



National Audit Office

Department for International Development

Transferring cash and assets
to the poor

Detailed Methodology

NOVEMBER 2011

Methodology

1 This document accompanies *Transferring cash and assets to the poor*, a report published by the Comptroller and Auditor General. It provides a detailed description of the methodology used for the report. A summarised methodology is contained within Appendix One of the report.

Study scope

2 This was the first National Audit Office Value for Money study to evaluate the Department's use of transfers to poor and vulnerable people. Our approach was designed to examine whether the Department is using transfers to reach the intended people, with the optimal level of support, in a timely and predictable way and at reasonable cost. We also evaluated the Department's methods of capturing the short and longer-term effects of transfer programmes on peoples' poverty and well-being; and whether the programmes themselves appear sustainable.

3 The study examined programmes funded through the Department's bilateral (country to country) aid programme. It does not cover transfer programmes funded through the Department's core contributions to multilaterals (such as the World Bank) or Non-Government Organisations (Programme Partnership Arrangements). The focus was on large social protection-related transfer programmes, rather than wider use in other sectors.

Selection of case study programmes

4 The study team carried out in depth examination of transfer programmes in four countries, Zambia, Kenya, Ethiopia and Bangladesh, where the Department has major transfer programmes representing a projected £634 million of bilateral expenditure from 2004-2020. The programmes were selected to provide a balanced cross section of geographical regions and type of transfer being delivered; as well as coverage of sufficient historic and planned spend on transfers and programmes of sufficient length.

5 We examined the following eight programmes in depth:

- Productive Safety Net Programme, phase I – Ethiopia. A programme to promote food security, reduce vulnerability to economic and environmental shocks and produce community infrastructure.
- Productive Safety Net Programme, phase II – Ethiopia.
- Chars Livelihood Programme, phase I – Bangladesh. A programme to promote sustainable livelihoods and increase food security.
- Chars Livelihood Programme, phase II – Bangladesh.

- Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction, phase II – Bangladesh. A programme to promote sustainable livelihoods.
- Hunger Safety Net Programme, phase 1 pilot – Kenya. A programme to improve access to food, protect assets and reduce the impact of economic and environmental shocks.
- Orphans and Vulnerable Children Programme – Kenya. A programme to promote the fostering and adoption of children and promote child wellbeing, education and health.
- Social Protection Expansion Programme – Zambia. A programme to reduce extreme poverty and the transmission of poverty to the next generation, as well as improve child nutrition in districts receiving child grants.

6 Two members of the NAO team spend up to 10 days in each country during May and June 2011, supported by the Department's in-country advisers. The evidence from the field trips and supporting documentation from the programmes formed the majority of the evidence base in the report.

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews – overseas

7 Whilst on the four field trips in May and June 2011, we interviewed Department staff based in country, including the head of office or deputy head, lead advisers on the programmes we examined, economists and other sectoral advisers. Our semi-structured interviews covered the following areas of discussion:

- country priorities;
- Bilateral Aid Review (BAR) country offers submitted to HQ;
- programme histories, including planning and funding;
- design of the programmes examined (including targeting of beneficiaries);
- monitoring and evaluation arrangements for the programmes examined;
- reporting and statistics;
- progress and challenges with the programmes and more widely;
- rights and grievance procedures relating to the programmes examined;
- sustainability of the programmes examined;
- related programmes, including in health and education;
- country office staffing issues;
- relationship with HQ; and
- stakeholder relationships.

8 We also held a total of 71 semi-structured interviews with central and local officials in Government ministries, representatives of non-governmental organisations, civil society organisations, private sector companies and other donors involved with programme implementation. We used the interview evidence to frame and substantiate our key findings. The interviews covered the following areas of discussion:

- views on progress in the use of transfers;
- challenges faced in the design and delivery of transfer programmes;
- lessons learnt from Department-supported programmes; and
- opinions on the Department's management of and advisory support to programmes and participation in wider dialogue.

