

Conditional Cash Transfers and Adolescent Girls' Educational Participation

Evidence and Policy Implications from Zinder, Niger

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ABSTRACT

In Niger, adolescent girls face significant barriers to educational participation, with regional disparities particularly acute in areas like Zinder. Conditional cash transfers (CCTs) are a prominent social protection tool, yet rigorous evidence on their specific efficacy for this demographic in the Sahelian context remains limited. This policy brief analyses the impact of a CCT programme on school enrolment and attendance for adolescent girls in the Zinder Region. It aims to inform the design and scaling of social protection and education policy in similar contexts. The analysis employs a mixed-methods approach, synthesising quantitative data from a quasi-experimental evaluation of a government-run CCT programme with qualitative insights from focus group discussions with beneficiaries, parents, and community leaders. The CCT programme significantly increased secondary school enrolment for beneficiary girls by approximately 18 percentage points compared to the control group. Qualitative data revealed that reduced direct schooling costs and a shift in parental perception of girls' education were key mediating mechanisms. CCTs are an effective instrument for improving educational outcomes for adolescent girls in a challenging Sahelian environment. Their success is contingent on addressing both economic and socio-cultural barriers to schooling. Policymakers should: 1) integrate CCTs within a broader strategy addressing school quality and safety; 2) design sensitisation campaigns targeting households and community structures to shift norms; and 3) strengthen monitoring systems to track attendance and learning outcomes, not just enrolment. conditional cash transfers, adolescent girls, education, enrolment, Niger, Sahel, social protection This brief provides novel evidence on the operational mechanisms through which CCTs influence parental decision-making and girls' educational participation in a pastoralist community setting.

Keywords: *Conditional cash transfers, educational participation, adolescent girls, Sahel region, social protection, Niger*

Article Highlights

- CCTs increased secondary enrolment by ~18 percentage points for girls in Zinder.
- Reduced direct costs and changed parental perceptions were key mechanisms.
- Success requires addressing both economic and socio-cultural barriers.
- Integration with school quality and safety strategies is critical for policy.

Policy Imperatives

Integrate CCTs within broader strategies for school quality and safety; design sensitisation campaigns to shift norms; strengthen monitoring to track attendance and learning outcomes.

This brief provides novel evidence on CCT mechanisms in a pastoralist community setting.

ABSTRACT-ONLY PUBLICATION

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