

POLICY PAPER

INVESTING IN GIRLS:

Opportunities for Innovation in Girl-Centered Cash Transfers¹

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Introduction

Over the last decade, anti-poverty initiatives across the developing world have increasingly focused on gender-based strategies, and in particular, on achieving equality and empowerment through gender-focused program innovation. While important progress has been made in the last several years, men still outnumber women in paid employment in almost every region of the developing world, with more women working informally, and in more vulnerable employment positions, than men.

Girls in the developing world are underrepresented in education, too, with female university-level enrollment in Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, at 76 percent and 67 percent of male enrollment, respectively.¹ The United Nations Millennium Development Goal 3, to “Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women,” was aimed at addressing these remaining and widespread disparities.

There are over 580 million girls in the world aged 10 to 19 years, of which roughly 90 million are in low-income countries² where the per capita income is less than

USD 1,005 per year.³ Over 85 percent of adolescent girls are estimated to live in poverty in countries such as Bangladesh, Liberia, Tanzania, and Rwanda.⁴ They often work in the informal sector, may not be in school, and are missed by many development interventions. Over 100 million girls between the ages of five and 17 are involved in child labor, with the majority engaged in hazardous work, including domestic service and other informal types of work where girls are particularly isolated and vulnerable.⁵ In over a dozen countries across the world, more than 50 percent of girls—and in some nations as much as 87 percent—do not complete primary school. Globally, approximately one-quarter of girls in developing countries are not in school at all.⁶

Investing in adolescent girls is important for addressing inequality and is critical for the realization of their rights, but it can also pay enormous economic dividends. Mounting evidence shows that investments in adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) may prove to be an even more effective way of ending intergenerational poverty than

³ See World Bank definition: http://data.worldbank.org/about/country-classifications/country-and-lending-groups#Low_income

⁴ Maplecroft, *Girls Discovered: Global Maps of Adolescent Girls*, GirlsDiscovered.org. <http://www.girlsdiscovered.org/>. 2012.

⁵ ILO 2009. Cited in “Stemming Girls’ Chronic Poverty: Catalysing Development Change by Building Just Social Institutions,” 2011, 2. Chronic Poverty Research Centre.

⁶ Jad Chaaban and Wendy Cunningham. *Measuring the Economic Gain of Investing in Girls: The Girl Effect Dividend*, Policy Research Working Paper 5753, World Bank, August 2011, 17.

¹ In 2011, the New America Foundation launched an initiative to examine the global movement toward the electronic payment (e-payment) of social protection benefits.

¹ United Nations, “UN MDG 3 Fact Sheet,” 2010.

² Maplecroft, *Girls Discovered: Global Maps of Adolescent Girls*, GirlsDiscovered.org. <http://www.girlsdiscovered.org/>. 2012.

programs targeting children generally. For example, in their 2011 paper, “Measuring the Economic Effects of Investing in Girls: The Girl Effect Dividend,” the World Bank’s Jad Chaaban and Wendy Cunningham found that if young women in Brazil were employed at the same levels as men, the annual national GDP would rise USD 23 billion. In lifetime income by that logic, they calculate that India would add almost USD 400 billion to its GDP.⁷

Girl-targeted social protection policies, to the extent they exist, have traditionally aimed at keeping adolescent girls in school, prioritizing HIV prevention, delaying marriage, and offering reproductive health programs before puberty. These are all critical objectives. However, advancements in technology coupled with another emerging trend in anti-poverty initiatives—the shift in social protection programs from in-kind transfers to cash payments, and the increasing disbursement of those cash payments using electronic methods—provide a unique opportunity to consider new and complementary goals that could enhance both the efficiency and efficacy of girl-centered programs.

This paper suggests that as investments in targeted cash transfer interventions for AGYW increase, policymakers and other stakeholders should leverage trends toward financially-inclusive e-payments as a means to achieve multiple potential objectives including: 1) counting adolescent girls to ensure they have access to health and educational opportunities by encouraging registration at birth; 2) improving adolescent girls’ access to financial services; and 3) encouraging asset-building opportunities. We posit that doing so could result in several positive outcomes, such as 1) greater potential to provide adolescent girls with access to formal financial systems; 2) formal identity and rights; 3) the chance for governments and others investing in girl-focused programs to achieve a better return on investment; 4) reduce government leakage and corruption that waste precious resources; 5) provide financial institutions an expanded client base and holdings;

⁷ Jad Chaaban and Wendy Cunningham. *Measuring the Economic Gain of Investing in Girls: The Girl Effect Dividend*, Policy Research Working Paper 5753, World Bank, August 2011, 20.

and 6) create opportunities for practitioners looking for ways to nudge behavior or enhance social and economic outcomes.

The Benefits of E-Payment Systems⁸

For Recipients: Financial Inclusion

- Under account-linked e-payment systems, individuals have a place to safely store and manage their money
- Often, electronic G2P payments are a beneficiary’s first introduction to the formal economy

For Governments: Cost Savings

- E-payments allow for a more streamlined payment process that can lead to significant savings. In Brazil, administration costs for the Bolsa Familia program dropped by over 80 percent after a shift to e-payments
- E-payments can result in a reduction in the amount of bribes paid by recipients in order to receive their benefits, as in Argentina, where one program saw that number fall by an estimated USD 10.7 million
- E-payments reduce the ghost worker problem

For Financial Institutions: Increased Profits

- With e-payment social protection models, the volume of accounts will often be able to reach sufficient scale to make the accounts profitable for the financial intermediaries
- Where that is not possible in the short term, it will be necessary for governments to provide small subsidies

After examining the current landscape of social protection interventions for adolescent girls and the benefits of emerging e-payment opportunities, we explore what creative tools and interventions could be introduced to enhance existing (or create new) programs that take advantage of the economic empowerment and asset-building opportunities provided by e-payment systems. We also highlight case studies of special relevance in order to offer recommendations for program design. And we identify research gaps and potential barriers and constraints to AGYW in accessing new technologies.

