

Institution: University College London		
Unit of Assessment: 25b - Area Studies		
Title of case study: Changing policy design of cash transfer programmes in UK government, international non-governmental organizations and development consultancies		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2006-2016		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Professor Maxine Molyneux	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Professor of Sociology	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 2012-present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 1 August 2013 - 19 February 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)		
<p>Cash transfers are a form of income support usually consisting of monthly payments of cash to the poorest households in the Global South. Despite the success of cash transfer programmes in reducing poverty, limitations in their design and implementation restrict their effectiveness and inclusiveness. The Department of International Development (DFID) commissioned Transforming Cash Transfers (TCT) research, directed by Maxine Molyneux, to investigate 5 cash transfer programmes in the Middle East and Africa. The results informed a key strand of DFID's development assistance and the changes introduced to programming benefitted over 2 million households in 5 countries (Mozambique, Uganda, Kenya, Yemen, and the Occupied Palestinian Territories). It further informed the policy design and research methodology of several UN agencies and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and contributed to a change in the delivery of cash transfers across a range of policy actors – including government ministries, NGOs and development consultancies.</p>		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)		
<p>Maxine Molyneux is an internationally recognised expert on gender inequality, who has combined an academic career with a dedication to policy development in the Global South for over 40 years. Her regular involvement in policy debates within UN agencies and NGOs as a gender specialist led in 2005 to an invitation from Oportunidades, a flagship cash transfer and social protection programme, to join a team to investigate its workings in three sites in Mexico. Molyneux's resulting outputs were the first to systematically analyse the gender biases in the design of Latin American cash transfer programmes (CTPs), and to show how these interacted with gender inequalities in households to exacerbate women's long-term precarity (R1, R2). In (R2), Molyneux examined the outcomes of Oportunidades. Molyneux concluded that the programme created dependency on a subsidy that confirmed mothering as women's primary social role, and that while it might enhance women's social status and self-respect, it did little to secure sustainable livelihoods or challenge normative gender roles. Molyneux expanded upon (R2) in a paper commissioned by the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), which compared the Oportunidades CTP with a different kind of programme in Peru: Comedores Populares (R1). Molyneux argued that in both instances the structure of these state welfare programmes actively reinforced asymmetrical and unequal gender relations through expectations of voluntary female labour, with long-term consequences for addressing poverty. Molyneux therefore argued for more transformative elements to be incorporated into anti-poverty programmes to provide sustainable livelihoods for women and encourage more equitable relations within the household.</p> <p>As a result of this research, in 2010 CARE International asked Molyneux to serve as Research Director of a project investigating CTPs in three Andean countries: Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru. This research revealed the intersecting vulnerabilities of poor indigenous women, highlighting the disempowering effects of racial discrimination and mistreatment in programme management, and the lack of support to strengthen women's resilience and economic security (R3). Such failures inherent in CTP design have helped to explain why they have had a limited impact on tackling extreme poverty (R1, R2, R3). As social protection programmes became an increasing part of DFID's Overseas Development Assistance (ODA), research on their effectiveness was necessary to test programme design. In 2012, the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) won GBP833,682 of DFID funding to carry out the first large scale qualitative research project examining stakeholder perceptions of cash transfer programmes. Molyneux</p>		

was asked to serve as Director of Research (2012-14) on the Transforming Cash Transfers (TCT) project because “her pioneering analysis of the gender relations and the adverse consequences of ignoring them in cash transfer programming was highly influential in rethinking social protection programming (R2) (R3)” (i). DFID-supported CTPs are targeted at chronically poor populations, and – drawing on Molyneux’s findings in (R1) and (R2) – the aim of the TCT research design and the innovative methodology was to include the views of vulnerable groups (women, the disabled, the elderly and households with orphans) to assess the effectiveness of programmes in reaching the most disadvantaged. Molyneux’s edited collection (R5) included case study findings of the TCT project, along with new research by leading development policy analysts and academics. Drawing on her research, as well as the TCT project it inspired, her introduction stressed the importance of embedding social accountability mechanisms in cash transfer programmes to ensure responsiveness to beneficiaries and to demonstrate their importance even in conflict areas, to enable more accurate identification of, and attention to, excluded vulnerable people (R5). This research concluded that technocratic solutions aimed at inclusion of the vulnerable did not always translate into government action and more needed to be done to secure effective downward accountability. Molyneux et al’s contribution to *State of the Urban Poor Report 2015* reviewed the evidence of good practice in CTPs in Latin America, a region considered successful in reducing poverty, for application in India. In particular, Latin American countries had begun to be more responsive to the specific needs of extremely vulnerable women for work and training opportunities and affordable childcare to give them a route out of poverty (R4).

