



PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCIES AND CASH TRANSFER PROGRAMMES: MAKING THE CASE FOR GREATER INVOLVEMENT

Social Determinants of Health Discussion Paper 4

DEBATES, **POLICY & PRACTICE**, CASE STUDIES

PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCIES AND CASH TRANSFER PROGRAMMES: MAKING THE CASE FOR GREATER INVOLVEMENT

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Executive Summary

This report examines the case for greater involvement by public health agencies in cash transfer schemes, a form of welfare assistance. It seeks to identify opportunities, obstacles and actions that might support greater involvement.

The issue arises because cash transfer schemes are an increasingly common form of welfare assistance across the world. Health gain is an explicit objective of such schemes, yet the public health community to date have largely been passive observers rather than active participants.

The first part of the report describes the schemes, sets them in historical context and considers the mechanisms through which they might affect health outcomes. It concludes that there are good theoretical reasons why cash transfers might be expected to improve health.

The second part of the report critically examines the evidence surrounding cash transfer schemes. It finds that cash transfers beneficially impact a range of health outcomes and broader determinants of health. Furthermore, it finds that cash transfers have potentially significant impacts on access to health systems and that there are aspects of scheme design and implementation that the health sector is well placed to assist. Together, these constitute a compelling argument that public health agencies should develop more substantive engagement with cash transfer schemes.

Part three of the report seeks to identify concrete opportunities, obstacles and actions for greater involvement in these schemes. It recommends that public health agencies assist in advocating cash transfer schemes as a priority consideration in country level plans for social policy and makes further specific recommendations for action by national and international public health agencies.

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