⁸ Kathy Lindert, Anja Linder, Jason Hobbs, and Bénédicte de la Brière, *The Nuts and Bolts of Brazil’s Bolsa Família Program: Implementing Conditional Cash Transfers in a Decentralized Context*, SP Discussion Paper no. 0709, Washington, DC: World Bank, May 2007, 51-53.

The Current and Future Landscape of Girl-Centered Social Protection

This paper specifically examines government-to-person payments that are targeted toward girls. There are a range of programs and interventions that are designed to help girls that do not fit within this scope. However, despite the enormity of girls' global needs, and the rapidly increasing popularity of cash-based social protection, there are still very few social protection programs that transfer cash directly to AGYW. Within our database of 82 active programs for which we have adequate payment and delivery details, the total number of schemes directly targeting girls is seventeen (about 20 percent). Fourteen of those are in India, most of which are funded and implemented at the state level. These programs reach approximately 2.3 million of the 90 million girls in developing countries mentioned earlier. Further, only three girl-targeted programs use an electronic payment method: Dhan Lakshmi, the Balika Vidyalay Scheme and Ladli in Delhi (all in India).⁹ This section examines the current and potential relationship between e-payments and girl-centered social protection policies.

The heat map below shows gender disparity according to UNDP's Gender and Inequality Index across the globe. This reveals the countries where girls are particularly vulnerable and their futures look especially bleak—not just economically, but with respect to education, health, and rights. Additionally, countries with programs that provide payments directly to girls are outlined in white and countries with programs that reach girls (although not necessarily directly or intentionally) are shaded diagonally. While there are few countries with programs that pay girls directly, as the map shows, there are also a host of programs that aim to improve the lives of girls (and children more broadly) in a less direct manner. By and large, these programs incentivize parents to ensure that their children remain in school, are given adequate healthcare, and in India specifically, are not discriminated

⁹ While programs exist in Guatemala (for *Abriendo Oportunidades*) and Nigeria (the Kano State Pilot), there is not sufficient data available for them to be included in our analysis.

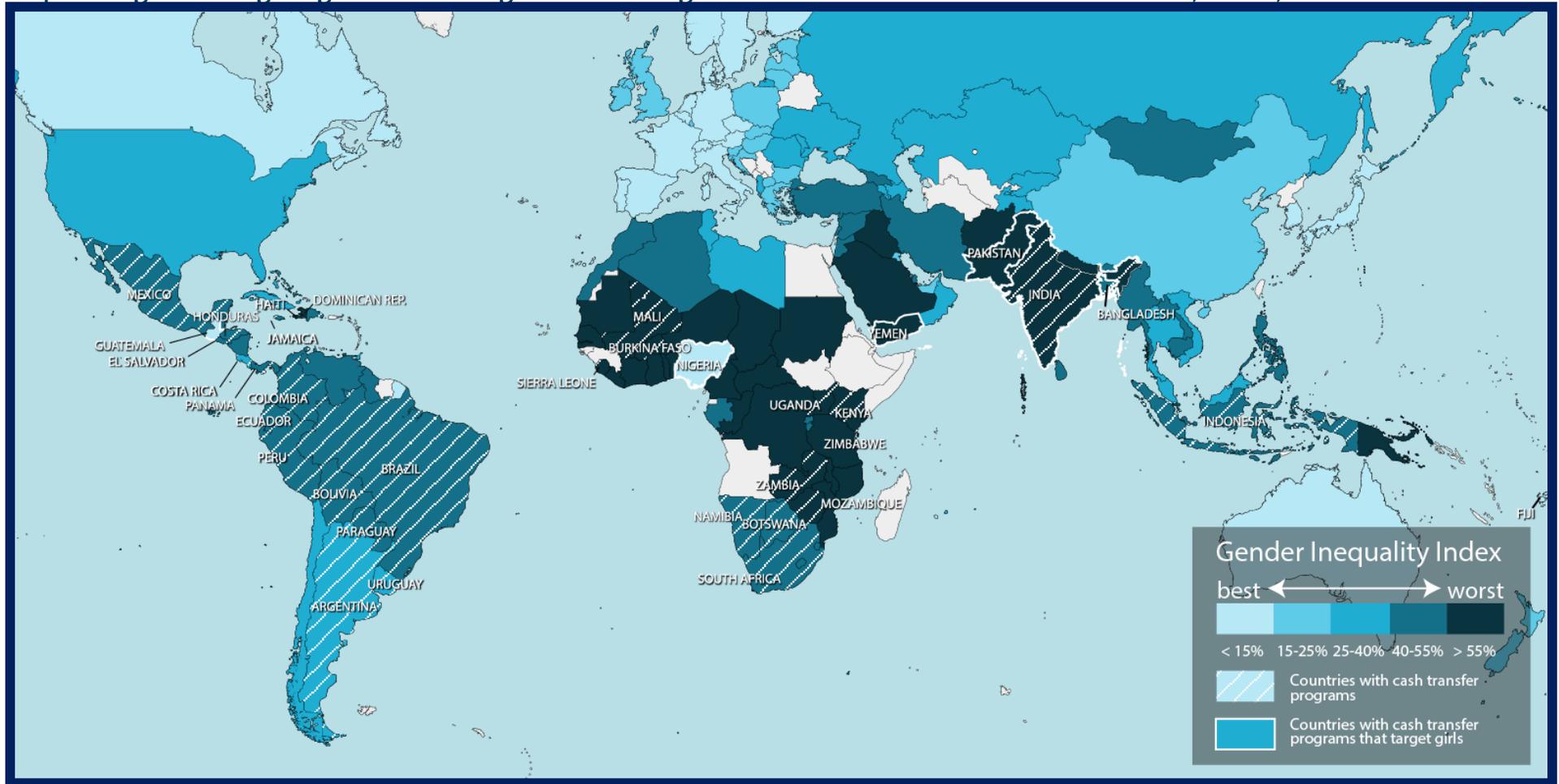
against through sex-selective feticide or infanticide. For example, Kenya's Cash Transfer for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVCs) Program pays families to ensure that the OVCs in their care remain in school. Research has shown that this program has had a significant impact on HIV rates among beneficiaries.¹⁰ Further, Bourse Maman in Mali, which provides cash transfers to families on the condition that their children maintain 80 percent school attendance, pays a higher amount to families ensuring their daughters' continued education because of the cultural and economic practice of removing girls from school to perform domestic work. Finally, programs, such as Janani Suraksha Yojana in India benefit poor mothers—many of whom are AGYW. This larger category of programs totals 42 of the 82 (over half) in our database.