The Institute of the Americas was a unit of the School of Advanced Study of the University of London and moved in its entirety to UCL in 2012. The unit’s case studies have received approval from Research England to include underpinning research undertaken prior to 2012.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

- R1.** M. Molyneux, ‘Change and Continuity in Social Protection in Latin America: Mothers at the Service of the State’, Gender and Development Papers No. 1, UNRISD, Geneva, 2007. DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.15062.24646. *Peer-reviewed UNRSID paper.*
- R2.** M. Molyneux, ‘Mothers At The Service Of The New Poverty Agenda: PROGRESA/Oportunidades, Mexico’s Conditional Transfer Programme’, *Journal of Social Policy and Administration*, 40:2 /3 (2006). [DOI:10.1111/j.1467-9515.2006.00497](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9515.2006.00497). *This peer-reviewed article was the most downloaded paper published in this journal during the year of publication. It was included in a book of UNRISD ‘classics’ to mark the 50th anniversary of UNRISD’s work, 2015.*
- R3.** M. Molyneux & M. Thomson, ‘CCT programmes and women’s empowerment in Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador’ (London: CARE International, 2011) <https://bit.ly/3akRGol> *A synthesis article on this research was published with Marilyn Thomson in Gender and Development as ‘Cash transfers, gender equity and women’s empowerment in Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia’, 19:2 (2011), 195-210. DOI:10.1080/13552074.2011.592631*
- R4.** M. Molyneux, N. Jones, M. Stavropoulos, ‘Gender, Urban Poverty and social protection: Lessons from Latin America’, in *State of the Urban Poor Report 2015: Gender and Urban Poverty*, ed. by Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation, Government of India, and Om Prakash Mathur (Oxford University Press: New Delhi, India, 2015), pp. 176-193. *Peer-reviewed output in high-quality edited collection.*
- R5.** M. Molyneux with N. Jones and F. Samuels ‘Can Cash Transfer Programmes have ‘Transformative’ Effects?’, special issue of *Journal of Development Studies*, 52:8 (2016), 1087-1098. DOI:10.1080/00220388.2015.1134781. Also republished by Taylor and Francis as a book. *Submitted to REF2021.*

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Poverty reduction is a global development policy goal and since the early 2000s, the favoured means of tackling it has been through income support in the form of regular cash transfers (CT) to the poorest households. Building on Maxine Molyneux’s findings in (R1), (R2) and (R3), and directed by her, the Transforming Cash Transfers (TCT) project, investigated beneficiary and community perspectives on CTPs across 6 field sites covering c. 2 million households – 3 in

Africa (Mozambique, Uganda, Kenya), 3 in the Middle East (Yemen and two sites in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), Gaza and the West Bank) – all countries that benefitted from direct UK Overseas Development Assistance. Moreover, Molyneux’s methodological emphasis on targeted support to individuals in vulnerable groups is visible in the project findings, which were summarised in 6 in-depth case studies published in December 2012 and a synthesis report published in April 2013. These showed that what Molyneux had identified in Mexico (**R1**, **R2**) had broader application across the global South: even small transfers, when given to individuals from vulnerable groups (e.g. orphans in Kenya; the elderly in Uganda) rather than to ‘households’, have significant economic and social impacts, including enhanced social participation and psycho-social wellbeing (**ii**). These benefits extend to the household as a whole. TCT therefore provided robust evidence from the perspective of beneficiaries and their communities that was essential for improving the effectiveness of CT programmes. Molyneux planned and reviewed all the reports and presented the findings to DFID and policymakers.

Since August 2013, DFID field and HQ staff have used the reports to brief and advise Ministries responsible for cash transfer programmes (**CTPs**) in the field site countries and beyond. The TCT project has informed UK social protection programming and established criteria for good practice. DFID and other agencies have adopted its methodology, particularly the focus on targeted individual transfers and evaluation, leading to changes in programme design to ensure better targeting of, and accountability to beneficiaries. It led to subsequent research commissioned by DFID and brought about adaptations in programmes to ensure greater gender awareness and inclusion, and responsiveness to the needs of the disabled. The reports have also been used by several UN agencies, and by INGOs in social protection programming and have contributed to a change in thinking and practice in the delivery of cash transfers across a range of policy actors – including government Ministries, INGOs, development consultancies and policy-makers.

