

# **The Transformative Potential of Social Protection in Fragile Contexts: A Case Study of the Social Cash Transfer Pilot Scheme on Child Wellbeing in Bomi County of Liberia.**

**By**

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# STUDY AREA

The area of study is the Bomi County of Liberia. It is one of the poorest counties in Liberia as it was heavily affected by the war.





## RESEARCH PUZZLE

To what extent can cash transfers transform the wellbeing of vulnerable children in a fragile context?

- Education
- Food intake
- Health status
- Child labour



# WHAT IS THE MOTIVATION FOR THE RESEARCH

- Children in Liberia find themselves in a fragile context as a result of the destructive 14-year civil war, which only ended in 2003.
- Low indicators of children's wellbeing: high levels of poverty, increased child mortality, and low school enrolment and attendance.
- This acute post-civil war vulnerability situation in Liberia led to the introduction of cash transfers in 2010 for a period of 4 years up to December 2014.
- The objective of the cash transfer scheme was to reduce vulnerability among ultra-poor, labour-constrained households in Bomi County of Liberia.
- This study therefore, aims at analysing the impact of the scheme in transforming the specific aspects of the wellbeing vulnerable children in beneficiary households.



## OPERATION DEFINITIONS

- **Transformative potential:** the prospect of changing specific aspects of the wellbeing vulnerable children in beneficiary households. The desired change is from negative to positive
- **Child wellbeing:** a holistic and multi-dimensional approach to conceptualizing the status of children, which combines both material and non-material aspects of children's wellbeing.
- **Fragile contexts:** as “those areas where the state is unable or unwilling to harness domestic and international resources effectively for poverty reduction.
- **Cash Transfers:** regular non-contributory payments of money provided by government or non-governmental organisations to individuals or households, with the objective of decreasing chronic or shock-induced poverty, addressing social risk and reducing economic vulnerability



# THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

The **Child Sensitive Social Protection framework** and the **Transformative Social Protection Framework** are the theories that underpin this study.

**Child Sensitive Social Protection Framework** – argues that **social protection** should address the inherent **social disadvantages, risks and vulnerabilities** children may be born into, as well as those acquired later in childhood due to **external shocks**.

**Transformative Social Protection Framework:**

emphasizes **equity** and views social protection as an instrument for addressing the **human rights** of vulnerable and marginalized populations.

**VARIABLES:**

**Independent**-Social Protection

**Dependant**-Transformative Potential/Child well being

**Antecedent/Intervening**-Fragile context





# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A quasi-experimental study that employed a **triangulated/mixed method**

## Sample and Sampling Strategy

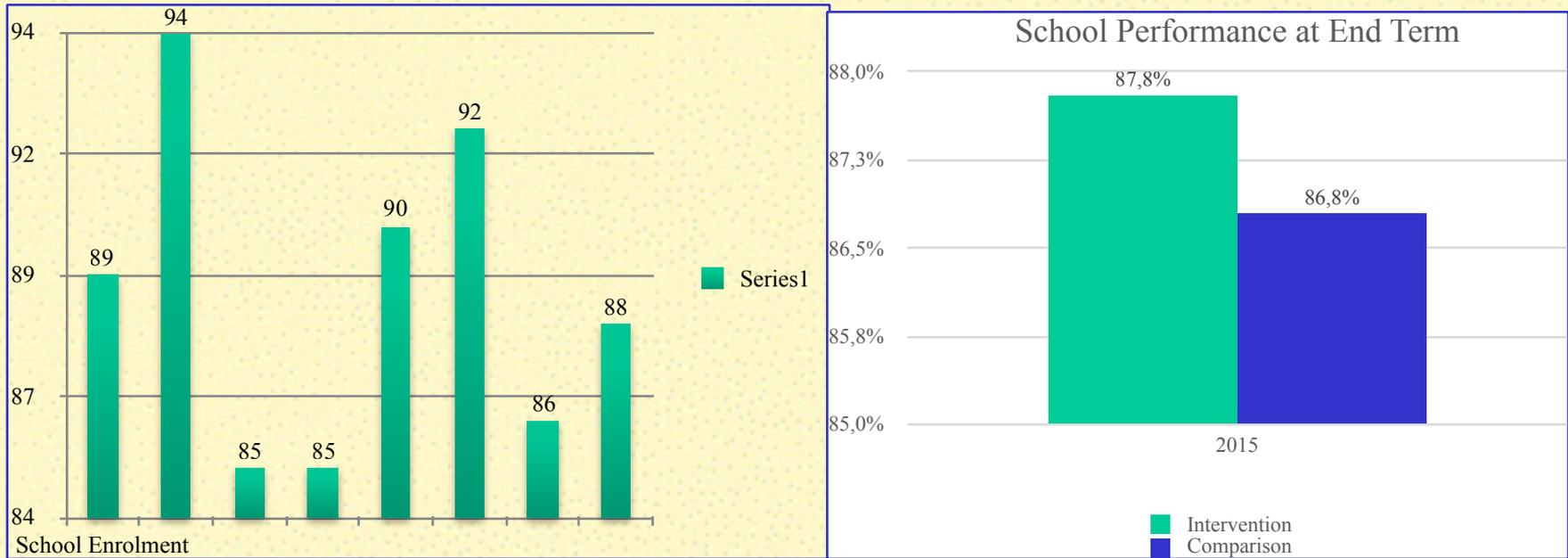
- Quantitative data was collected from a sample size of 224 respondents. This sample size was split evenly between households receiving cash (experimental/ intervention group) and households with similar characteristics but not receiving cash transfers (control/ comparison group).
- For qualitative data, a total of 66 participants were sampled
- The Participants including 32 children were **purposively sampled**