All of these programs incorporate cash transfers as a means of incentivizing positive behaviors. Cash transfers have gained credibility for encouraging positive behaviors in recipients, and governments and funders alike have begun to consider these payments a viable approach to addressing a host of poverty-related concerns.

In India, for example, virtually all of the social protection cash transfer programs targeting girls incentivize education but primarily aim to address the sex ratio imbalance in the country. The hope is that by rewarding the birth of daughters and providing funds for education, these programs will enhance the perceived value of daughters in the eyes of their families. As in India, Bangladesh also uses education-focused cash transfer programs to address other issues.

¹⁰ S. Handa, A. Pettifor, H. Thirumurthy, and C. Halpern. Effect of a national social cash transfer program on HIV risk behavior in Kenya. Nineteenth International AIDS Conference, Washington DC, abstract FRLBD01, 2012.

Map 1: Programs Targeting Girls and Programs Reaching Girls in Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia



In the coming years, technological advances in point-of-sale devices, biometric identification, and mobile delivery mechanisms promise to make the electronic delivery of social protection payments a reality in even the most remote areas of the world. Governments will have a range of options in how they set up these delivery systems, including retail banking, mobile delivery, and debit and smart card technologies, for instance, depending on local infrastructure and context.

E-payments provide a more streamlined payment process and reduce the cost of distribution, but they can also be the first step toward financial inclusion for AGYW on the edges of society. Programs that leverage e-payments not only provide recipients with account access, but they can also encourage savings. Research shows that saving improves the long-term economic conditions of recipients and leads to an increase in future-oriented decisions and a more hopeful outlook on life. This is often referred to as “asset effects.” In a study by Columbia University’s Fred Ssewamala and Lela Ismayilova, 277 AIDS-orphaned youths were provided, in one part of the intervention, with matched-savings accounts, and found “statistically significant differences between youths in the experimental and control groups on attitudes toward saving, academic performance, educational aspirations, and health-related behavior.”¹¹

None of the girl-targeted social protection programs to date, however, take full advantage of the financial inclusion or asset-building opportunities inherent in cash transfers. For instance, most programs make cash payments rather than electronic payments, which generally require travel to or from a post office or bank, long lines, burdensome paperwork, and significant staff hours. Programs like the Basic Education Development Project (BEDP) in Yemen and Balika Samridhi Yojana (BSY) in India involve an electronic *delivery* of funds to a central pay point (bank,

post office, etc.), but pay in cash. Three programs—Secondary Education Sector Improvement Project (SESIP) II in Bangladesh, and Ladli, Dhan Lakshmi and ABAD in India—pay into an account in the girl’s name, but they do not allow for interaction with the account for money management or savings purposes.

The admittedly tiny universe of e-payments to adolescent girls points to an important and timely opportunity. As investments in girls increase, the focus of those investments will increasingly prioritize asset building and economic empowerment objectives in order to address a whole host of other girls’ needs. If e-payments—through a bank account, card, or mobile phone—were coupled with financial literacy education and account interaction, the recipients would be better prepared to enter the workforce or support a family upon completion of school. Additionally, if biometrics or behavioral nudges are incorporated into existing programs, more girls could likely participate in the programs and meet the conditions for receiving cash transfers.

Three E-Payment Opportunities

The section below discusses three types of specific and immediate opportunities for current and future girl-centered programs to leverage the shift to electronic payment systems:

1. **Providing formal savings opportunities for adolescent girls**
2. **Experimenting with behavioral nudges**
3. **Leveraging biometric ID tools**

Of the social protection programs specifically targeting adolescent girls, we discovered none that were delivered through financially-inclusive accounts where adolescent girls had full access to make deposits.¹² Second, electronic payment systems will undoubtedly open up new

¹¹ Fred M. Ssewamala and Leyla Ismayilova, “Integrating Children’s Savings Accounts in the Care and Support of Orphaned Adolescents in Rural Uganda,” *Social Service Review*, 83 no.3 (2009): 453–472, 453.

¹² While social protection payments currently reach between 750 million and one billion people globally, early evidence suggests that less than half of these recipients are reached through a bank account in which they can make deposits. *GSSP Database*.

opportunities to experiment with creative policy design; as e-payment systems make measurement easier and less costly, researchers and development experts can more easily measure what interventions work best to achieve policy objectives. A number of insights from social and cognitive psychology, as detailed later, provide helpful hints about specific interventions that may warrant increased investigation. Finally, biometric identification technology frequently employed in the shift to e-payments provides opportunities to help count AGYW correctly, not only providing them access to services, but also perhaps by helping to delay marriage by verifying age properly. Below, we consider each of these opportunities in turn.

Enable or Encourage Savings Behavior

E-payment systems can offer new opportunities for financial access and the opportunity to save and build assets to millions of girls and young women. Formal bank accounts, however, may not be appropriate to all program goals or capacities. Fortunately, there are several means of delivering financially inclusive payments that enable or encourage savings, which can be tailored to objectives and contexts.

