

Addressing intimate partner violence, food security and nutrition in Ecuador

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Highlights

Evidence impact

- Findings on the effectiveness of food vouchers have informed World Food Programme (WFP) interventions to improve nutrition and food security of refugee populations in Ecuador.
- WFP has used findings and lessons from testing transfer modalities to inform its five-year country strategic plan and programmes to address violence against women so the programmes are sensitive to local cultures and contexts.

Factors that contributed to impact

- WFP commissioned the evaluation and committed to evidence-informed decision-making for its food security and nutrition strategy and programming to make it more gender sensitive.
- The researchers and WFP shared long-term relationships and were part of similar networks.

Impact evaluation details

Title: [The effect of conditional transfers on intimate partner violence: evidence from...](#)

Authors: Melissa Hidrobo, Amber Peterman, Lori Heise

Status : Completed March 2015



Context

Recent multi-country studies show that intimate partner violence (IPV) is widespread and common. One in three women globally have experienced physical, sexual and/or psychological violence by a partner during their lifetime. In Ecuador, violence and discrimination against women remains high across socio-economic groups. The lifetime prevalence of IPV is estimated at 35% for physical violence, 14.5% for sexual violence and 43.4% for psychological violence.

Many poverty alleviation programmes targeting women throughout low- and middle-income countries aim to empower women through economic means, including labour, assets, microfinance or cash transfers. However, across and within disciplines, there is no consensus on the theories and predicted association between female economic empowerment and IPV. Empirical evidence also remains mixed.

In 2011, WFP expanded its assistance to the Ecuador government to support the integration of Colombian refugees and address the food security and nutrition needs of refugees and poor Ecuadorians. The programme consisted of six monthly transfers of cash, vouchers or food to Colombian refugees and poor Ecuadorian households. The programme targeted women to receive the transfers to improve their role in household decision-making, particularly with respect to food and nutrition.

WFP collaborated with researchers at the International Food Policy Research Institute in 2011 to evaluate the programme's impacts on IPV and learn about the differential impacts of different transfer modalities.

Evidence

The evaluation found that transfers through all modalities reduced controlling behaviour amongst men and physical or sexual violence by 6 to 7 percentage points. However, women's

initial bargaining power was important in determining the magnitude of impact. Thus, existing gender norms in local cultures and contexts were important for designing social transfers. The findings suggested that reductions in IPV are due to a combination of improvement in women's bargaining power and a decrease in poverty-related conflict. Food vouchers were shown to be a cost-effective modality to deliver food assistance and improve dietary diversity.

Evidence impacts

Improved the design of a government food voucher programme

The evaluation informed the design of a food voucher programme, Supporting Local Governments' Capacities to Improve Food and Nutrition Security in Ecuador. WFP's Ecuador country office also used the impact evaluation findings to improve linking of the food vouchers with local smallholder farmers by carrying out a local market analysis to identify sale points for the exchange of vouchers.

Informed WFP's country strategy and programming

Findings informed WFP Ecuador's five-year country strategy plan (2017–2021). The strategy has cited the evidence to inform its approach to nutrition-sensitive programmes and those designed to assist women who have experienced IPV. A key stakeholder from WFP Ecuador is now working at WFP Colombia. According to this stakeholder, lessons from the 3ie-supported impact evaluation have also informed the design of an impact evaluation of a programme in Colombia that compared different transfer modalities.

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