The TCT project enhanced DFID’s understanding of social protection policies especially in Yemen and changed DFID Mozambique’s and Occupied Palestine Territories (OPT)’s social protection strategy and policy: The Head of DFID’s Social Protection Unit confirms that: the “research findings and approach informed internal DFID discussions on social protection design and implementation, as well as with governments, and impacted on programmes and subsequent research” (**iii**). For example, the TCT case study on Yemen which found that the existing programme had a positive impact on poverty that was limited by the relatively small cash transfers it was able to provide, “informed DFID’s perspective on Yemen’s Social Welfare Fund, underlying that Yemen was fortunate to have a basic social protection system in place, and although it had weaknesses, it was an important institution to help strengthen” (**iii**). In OPT, “the key lessons [...included] the insightfulness of beneficiary voices on programming and its effects” and in response a form was created for feedback and advice given on strengthening communication and outreach. TCT demonstrated the need for greater focus on accountability: as the head of DFID’s Social Protection Unit explains, “The research highlighted the need for greater emphasis on social accountability mechanisms” since these are easy to implement but difficult to operate effectively. “To explore these issues further, we commissioned follow-on policy research” in 2016-18 and appointed Molyneux to the Advisory Board. She advised on research design, methods, and acted as peer reviewer. The resulting report, which cites the TCT project reports, was posted open access online at Development Pathways (**iv**).

The TCT reports shaped DFID social protection strategy in Mozambique, which moved to individual rather than household targeting. The lead advisor on Social Protection for DFID Mozambique explains that the reports “created much greater awareness of the lack of inclusion of people with disability in the PSSB [the basic social protection programme], and the difficulties caused by the targeting criterion that was based on the household rather than the individual” (**v**). As a consequence, DFID Mozambique changed their strategy. The new 2016 strategy “moved the PSSB” which provides a cash transfer to over 370,000 people “to individual targeting based [on] categorical targets and rights rather than household targeting, influenced by this research”. Changes made to the Mozambique cash transfer programme (**PSSB**) as a result of the research

benefitted about 1.8 million people beyond the initial programme (v) by changing the basis of targeting from households to vulnerable groups such as women and the disabled.

The TCT research informed consultancy advice issued by NGO Ladysmith and development organization Oxford Policy Management. TCT's evidence and methodology were used by development organizations to advocate for better social protection systems. The Director of Ladysmith, an NGO consultancy based in the USA that advises international development organizations on how to take action on gender data, confirms that the TCT methodology "informed our recommendations for participatory program monitoring and evaluation presented in the [United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization] webinar 'Measuring Gender Outcomes in Social Protection: Why is it important? How to do it?' (22 March 2018). ... [it] was the most watched webinar hosted on Socialprotection.org in 2018" (vi). The TCT methodology was particularly valuable because M&E in CTPs "tends to neglect the experiences and perspectives of the women that they target" and because policymakers and practitioners find it difficult to access relevant research (vi). By contrast, Molyneux has made "this high-quality research accessible and available to a policy and practitioner audience" (vi). TCT methods and social accountability findings have informed Ladysmith's work with Gender Equality and Integrated Health Systems teams at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. In their consultations with the Foundation, Ladysmith "referred to the TCT methodological approach [... which] provides evidence of the value and importance of social accountability and qualitative and participatory research in program design and evaluation" and Ladysmith have used the TCT findings and methodology "to advocate for women's participation in programme design, monitoring and evaluation" (vi). In 2018 Molyneux and ODI co-hosted a workshop titled Gender, Adolescence and the Sustainable Development Goals. Ladysmith said: "The workshop helped to inform our thinking for projects that Ladysmith has been involved in for the past two years in the gender norms socialization space. Specifically, the workshop alerted us to research that we used in deliverables for UNICEF (including: *Global Mapping of Existing UNICEF Programming on Gender Socialization*, 2019) as well as in Ladysmith's academic-policy papers (*Programmatic norms change to eliminate violence against children: Insights for practitioners and researchers from a UNICEF global mapping 2020*)" (vi).

Oxford Policy Management (OPM) supports governments to develop social protection systems. Countries such as Zimbabwe, Zambia and Kenya have begun to strengthen their feedback systems for beneficiaries of social protection programmes, while Malawi and Zambia are strengthening their case management practices. OPM explain that "The wave of country governments that has started to work on these aspects of social protection delivery is [...] the indirect consequence of a slow shift in thinking and practice" that OPM "as partners to government have helped push". OPM confirms that the TCT research provided an "important evidence base", which OPM have used "to leverage policy support and attention [...] within our policy design, programme implementation and programme evaluation work". Output [5], edited by Molyneux, was of particular value: 'The strategic use of a themed edition of the *Journal of Development Studies* focusing entirely on this topic [R5] gave an opportunity to the broader community who had been working on this to further systemise the evidence base and affect the global discourse' (vii) 'Insights from TCT research' were taken up by 'the TRANSFORM Curriculum on building social protection floors in Sub-Saharan Africa' (vii). '*Leadership & Transformation Curriculum on Building and Managing Social Protection Floors in Africa – TRANSFORM*' is a training package which builds capacity in policymakers and practitioners to improve the design, governance and administration of social protection systems. It is having a large impact across the continent' (vii). Since it was launched in 2018 TRANSFORM has conducted 47 trainings in 12 countries for 1250 participants who have benefitted from increased knowledge and understanding of social protection programmes: a participant in Kaufe District Application, Zambia, said 'This program has given me the courage to implement some of the changes that I've been wanting to make for a long time.' (vii).

