. In Ecuador, Uganda, and Yemen, cash had a relatively larger impact on improving dietary diversity as did vouchers in Ecuador. However, in Niger, food had a larger impact on dietary diversity. In each country, the delivery of cash was less costly than the delivery of food.

## Pakistan

Ongoing research in partnership with Aga Khan University is comparing the impact on stunting (i.e. linear growth) of enhanced social protection programming using combinations of cash, social behaviour change communications, and specialized nutritious foods. Formative research has been conducted and the second technical working group is scheduled to take place in Rome on October 5-6, 2017.

### **Key Developments and Events**

*In March 2017, the WFP Nutrition Division - in collaboration with the Nutrition-Sensitive Working Group, regional bureaux, country offices and IFPRI - released detailed guidance for enhancing the nutrition-sensitivity of all WFP programming, with a particular focus on programmes using cash-based transfers<sup>2</sup>.*

*On November 14th, 2017, WFP and Action Against Hunger (ACF) will co-convene a workshop on cash for nutrition. The goal of this workshop is for high-level representatives from diverse organizations involved in nutrition, as well as government representatives, to review the current evidence on cash for nutrition and produce a position paper defining concrete actions on how to translate this evidence into programmatic and/or policy action. In preparation for this workshop, a consultant has been hired to collate existing evidence and draft a summary document, including recommendations around the way forward for programming and policy around cash for nutrition. This document will be reviewed by WFP and ACF, and the final version will be presented at the workshop for discussion by participants prior to endorsement of the position paper.*

<sup>1</sup> ODI. 2016. Cash transfers: what does the evidence say?

<sup>2</sup> Unlocking WFP's potential: Guidance for nutrition-sensitive programming.