

### **3ie-IFPRI Joint Seminar: Zambia's Child Grant Program**

David Seindenfeld, Senior Researcher (International Development, Evaluation, and Research) at the American Institutes for Research (AIR) presented on the 24-month impact of Zambia's child grant program (CGP) on January 30th at the 3ie-IFPRI seminar series. Using a randomized control trial, Seindenfeld examined the program's impact on a host of factors including poverty reduction, food security, and the wellbeing of children under the age of five. The program intended to focus on five primary objectives: income, education, health, food security and livelihoods. Overall, the results show that the CGP not only increased average consumption levels but also impacted poverty reduction and food security.

The CGP is a Government of Zambia cash transfer program that targets households with children under age five by providing each household with 60 kwacha (ZMW), or roughly USD 12 a month regardless of household size. For the purpose of the study, families with children under age three were enrolled to ensure that they would still be part of the program at the 24 month mark. The baseline and follow-up surveys were conducted around October, when food was most scarce and thus the program had the greatest opportunity to demonstrate its impacts.

A difference-in-difference estimation strategy was used to estimate the effectiveness of the program. The CGP generated positive impacts on a range of indicators, including increasing both food expenditure and livestock production, while also reducing the poverty gap. With younger children, the program lowered the incidences of diarrhea, while having no influence on educational expenditures. Other impacts included increases in the food security and productive capacity of households, in the operated land area, and in the overall crop expenditures (such as fertilizer and hired labor). The researchers also investigated the differential impacts of CGP depending on household size, and found that the program's impacts on total expenditure were double the size for small households as they were for larger households.

Jose Cuesta, Senior Economist (Poverty Reduction & Economic Management Network) at the World Bank and an expert on poverty and food security issues, served as the discussant for the presentation. He started his comments by referring to the impact evaluation as a "gold standard" for others and made two recommendations to improve the paper. First, he recommended a tempering of the enthusiasm for the result, as the findings only addressed half of the original goals of the intervention. More specifically, he focused on the claims made about the positive impacts of the program on nutrition outcomes. Cuesta suggested that, as all of the anthropometric measures of health showed were insignificant, more investigation should be done on the nutritional impacts of the program. He also requested more information on the link between the impact evaluation and the Government of Zambia's recent launch of a national unconditional cash transfer program. Cuesta's points led to a larger discussion among the seminar participants about different measures of nutritional outcomes and further clarifications of the productive impacts of the intervention.