To examine what kinds of electronic payment systems might be most appropriate in what contexts, a short review of these systems is helpful. There are two distinct trends within the shift to financially-inclusive e-payments. Delivery mechanisms either actively or passively *enable* savings by allowing recipients to keep a store of value or make deposits, or they *encourage* savings opportunities through nudges or even conditions. Some programs use multiple methods of delivery depending on the target population.

By far the most common form of social protection e-payments are *savings-enabling models*. In Brazil, for instance, there are over 1.7 million accounts within the Bolsa Família program that are now delivered through a commercial bank or government post bank.¹³ Colombia's

¹³ Jamie Zimmerman et al. *Savings-Linked Conditional Cash Transfers: Lessons, Challenges and Directions*. (Washington, DC: New America Foundation, 2011), 12.

Familias en Acción program and the Social Risk Mitigation Project in Turkey also follow this model. Payments may also be made through retail banking agents such as those used by Mexico's Oportunidades in rural areas.

Another savings-enabling model employs debit cards or smart cards. These are used in Pakistan with the Benazir Income Support Program, and in Jamaica's PATH program. Mobile phones are also being used in social protection payments, particularly in emergency situations. In March of 2012, Haiti saw the first emergency relief for post-disaster housing reconstruction delivered by mobile phone.¹⁴ Concern Worldwide has also been doing some interesting work in this area. In 2008, it supplied mobile phones and solar panel chargers to groups of 10 recipients in Kenya in the wake of a devastating drought. Of particular note is that the agency did not need to distribute mobile phones to all recipients—each recipient was given a SIM card, which could be used interchangeably with “communal” phones. The SIM cards doubled, essentially, as debit cards.¹⁵

The second and more intentional form of financially-inclusive e-payment systems are *savings-encouraging models*. One such model relevant to the youth context uses Child Development Accounts (CDAs), such as those that have been piloted in Nigeria and Uganda, which provide matching grants for savings and other behaviors. Another model is Bangladesh's Income Generation for Vulnerable Group Development (IGVGD) program, which targets women and gives in-kind donations dependent on savings in a passbook. One evaluation of this program in 2004 found that the average increase in net annual income was roughly USD 200.¹⁶ Peru's PCA capital development program also targets women, and offers matching grants as well as financial literacy training to recipients. In less than

¹⁴ UNDP and Digicel. “First Mobile Phone Cash Transfer for Housing Repairs Kicks off in Haiti,” Press release, March 1, 2012.

¹⁵ “Technology Makes Cash Transfers Safer in Kenya”. *Voice of America News*. October 19, 2011.

¹⁶ Dale Posgate, Paolo Craviolatti, Naomi Hossain, Petra Osinski, Tricia Parker, and Parvin Sultana, “Review of the BRAC/CFPR Specially Targeted Ultra-Poor (STUP) Programme: Mission Report,” unpublished report, BRAC Donor Liaison Office, Dhaka, 2004.

three years, an evaluation showed, 10 thousand women had saved USD 2 million.¹⁷ In Zambia, the Kalomo Pilot Social Cash Transfer Scheme requires recipients to open savings accounts. As a result of the program, the number of households that were making investments increased from 15 to 50 percent. Further, the average amount invested by these households doubled.¹⁸

While these programs reflect a great variation in design and delivery methods, they also clearly display the benefits of providing formal savings opportunities to recipients. For girls in particular, offering the ability to save or actively encouraging savings can have a significant impact on their economic vulnerability and sense of independence.

Experiment with Nudges

The opportunities for learning more about recipients' financial habits are growing with an expanding mobile infrastructure which allows for electronic payments in some of the most remote areas in the world. Not only do electronic payment systems allow governments to have an auditable trail for all government-to-person (G2P) payments, they also allow for precise measurements of the savings demands and habits of recipients. Encouraging savings, too, becomes far easier, and opportunities to experiment with new asset-building approaches have never been greater.

In the youth context, accounts would allow for the opportunity to better develop sustainable savings habits early on in life. One of the basic tenets of the psychology of habits is that behaviors take less effort the more they are repeated. With habit formation, similar to learning to play a sport, actions that begin as “reflective” thought processes develop into “automatic” processes. In this way, strong positive habits also free up valuable cognitive bandwidth. By encouraging savings habits among youth—and girls

more specifically—financially-inclusive social protection programs can not only provide a safe place to store, manage, and build assets long-term, but they can also help establish strong savings habits that allow AGYW to fully leverage their capacities, benefitting them for years to come. Mobile banking in particular allows for experimentation with savings “cues” and establishing savings habits long after conventional interventions would end.

Capitalize on Biometric IDs

To make e-payment systems as effective and efficient as possible, developing world governments are rolling out national biometric ID schemes or employing biometric IDs at a programmatic level. In Liberia, as Princeton University's Jonathan Friedman recently reported, a successful shift to biometric ID-based salary payments saved the government USD 4 million a year.¹⁹ In India, the consulting group McKinsey estimated that a shift to e-payments would save the government over USD 23 billion a year—implying that the government would recoup the investment in the necessary infrastructure within a single year.²⁰

Some form of biometric identification technology is already being used in Pakistan, Afghanistan, the DRC, Malawi, South Africa, India, Ghana, Namibia, Botswana, Kenya, Nigeria, Iraq, Philippines, Bolivia, Indonesia, and Mexico, as the Center for Global Development's Alan Gelb and Caroline Decker detailed in 2011. Biometric IDs provide an even greater opportunity to reduce fraud and eliminate the patchwork identification systems common in most developing countries.²¹

¹⁹ Jonathan Friedman, *Cleaning the Civil Service Payroll: Post-Conflict Liberia, 2008 – 2011*, (Innovations for Successful Societies, Princeton University, October 2011), 9.

²⁰ Tilman Ehrbeck, Rajiv Lochan, Supriyo Sinha, Naveen Tahilyani and Adil Zainulbhai, *Inclusive Growth and Financial Security: The Benefits of E-Payments to Indian Society*, (McKinsey & Company Financial Services Group, India, 2010), 2.

