

“The way to a man’s heart is through his stomach?”

A mixed methods study on the causal mechanisms between a cash and in-kind food transfer program and decreased Intimate Partner Violence

Ana Maria Buller, Melissa Hidrobo, Amber Peterman & Lori Heise

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Objectives

Existing evidence: A RCT of a 6-month cash, voucher and food transfer program paired with nutrition trainings, found decreases of 30% in physical and sexual IPV in Northern Ecuador ([Hidrobo et al. 2015](#)).

- Use sequential mixed methods research design to look “beyond the impact” of the program
- Understand pathways through which transfers affected household dynamics and IPV.

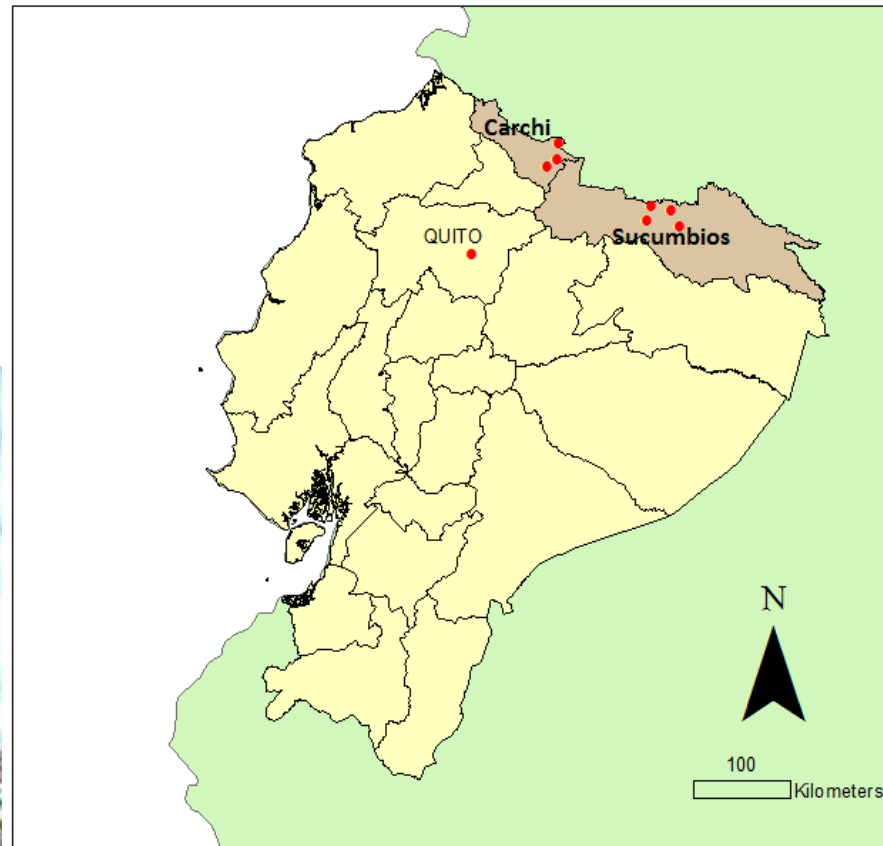
Context and intervention: “Cash, Food and Voucher” trial

- Implemented by the World Food Programme in 2011
- 7 urban centers with high Colombian refugee populations in the Northern provinces of Carchi and Sucumbíos
- 6 monthly transfers equivalent to \$40 (11% pre-transfer HH consumption), targeted to women
- Conditional on nutrition trainings



Setting

In Ecuador, lifetime prevalence of IPV is high, estimated at 35% for physical violence, 14.5% for sexual violence, and 43.4% for psychological violence (INEC 2011).



Qualitative follow-up

- Conducted August - September 2013
- Participants were purposively sampled according to changes in IPV from baseline to follow-up in the RCT
- 48 interviews with women, 8 FGDs (2 women, 6 men)
- Analyzed using thematic Nvivo coding structure

Additional analysis of RCT data

- Same methodology (ANCOVA multivariate models) as original impact evaluation analysis
- N = 1,226 women in panel aged 15 – 69 who qualified to be interviewed (recently partnered, could ensure privacy)

Protective pathways

Pathway 1: Decreased day to day conflict and stress in the **couple**

Pathway 2: Improved wellbeing in the **household**

Pathway 3: Increased **women** empowerment

No evidence of increases in IPV through: 1) extractive behaviour, 2) backlash against existing gender norms or 3) increases in alcohol use

Pathway 1: Reduced day to day conflict and stress in the couple

Interviewer: During the time of the transfers was there any physical violence?

Respondent: No, because I did not ask for it [money for food] anymore... I did not insist anymore, because the arguments happened mostly when I asked for money for food, and he usually did not have any money (IDI 42, Female, Tulcan)

Quantitative support: Impact analyses of “recent disputes” finds 5 pp reduction in any dispute during the program period across nine domains.

Pathway 2: Improved wellbeing in the household

In a context where most men and women engage in sporadic work, the financial stability of transfers:

- increased food security
- increased ability to pay the rent and purchase important goods and services
- pay debts
- increased ability to pay for unexpected bills such as a sudden illness in the family, and save money

Words such as 'happiness', 'relaxed', 'enjoy', 'good help' were very usual in the discourses of women when describing the impact of the transfers in their lives.

Pathway 2, cont: Improved wellbeing in the family

In some households, shopping for food also became a joint activity which many beneficiaries looked forward to:

“We used to go together as a family to the supermarket and ate [after that], that was very nice, it seems to be something that is not necessary but it does contribute towards household harmony (IDI 36, Female, Tulcan)”

Quantitative support: We found that transfers increased happiness and ‘locus of control’ by approximately 5-7 pps, however, these increases were only significant in the bottom half of food insecure households

Pathway 3: Women's empowerment

Qualitative results show the transfer increased autonomy, decision-making and nutrition trainings gave women a renewed self-confidence and knowledge.

“When I got that [the transfer] it was both of us [head of household] because with what I got [the transfer] I could buy food and all and he could pay for other things (IDI 31, Female, Tulcan)”

“There [in the workshops], you slowly lose the shyness [...], I used to be very shy, now I am only a bit shy. If someone asked me something, I used to get red in the face and did not know what to answer, I did not use to go to talks, I had never had talks before (IDI 2, Female, Nueva Loja)”

Pathway 3, cont: Women's empowerment

Program also increased men's respect for women:

“As I was telling you, the woman knows about her food and in my case, my wife is very good at seasoning, and you fall more in love depending on how the woman cooks... nutritiously and all (FGD 1, Male, Tulcan)”

Quantitative support: Positive impacts on group participation (13 pp), selective nutrition knowledge (13-15 pp), no impacts on decision-making.

Policy and programmatic implications

- Mixed methods analyses shows short-term cash and in-kind transfers paired with nutrition trainings can be tools to decrease IPV through stress reduction, financial stability and women's empowerment
- Targeting women as beneficiaries and framing the intervention under the umbrella of food security and nutrition may have contributed to shape these impacts
- There is a need to think about perpetrating traditional gender roles vs challenging them
- There is need for further replication and mixed methods evidence in diverse settings

Thank you!

“The way to a man’s heart is through his stomach (love comes through your mouth), so the basic food improves the relationship and the family gets more integrated (FGD 1, Male, Tulcan)”

Corresponding author:

Ana Maria Buller (Ana.buller@lshtm.ac.uk)

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References

- Hidrobo, M., A. Peterman, and L. Heise. 2015. The effect of cash, vouchers and food transfers on intimate partner violence. Evidence from a randomized experiment in Northern Ecuador. *Under second review*.
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