## Data Collection and Analysis

- Qualitative data was collected through **in-depth interviews** and **focus groups**. The data was **analysed thematically**.
- Quantitative data was derived from **mid and end term evaluation data sets**. Data was analysed using the **Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS)**.



## Effect on School Enrolment & Performance



A higher proportion of children from intervention households over those from controlled households enrolled and performed better in school. Qualitative data from key informants in the education sector confirmed the positive impact of social cash transfers on school enrolment and performance.



## Effect on food security and food intake



**The effect on food security and food intake-** A higher proportion of intervention households over control households described positive impacts of cash transfers on quality and quantity of food intake

# Health Status

	Intervention N=286 children	Control N = 276 children
	%	%
Since, last year has health status Improved	74	37***
Stayed the Same	24	59
Worsened	2	4
Sought care for last illness	97	77***

\*\*\*P<.001, ~p<.05,

At mid term, an estimated 74% of intervention children had improved health over the past year compared to 37% of comparison children (p<.001). At endline there were no significant differences between the two groupd when it came to improved health status, and health seeking (95% vs 94%, p<.01). Qualitative data from focus group discussions and key infoamnt interviews indicated that the outbreak of EVD during the final year of the CT programme added to the anxiety that underlined the generally low perception of health status at endline



## Effect on Child Labour

Household Reports of Child Work	Intervention N=81 %	Comparison N = 82 %
More likely	5	13
No Change	25	24*
Less Likely	70	52
Sought care for last illness	97	77

\* $p < 0.10$ ,  $\sim p < .05$

However, at endline, there were isolated reports of children's involvement in light work, as a result of the cash transfer: "I can say that more children working now because of social cash. The work they doing plenty is selling on the streets because their people have small money to do business to help the family." (Local Leader, 44)



# DIFFERENTIAL IMPACTS

- Qualitative data revealed existence of some negative impacts of the cash transfers on child wellbeing. These included:
- Isolated reports of misuse of cash by some of the households heads. For example, one key informant reported:  

“Very few of the beneficiaries unwisely used their money by involving themselves into alcoholism and other bad practices such as smoking and womanizing”
- Community level tensions, particularly jealousy and animosity between recipient and non-recipient households.
- As noted above, there were also few cases in which intervention households used children in petty trading, which, in the few cases where children missed school as a result, this amounted to child labour.



# Lessons For The Social Work Profession

- The profession needs to strengthen its knowledge base on social protection in general and transformative approaches to social protection in particular to address equity, gender and human rights issues and to ensure social justice
- Child sensitive social protection is a good entry point for social work to expand its influence on addressing child poverty and vulnerability. Cash transfers without a complementary case management system will result in differential impacts such as misuse of cash, community tensions and increased child labour
- The social work profession, through its casework and community work methods, is better placed to address equity and gender issues in social protection, particularly girl education, and advocacy for social change
- International Social Work practice has to address issues of social inequalities and child rights violations triggered by state fragility. The profession can achieve this by integrating child protection issues in emergency cash transfer programming



## ABOUT ME

- University Website:

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# Questions, Comments & Suggestions?