²¹ Alan Gelb and Caroline Decker, *Cash at Your Fingertips: Biometric Technology for Transfers in Developing and Resource-Rich Countries*. CGD Working Paper 253, (Washington, DC: Center for Global Development, 2011), 7.

¹⁷ Jamie Zimmerman and Yves Moury, *Savings-Linked Conditional Cash Transfers: A New Policy Approach to Global Poverty Reduction* (Washington, DC: New America Foundation, 2009), 11.

¹⁸ MCDSS-GTZ Social Safety Net Project, *Evaluation Report: Kalomo Social Cash Transfer Scheme*, 2006, 2.

Mexico is currently using biometrics on a national scale to deliver G2P payments. India's Unique ID (UID) program, too, is moving toward national financial inclusion through its use of iris scans that will lay the foundation for nationalized e-payments. When completed, the UID will have the largest biometric database in the world. Many programs, like Kenya's Hunger Safety Net Project, are already using biometrically-enabled smart cards.

In the context of girl-centered programs, biometric IDs have two immediately apparent potential applications. First, proper identification is needed for adolescent girls to access many state services and can be used to help them enter the formal financial system. Second, biometric IDs may eventually play a role, through birth registration, in helping ensure that adolescent girls are not married before legal age using fraudulent birth certificates. Programs encouraging biometric registration at birth can also be paired with formal bank accounts, achieving multiple goals at once.

These three opportunities: increasing financial inclusion for adolescent girls; being able to more easily experiment with new girl-centered programs; and employing biometric IDs to help adolescent girls constitute key categories where the shift to electronic payment systems holds great potential to maximize outcomes of social protection payment interventions on AGYW.

Applying E-Payment Opportunities to Girl-Targeted Programs: Case Studies

To understand how policymakers and practitioners can leverage these e-payment opportunities—savings applications, biometric technology, and experimentation with applications from behavioral economics—to strengthen the design and impact of interventions targeting adolescent girls, we examine them in the context of two programs. An in-depth discussion helps surface policy and program recommendations that could be applied to current or future girl-centered cash transfer programs around the world.

Bangladesh's Female School Stipend Program

Bangladesh's Female School Stipend Program (FSSP) offers a useful case study from the perspective of savings and social protection. FSSP provided cash transfers that were delivered electronically through bank accounts, but in practice the adolescent girls did not have direct access to their accounts.

The goal of FSSP was to address the unsustainable growth of Bangladesh's population.²² The government realized in the 1970s that the longer adolescent girls stayed in school, the later they were likely to marry, and the fewer children they were likely to have. In 1994, the FSSP was launched nationally as the government set out to increase female enrollment in rural secondary schools. It included the Female Secondary School Assistance Project, the Female School Stipend Project, the Secondary Education Sector Improvement Project, and the Female Secondary School Education Stipend Project.²³ Since 1994, both female and male secondary school enrollment has jumped significantly.

As part of the program, monthly transfers were offered to adolescent girls in grades 6 through 10 upon completion of each grade. Extra money was provided for school fees, book allowances, and examination fees, conditional upon 75 percent attendance and 45 percent marks on final exams, as well as delaying marriage until age 18. The transfers ranged from about USD 3 in grade six to about USD 6 in grades 9 and 10, plus an additional USD 1 to 2 in school fees, depending on the grade in which adolescent girls were enrolled.²⁴

In 2005, the program delivered USD 25 million and reached 2.3 million adolescent girls. That figure is now over four million.²⁵ The tuition segment of the transfer was paid

²² Ibid.

²³ Naila Kabeer, *Social Protection in South Asia: A Review*. Sussex, England: Institute of Development Studies, 2009, 20-21.

²⁴ Anna T. Schurmann, "Review of the Bangladesh Female Secondary School Stipend Project Using a Social Exclusion Framework," *Journal of Health and Popular Nutrition*, 27, no. 4 (August 2009).

²⁵ Naila Kabeer, *Social Protection in South Asia: A Review*, Sussex, England: Institute of Development Studies, 2009.

to the school directly and the rest of the stipend was paid out through bank accounts in the girls' names.²⁶ Delivery of the funds varied by region, but was frequently made using bank representatives who visited the schools twice a year for disbursement.

The economic returns on education for boys in primary and secondary school are at 3.4 and 3.2 percent respectively, while the returns for girls are 8.9 and 9.6 percent. In other words, the returns on investing in adolescent girls' education in Bangladesh are about three times greater than the returns on investing in boys' education.²⁷ Further, an adolescent girl's educational attainment is the single greatest indicator of her life expectancy.²⁸

Recommendations

Allow the account holder to access her account for the purpose of depositing money. FSSP delivers money into accounts in the adolescent girls' names, and therefore the accounts provide an opportunity to add program elements encouraging the development of savings habits. Based on the research, electronic transfers would be more efficient than hard cash because they reduce the risk of leakage and corruption. Further, this provides a critical step towards financial inclusion for the adolescent girls.

Offer in-school banking as a component of the cash transfer to help establish savings habits. How to best integrate bank accounts would depend on communal needs, but could easily include a system whereby in-school banking could be provided by banking agents that visit the schools and take deposits. Banking agents in many cases already visit the schools to disperse funds. Increasing the number of visits by the banking agents for financial literacy and deposit-taking would be logistically feasible. If a

program wanted to encourage savings, a matched-savings element could be added.

Require financial literacy training as a component of school curriculum. Children from poor families often simply do not have the knowledge or skills necessary to manage their money in the best way, especially in light of the high number of “unbanked” among the poor. As Jennefer Sebstad noted in *Girls and Their Money*, “Across countries, the market research findings on current knowledge revealed that very few girls understand the concept of a saving goal. Most girls are not experienced with formal savings, do not have accounts, and are unfamiliar with how accounts work.”²⁹ Access to financial services is important, but educating adolescent girls on financial literacy is crucial to their current and future financial wellbeing as well as that of their future families.

