Are conditions pro-women? A case study of a conditional cash transfer in Indonesia

Conditional cash transfer programmes typically select women as the recipients of funds to help tackle household poverty. Evidence from a cash transfer programme in Indonesia shows that this does not impact on intra-household gender relations or improve the position of women in the household.

Introduction
Following the success of conditional cash transfer programmes in several Latin American countries, Indonesia launched a pilot cash transfer programme – the Program Keluarga Harapan (PKH) – in 2007. The PKH provides poor families in Indonesia with money in return for compliance with certain conditions such as attending healthcare clinics. The programme selects women from these households as the allowance recipients. This paper assesses the impact of the PKH on gender relations within the household. The research is based on a qualitative study of 16 households in four villages with different cultural backgrounds and lifestyles.

Main findings
The PKH offers transfers to poor families conditional on their participation in health and nutrition programmes as well as their children’s school attendance. The programme is designed to reduce future levels of poverty by encouraging investments in children’s education, health and nutrition.

To achieve this, the programme targets expectant mothers or, if there is no expectant mother, mature women in the households with children of eligible age. The transfers are given to women in the family because it is believed they are more likely to focus spending on goods and services that are beneficial to children’s wellbeing.

The research examines the impact of the PKH on families living in two different provinces: West Java and East Nusa Tenggara. In each province, the study examined eight recipient households – four from a rural, inland village and four from a coastal, urban village – and four non-recipient households, two from each type of village.

Despite differences between the four research locations, gender relations are generally characterised by the lower position of women in relation to men. In all four villages, there is a clear division of labour between women and men. Women are responsible for the majority of household jobs such as cooking, washing clothes and cleaning the house as well as taking care of children.

Many of the women also contributed to the family income, for example working as agricultural labourers, fish sellers or small traders. This places a double burden on many women who need to generate income as well as manage the home.

In terms of access to household assets and control over family finances, generally women are responsible for day-to-day spending on small items. Men make the decisions on big or strategic purchases and also tend to have control of strategic assets such as houses, land and livestock.

The PKH transfers are sizeable compared to household incomes. The quarterly cash transfers can be more than many families earn in a month. As these transfers are channelled to women in the family, it might be expected that the PKH would improve the position of women in the household. But the research shows that the PKH has no effect on intra-household gender relations or the relative position of women in the household.

Key research findings
- The PKH has no impact on intra-household gender relations: women do not have more access to household resources or an increased bargaining position vis-à-vis their husbands.
- The programme has not altered the traditional division of labour within households.
- The PKH had not caused conflict between men and women; most funds are used to meet routine household needs that are traditionally women’s responsibility.
- All programme beneficiaries taking part in the study used part of their transfers for other daily needs such as food and paying off debts.
- Some programme beneficiaries used part of their transfers for helping other family members, particularly older children.
- Some programme beneficiaries reported using part of their transfers for accumulating assets, such as buying livestock or making improvements to their houses.
Conclusions
One of the main reasons why the PKH has not had an impact on intra-household gender relations is that mechanisms for enforcing the conditional aspect of the programme are very weak. Most recipient families reported managing their household work and finances just as they always had done.

The research also shows that the poorer the household, the larger the share of transfers being used to meet household needs not directly related to children’s health and education.

As men have a dominant role in decision-making on household spending, they should be involved in PKH implementation.

Key policy lessons
• The implementation of the PKH should be linked with other programmes that aim to increase the economic participation of women.
• As men have a dominant role in decision-making on household spending on big or strategic items, they should be involved in PKH implementation.
• Transfers to poor families in urban areas might need to be increased.
• Programme facilitators should not restrict the way recipients use transfers too rigidly.
• The government should strengthen the monitoring of compliance with the programme’s conditionality.

Credits
The research report that is summarised here was written by Sirojuddin Arif, Muhammad Syukri, Widjajanti Isdijoso, Meuthia Rosfadhila and Bambang Soelaksono (The SMERU Research Institute, Jakarta, Indonesia). Research, writing, and publication of this material was made possible through the Social Protection in Asia (SPA) policy-research and network-building programme, funded by the Ford Foundation and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). The programme was managed by the Institute for Human Development (IHD) New Delhi, India, and the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) Brighton, UK.

Further information
The full research report and the other titles in this CSP series are available on the CSP website and also the SPA website www.socialprotectionasia.org

For further details of SPA programme research findings and policy lessons, see the programme synthesis report 2010, available online here: www.ids.ac.uk/go(idspublication/social-protection-in-asia-research-findings-and-policy-lessons

The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of any of the institutions involved. Readers are encouraged to quote or reproduce material from CSP Research Reports in their own publications. In return, the Centre for Social Protection requests due acknowledgement and a copy of the publication.

© CSP/SPA 2011

The Centre for Social Protection
Centre for Social Protection
Institute of Development Studies
At the University of Sussex
Brighton BN1 9RE
UK

Email: socialprotection@ids.ac.uk

Website: www.ids.ac.uk/go/centreforsocialprotection