The TCT evidence base and methodology was used by UN agencies in their recommendations to government policymakers and evaluation of the design of social protection programmes. As a result of her leadership of the TCT project, Molyneux was invited

to help shape the UN Women's 2015/2016 *Progress of the World's Women* (POWW) report. The POWW is a flagship report designed to highlight gaps and prompt action which reaches a global audience of policymakers, civil society actors and researchers. The 2015/16 POWW proposed a new policy agenda to transform the global economy and enable the realisation of women's rights. In September 2014, Molyneux was invited to review Chapter 3 of the POWW and shaped its analysis of cash transfer programmes. The Chief of the Research and Data Section at UN Women confirms that "For the production of our 2015/2016 POWW entitled *Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights*, [...] we had the opportunity to use the research you have conducted for the UK government in the *Transforming Cash Transfers* project, to enrich and shape our policy messages [...] especially its analysis of CTPs and their impact (positive and negative) on gender equality, and key messages of the chapter for the design of social protection programmes" (viii). The report (ix) cites (R2) and (R3). Additionally, UN Women "has drawn upon your work on conditional cash transfers to produce two briefs", which recommend that social protection floors "Avoid tying cash transfers to conditionalities that add to women's unpaid care burdens and integrate gender-responsive elements, such as crèches, in public works programmes" (viii, ix). The briefs, *Making National Social Protection Floors Work for Women* and *Making Social Protection Gender-Responsive: Lessons from UN Women's Work in the Eastern Caribbean, No.7*, were published online as part of UN Women's Digital Library.

UNICEF and the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) have used the findings, recommendations and methodology of the TCT research in their own projects: "Your Transforming Cash Transfers project has informed our own research, both at FAO and Innocenti [UNICEF'S research centre, Florence], as well as our thinking on transformative social protection policy" (x). For example, the results, findings and recommendations of TCT "informed substantively FAO's technical guides on gender and social protection. [Molyneux] advised us on the content of the technical guides and served as principal peer reviewer" (Research Analyst, UNICEF Office of Research [iv]). The 3 FAO Technical Guides (ix), which were published in 2018 as part of the *Toolkit on gender-sensitive social protection programmes to combat rural poverty and hunger*, cite (R3) 14 times and (R5) once to demonstrate the importance of considering gender in the design of social protection programmes and of an intersectional approach and to critique conditionalities. This collaboration had a direct benefit on FAO projects: "your inputs have improved our project design and results, particularly in Rwanda" where FAO works to build synergies between social protection and smallholder agriculture (x). The toolkit's relevance is indicated by it having been made available beyond the FAO on socialprotection.org, a member-based knowledge sharing and capacity building platform, and by GSDRC, a partnership of research institutes, think-tanks and consultancy organisations who provide research and consultancy services and information resources. UNICEF's Transfer Project provides evidence on large-scale unconditional CTPs in more than 12 African countries. UNICEF drew on Molyneux's methodology in their evaluation design: "As a direct result of the work you carried out on cash transfers [...] the work that we are doing as part of the Transfer Project on social protection has informed design of our mixed-methods impact evaluations of national cash transfer interventions in Mozambique and Ethiopia" (x).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- i. Testimonial statement Senior Research Fellow, ODI.
- ii. Transforming Cash Transfers Reports: Six Case studies and 1 Synthesis Report: <https://bit.ly/3j4IVmA>
- iii. Testimonial statement head of DFID's Social Protection Unit.
- iv. Social Accountability in the Delivery of Social Protection report: <https://bit.ly/2YEMUqd>
- v. Testimonial statement DFID Field Officer.
- vi. Testimonial statement (supplied) and 23-11-20 email (held by UCL) Director, Ladysmith.
- vii. Testimonial statement Oxford Policy Management (OPM); Transform Newsletter and website.
- viii. Testimonial statement Chief of Research and Data Section, UN Women
- ix. Policy reports citing Molyneux research: UN Women POWW 2015-16 'Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights'; 2018 FAO Technical Guides 1, 2 and 3 (held by UCL).
- x. Testimonial statement Research Analyst, UNICEF office of Research.