Experiment with the timing of interventions. Behaviors are associated with certain times, locations, and people. Successful habit formation requires stable social environments, and school provides the necessary components of stability. The role of “cues” or “triggers” in habit formation is especially important.³⁰ Further, the psychology literature on habit formation suggests that the timing of interventions is also key. Since stability is central to habit formation, not all moments of an intervention are equal. This basic insight implies that transitional periods in an adolescent girl's development provide better opportunities to establish strong savings habits. It suggests that interventions timed, say, at the very beginning of the school year might be more successful than those timed in the middle of the school year, when patterns of association and behavior are more set. New environments, for a short time, create new cues that are not yet associated with prior behaviors. By identifying the age and/or the time of year

²⁶ Anna T. Schurmann, “Review of the Bangladesh Female Secondary School Stipend Project Using a Social Exclusion Framework,” *Journal of Health and Popular Nutrition*, 27, no. 4 (August 2009).

²⁷ Jad Chaaban and Wendy Cunningham, *Measuring the Economic Gain of Investing in Girls: The Girl Effect Dividend*. Policy Research Working Paper 5753. (Washington, DC: World Bank, August 2011), 13-14.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Jennefer Sebstad, *Girls and their Money: Strategies for Promoting Savings, Financial Education and Social Support for Adolescent Girls in Low-Income Countries*. Synthesis Report, (Washington, DC: Microfinance Opportunities, November 2011), 25.

³⁰ Căzilia Loibl, David S. Kraybill, and Sara Wackler DeMay, “Accounting for the Role of Habit in Regular Saving,” *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 32 no.4 (2011): 581-592.

that these interventions are most likely to aid in habit formation, programs can deepen the impact of the cash transfer.

India's Apni Beti, Apna Dhan Program

India presents a complex yet promising context for girl-targeted interventions. In addition to a significant gender gap in education, there are a host of other issues that programs seek to address, often simultaneously.

Apni Beti, Apna Dhan (ABAD), or “Our Daughter, Our Wealth,” was implemented in the wealthy Indian state of Haryana in 1994, and was initially designed to target families who lived below the poverty line. The program aims to reverse the sex ratio imbalance of boys to girls and to delay marriage.

ABAD is a cash transfer scheme with three primary components. The first is a payment of USD 11 given to the mother after giving birth to a girl to compensate for some of the costs of childbirth. This is designed to counteract the tendency toward son preference and sex-selective feticide. The second is a savings bond opened in the girl's name in the amount of INR 2,500 (about USD 54), conditional on her remaining unmarried until the age of 18. Only then can she access the funds in her account, which will have accumulated to USD 540. In addition, the program incentivizes continued education by offering USD 107 if the girl remains in school through grade 5 (the last grade of primary school) and another USD 42 if she continues through grade 8.

While Haryana is one of the wealthiest states in India, according to Nistha Sinha and Joanne Yoong, authors of the only evaluation to date on ABAD, it is also, perhaps paradoxically, one of the worst in terms of gender disparity. Not only do adolescent girls in Haryana tend to be disadvantaged in access to education, quality of health, and survival rates, but the state also shows the worst disproportion in sex ratios in the country, with

approximately 820 adolescent girls for every 1000 boys aged zero to six.³¹

The National Family Health Survey (NFHS) Haryana State report for 2005-2006 highlighted the extent of son preference in the context of family planning: “Women in Haryana are much more likely to use contraception if they already have a son. For example, 81 percent of women with two sons but no daughters use a method of family planning, compared with 30 percent of women with two daughters but no sons.”³² The research conducted by Sinha and Yoong points to an increase in female sex selection potentially due to ABAD. Impacts on adolescent girls' education were less notable, and at the time of their evaluation, impacts on delayed marriage could not be evaluated.

While Indian law states that adolescent girls must be 18 years old to marry (boys must be 21) and dowries are prohibited, both laws continue to be disregarded. Workers at the local level who are tasked with enforcing these laws admit to feeling pressure within the community to overlook child marriage for fear of reprisal, or worse, to being unaware that these laws exist. Because of the extent to which poverty impacts a family's decision to marry off its daughter, the cost of dowry continues to be a burden. The cash transfer amount that is awarded to the girl pales in comparison to a typical dowry, not to mention the cost of the wedding ceremony. Further, as notes a study by ICRW, entitled *Delaying Marriage for Girls in India*, older adolescent girls—those who remain in school longer—will require older marriage partners who will likely also be better educated and thus require a better dowry.³³

³¹ Nistha Sinha and Joanne Yoong. *Long-Term Financial Incentives and Investment in Daughters Evidence from Conditional Cash Transfers in North India*, Policy Research Working Paper 4860, (Washington, DC: World Bank, March 2009), 4.

³² Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India. *National Family Health Survey 2005-2006: Haryana*, (Mumbai, India: International Institute for Population Sciences), November 2008.

³³ Priya Nanda, Sonvi Kapoor, Sushmita Mukherjee, Marcy Hersh, Sharmishtha Basu, and Rashi Bhargava, *Delaying Marriage for Girls in India: A Formative Research to Design Interventions for Changing Norms*, (Washington, DC: International Center for Research on Women), March 2011, 3.

Recommendations

Remind recipients of progress reached toward their goals.

In *Getting to the Top of the Mind*, Karlan et al. found that reminders, and in particular, those that brought savings goals or accumulation to the fore, increased an individual's likelihood to save as well as the amount saved.³⁴ One way to apply this finding to ABAD would be to send out regular statements informing the recipients and their families how much interest their savings bonds have accrued, and perhaps reminding them how much they could earn if they complete a specific grade, or opt to delay withdrawal for an additional two years. More adolescent girls would likely be encouraged to continue in the program and would be more responsive to incentives.