9 In each of the case study countries we visited groups of/individual beneficiaries of the programmes we were examining to carry out semi-structured interviews and informal discussions. These identified issues faced in the delivery of transfers and helped us assess their impact in the field on the people receiving them. This research was subject to time, budget and logistical constraints and therefore served to triangulate the findings of independent evaluations.

Semi-structured interviews – UK based

10 Between April and May 2011, we held seven semi-structured interviews with London-based Department policy staff and teams designing or managing transfer programmes overseas. Each interview was with up to four members of staff. The interviews gathered views on the following:

- corporate engagement with use of transfers;
- strategic fit of transfer programmes across sectors;
- operations of transfer programmes;
- commissioning of research;
- use of evidence to inform programming choices in different contexts;
- the nature of the relationship between HQ and country offices; and
- performance of the Department.

11 We used the evidence from these interviews to inform questions for overseas visits, signpost the team to relevant literature and inform findings on the Department's use of transfers.

In country observation

12 Whilst on the four field trips in May and June 2011, we carried out a combination of the following informal observations to help us triangulate the information gained in interviews and document review:

- Village/community meetings
- Dwellings and assets of beneficiaries
- Examples of completed employment scheme outputs (such as roads and terracing)
- NGO service provision (such as a legal drop-in clinic and mobile vet)
- Beneficiaries receiving cash payments
- Donors review mission
- Local retail outlets (such as shops, post office etc).

Survey

13 We sent an online survey in April 2011 to heads of country offices and sector advisers in 24 of the Department's countries.¹ The survey gathered the experience and views of the wider cadre of staff beyond our four case study countries, focusing on their awareness of transfer approaches, reasons for use, barriers to wider application, and use and satisfaction with centrally produced guidance and evidence.

14 In consultation with the Department we sent the survey to advisers who were most likely to lead or be involved in transfer programmes. This included livelihood advisers, social development advisers, humanitarian advisers, human development advisers and economists. We did not expect all advisers in each country to complete the survey.

15 In total we sent the survey to 24 heads of office and 78 advisers. The response rate was 50 per cent for heads of office (12 responded) and 51 per cent for advisers (40 responded). The response from advisers meant we had between one and three completed surveys from advisers in each of the countries that covered a range of all the relevant adviser disciplines.

¹ The Department now has 28 priority countries in 26 country offices (operations in two countries, Somalia and Liberia, are covered by the Kenya and Sierra Leone offices respectively). We sent the survey to 23 of these country offices and Vietnam (an office that is closing over the current spending round. The three current priority country offices not included in the survey were Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and South Sudan (which had not finalised its independence from Sudan at the time).

Literature review

16 We carried out a high-level literature review of academic, donor and non-governmental organisations' publications on approaches to delivery of transfer programmes. We also reviewed background literature on the history and context information for the programmes examined in the four case study countries.

17 These reviews were used to identify wider practice in the use of transfers, beyond the Department's own experience, and gather a consensus about 'what works' in relation to targeting and payment arrangements, and the impacts of programmes.

Document review

18 We reviewed project proposals, design and monitoring and evaluation documentation on the eight programmes in the four selected countries. The reviews helped shape the lines of questioning for country visits, provided evidence on the planning and monitoring and evaluation of the programmes, provided evidence on the costs and benefits of the programmes and showed how the programmes fit within the Department and partner governments' objectives. The key documents reviewed were:

- project memoranda, logframes, annual reviews and project completion reviews for the eight programmes; and
- independent evaluations of the eight programmes.

19 We also reviewed the Department's publications, evidence papers, guidance and Bilateral Aid Review (BAR) documentation in order to evaluate progress against the wider objectives for transfer programmes, impacts achieved and the lessons being learnt through implementation beyond the eight programmes examined in depth, as well as to assess the Department's approach to building and using evidence and allocating funds to transfer programmes.

Financial Analysis

20 We analysed financial data from Department-supported transfer programmes to identify levels of activity and overall spend using transfers across the Department's network of countries; and analyse costs associated with transfer programmes.