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Child-level Impacts of Economic Strengthening: What is the Evidence?

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Outline

Summary: evidence is fragmented, conflicting and often context-specific.

- Positive outcomes for children
- Unintended negative outcomes
- Advantages of multisectoral programs
- Role of gender
- Gaps

Positive outcomes for children

Economic strengthening (ES) programs focusing on caretakers

- Improved health, nutrition and education
- Evidence most extensive for impacts of cash transfers, and microfinance to a lesser extent
- Little rigorous examination of child-level outcomes from other ES approaches

Positive outcomes for children

ES programs focusing on youth or children

- Financial education, asset accumulation
 - Outcomes: increased self-esteem, school attendance, reduced risk of sexual risk-taking intentions.
- Savings (+ financial education)
 - Outcomes: increased savings
- Livelihood, life skills & financial services
 - Outcomes: lower rates of depression and risky sexual behavior

Unintended negative outcomes

- Parental participation in microfinance associated with decreased school attendance and ability to pay school fees
 - Girls affected more severely
- “Inverted-U” pattern of child labor
- Gender-based violence: harassment increased for girls participating in an individual savings program
 - mitigated by saving in a group

Multisectoral programs → better social outcomes

Advantages of integrated programming

- Example of IRC New Generation Program in Burundi:
 - savings group program with family-based discussions on child protection and wellbeing
 - Outcomes: decrease in physical discipline
- Financial education & asset accumulation
 - Outcomes: increased self-esteem and school attendance, and reduced sexual risk-taking intentions

Role of Gender

- Women appear to invest more (directly) in their children than do men
 - Microenterprise earnings
 - Savings
 - Credit
- More research needed
 - None of these studies include long-term impact/outcomes; men's investments may produce greater long-term impact

Substantial Gaps

- Household impacts – beyond cash transfer programs
- How are children affected by increased income?
 - e.g. does income lead to better nutrition?
- How do improvements in child well-being today translate to better outcomes for them as adults?
- Community outcomes?
- ES effects on HH separation (or utility in reintegrating separated families)

Key Resources

- [CYES Network](#)
- [STRIVE](#)
- [CPC Network Livelihoods and ES Task Force](#)
- [USAID Displaced Children and Orphans Fund](#) (DCOF)

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