ICRW's work in the Indian states of Bihar and Rajasthan reveals that the motivations behind the practice of marrying girls off in adolescence are both complex and contextually specific. Early marriage in India is the result of a number of factors, including economic incentives such as the cost of dowry, societal pressures, stigma of sex outside of marriage, traditional understandings of gender roles, and the perpetuation of the idea that adolescent girls are the property of others. Because she is considered the property of her future spouse, he and his family would be the primary beneficiaries of her improved circumstances and continued education. In many cases, this diminishes her own family's perceived value in investing in her future.³⁵

Couple the savings bond with a payment system that allows the girl and her family to receive her incentivized payments throughout the schooling experience, perhaps conditional on reaching specific milestones. Another program in India that targets girls, called Dhan Lakshmi, uses a similar approach to ABAD, but also provides payments, based on completing certain grades, to the family to help cover the

costs of the daughter's education.³⁶ Currently with ABAD, the girl is not allowed to access her money in any way before she turns 18, precluding any savings opportunities. The single payment restricts the girl's access to her funds, thus leaving her without financial support until she is of age. This may make it difficult for low-income families to justify taking full advantage of the program. Finally, while the savings bond approach is likely cost-effective, it is not conducive to savings opportunities. By providing more frequent payments, the incentive to stay in school could be more important to the girl and her family's decision-making process. This would also give the family some financial support for the cost of the girl's education, and if coupled with access to her account, would make savings more feasible for girls in the program.

Leverage biometric identification for birth registration, financial inclusion, and enforcement of a program's conditions.

Biometric identification can provide an accurate record of adolescent girls' ages, which offers the potential to aid in the prevention of illegal child marriage, common in India. Marriage laws in India are generally lax, in part because of improper birth registration—sometimes intentionally—of adolescent girls.³⁷ Providing biometric IDs at birth allows for better monitoring and enforcement of existing laws, benefiting adolescent girls in the long run. It can also reduce costs in the process. Not only do biometric IDs present individuals with a more secure and accurate form of identification, they can likely aid in the enforcement of certain program conditions. Biometric IDs also provide a platform for financial inclusion. The Financial Access at Birth (FAB) Initiative, founded by Bhagwan Chowdhry, aims to do just that. FAB's goal is to deposit USD 100 into an electronic savings account for each child born in the world, and would require birth registration via biometric identification in order to do so.³⁸

³⁶ T.V. Sekher, *Special Financial Incentive Schemes for the Girl Child in India: A Review of Select Schemes*, (Mumbai, India: International Institute for Population Sciences), 2010, 11-12.

³⁷ International Center for Research on Women. *Delaying Marriage for Girls in India: A Formative Research to Design Interventions for Changing Norms*. March 2011, 57.

³⁸ Bhagwan Chowdhry, "Can Financial Citizenship Begin at Birth?" *Stanford Social Innovation Review* (Spring 2012): 17-18.

³⁴ Dean Karlan, Margaret McConnelly, Sendhil Mullainathan and Jonathan Zinman, *Getting to the Top of the Mind: How Reminders Increase Saving*, NBER Working Paper No. 16205, 2010, 10-11.

³⁵ International Center for Research on Women. *Delaying Marriage for Girls in India: A Formative Research to Design Interventions for Changing Norms*. March 2011, 13.

Table 1: Policy Recommendations

OPPORTUNITY	PROGRAM GOAL(S)	POLICY RECOMMENDATION(S)	
Formalize Savings for AGYW	Increase Educational Enrollment	Offer an electronic account into which regular payments are deposited, in place of, or in addition to products like savings bonds	
	Promote Financial Inclusion	Allow the account holder to access her account for the purpose of depositing money and accumulating assets	
	Reduce Fertility Rates	Develop a payment system that allows the girl and her family to receive payments throughout the schooling experience, perhaps conditional on reaching specific schooling milestones	
	Experiment with Program Design	Leverage Biometric ID tools	Require financial literacy training as a component of the school curriculum
			Experiment with the timing of interventions, to determine when patterns of association and behavior are most malleable
Leverage Biometric ID tools	Increase Educational Enrollment	Remind the recipient of the progress they have reached toward their goals by sending out regular statements informing the recipients and their families how much interest their accounts have accrued, and of any financial goals they set	
	Promote Financial Inclusion	Leverage biometric identification as a way of enforcing a program's conditions.	
	Promote Financial Inclusion	Leverage biometric identification for birth registration	
	Delay Marriage	Couple biometric registration with financial inclusion, by linking to a formal account	

Because India is already working to implement biometrics nationally, the country could be one of the first to take advantage of FAB.

Barriers and Challenges

Delivering financially-inclusive payments to adolescent girls requires overcoming significant obstacles, including regulatory, physical, and cultural constraints. Not the least of these challenges may be the regulatory constraints that limit the age that minors may have independent access to a bank account. Although allowing adolescent girls access to an electronic “store-of-value,” on a smart card, for instance,

does not require a bank account, these regulations do limit when and where girls may access their formal account through a bank that allows them to make deposits.

Regulatory Challenges

If payments are made through a formal financial institution, that institution must be licensed under appropriate national laws and regulations, be in good standing with its national regulatory authority, and be covered by a deposit guarantee scheme. The greatest obstacle for youth access to formal financial services across the developing world is the minimum age requirement,

according to Making Cents International’s 2012 Global Youth-Inclusive Financial Services Survey.³⁹ As documented in a 2012 report by Child and Youth Finance International, most countries do not allow minors to open an independent bank account until they reach either 16 or 18 years of age.⁴⁰ For interventions that depend upon formal financial linkages for youth, one needs to meet the appropriate legal and regulatory requirements—with maximum control for youth within that framework, and minimized age and ID restrictions.

Table 2: E-Payment Challenges for AGYW

Challenge for AGYW	Barrier Type	Potential Solution
Age restrictions on account openings	Regulatory	Minimize age and identification restrictions
Identification requirements for opening an account		Provide staff training on interacting with young clients
Limited travel capacity	Physical	Leverage mobile banking platforms
Safety risks when commuting		Provide in-school banking
Limited autonomy to manage money	Cultural	Incorporate “Safe Spaces” or group component into program
Social isolation		

Partner institutions should have or develop a code of conduct with respect to dealing with youth that includes staff development programs on how to best conduct interactions with young clients.

Physical Challenges

AGYW are particularly limited in their capacity to travel, which inhibits their ability to access financial services. In addition to poor roads and unreliable transportation that are common travel hurdles, AGYW also face a higher risk

³⁹ Making Cents International. 2012 *State of the Field in Youth Economic Opportunities: A Guide for Programming, Policy Making, and Partnership Building*, 2012, 91.

⁴⁰ Child and Youth Finance International. *Summary of Financial Regulation on Bank Accounts for Minors*. 2012.

of violence and theft when traveling. Many studies have cited the difficulties adolescent girls in particular face when traveling to or from school, fetching water, and running errands. The same concerns arise when considering AGYW’s access to financial services, especially of the bricks-and-mortar kind.

While there has been an array of innovative approaches designed to ensure access to bank accounts, the number of banks and the degree of access to banks is still incredibly limited—particularly in rural areas. One way Microfinance Institutions, banks, and governments have begun to bypass this issue is by leveraging mobile banking systems. M-PESA in Kenya was the first major success in mobile banking and many other telecom companies have followed suit. However, according to *Women & Mobile*, there are 300 million fewer women than men who own mobile phones.⁴¹ Mobile phone subscription data aggregated by both age and gender could not be located, but adolescent girls are generally less likely to have a mobile phone than just about any other demographic in the world. If financial access is the destination, and mobile phones are the vehicle, we need more adolescent girls in the driver’s seat. In other words, adolescent girls must have access to mobile phones—or at the very least SIM cards—that they have as much control over as possible.

A second way that adolescent girls can be brought into the financial mainstream is by coupling financial services with school attendance, as mentioned earlier. In-school banking, which usually entails oversight by a bank representative or a teacher, would provide adolescent girls the opportunity to make use of their account without having to deal with the risks of commuting to a bank branch for deposits and withdrawals. However, as research repeatedly shows, adolescent girls are less likely to be in school than boys. This, of course, is changing in countries like Bangladesh, and the gap will likely continue to narrow. Nevertheless, adolescent girls remain more likely to drop out before they

⁴¹ Cherie Blair Foundation for Women and GSMA Development Fund. *Women & Mobile: A Global Opportunity: A Study on the Mobile Phone Gender Gap in Low and Middle-Income Countries*. February 2010, 15.

reach secondary school than boys—usually due to early marriage, motherhood, or household labor—and they will therefore have less access to the opportunities in-school banking could provide.

Cultural Challenges

Any attempt to offer cash transfers directly to girls (known as direct assets to girls, or DATG) must consider the cultural constraints on adolescent girls' freedom to manage their own resources. Even if adolescent girls are given their own bank accounts, the degree to which a girl has control over her account and the money stored in it may be limited. AGYW's rights over assets (assuming their rights are codified by the government) are also subject to social and cultural norms. If AGYW are given assets directly, others in the family or home can assert authority or control over the funds. As Nicola Jones, Caroline Harper, and Carol Watson note in their paper, "Stemming Adolescent Girls' Chronic Poverty: Catalyzing Development Change by Building Just Social Institutions,"

Adolescent girls are particularly disadvantaged, as a result of both gender and age. The minority status of unmarried adolescent girls renders them dependent on parents/guardians when seeking to undertake legal or financial transactions, whereas young married women have greater dependence on the support and consent of their husbands.⁴²

As in other cash transfer programs, like Oportunidades where the money is disbursed to the mother rather than the father, DATG may cause friction between AGYW and their parents or spouses. Similarly, in light of an already-common risk of violence and harassment that AGYW disproportionately face, DATG have the potential to draw unwanted attention of others who may seek to take advantage of them. While there are multiple reasons that AGYW are particularly vulnerable to violence and

⁴² Nicola Jones, Caroline Harper, and Carol Watson, *Stemming Adolescent Girls' Chronic Poverty: Catalyzing Development Change by Building Just Social Institutions*, (London, UK: Chronic Poverty Research Center, 2010), 57.

harassment, the pervasiveness of social isolation for them—whether it is due to being kept out of school, forced to do much of the private sphere work, or preoccupation with their own children and family from a young age—plays a significant role in their lack of physical security.⁴³

This has led to programs like Tap and Reposition Youth (TRY) in Kenya incorporating group components, such as mentorship meetings, financial literacy and health trainings, and informal education groups into initiatives to improve the lives of AGYW. Findings from the Population Council's "Safe and Smart Savings Products for Vulnerable Adolescent Girls" pilot programs in Kenya and Uganda showed that providing "safe spaces" where they could interact with other adolescent girls and group leaders had a notable impact on the economic, social and health assets of the account holders. Those who had savings accounts alone showed an increase in savings behavior, but knowledge of such issues as HIV prevention and reproductive health, a feeling of security and community, and self-esteem did not improve as they did for the girls in groups.⁴⁴

Conclusion

The trend toward girl-centered asset-building strategies is certain to gather momentum in the coming years, especially as evidence continues to accumulate on the multiplier effects of investing in adolescent girls. At the same time, social protection payments will continue to become more effective at leveraging human capital investments and more efficient in their delivery, producing benefits for governments, financial intermediaries, and recipients. The nexus between the two offers fertile ground for new pilots and improvements in current programs.

To be sure, there are significant challenges ahead for development practitioners. The relationship between asset-

⁴³ Karen Austrian, and Corrine Ngurukie, *Safe and Smart Savings Products for Vulnerable Adolescent Girls in Kenya & Uganda*. Case Study no. 3. (Washington, DC: Making Cents International, Population Council, and MicroSave, September 2009).

⁴⁴ Karen Austrian, and Corrine Ngurukie, *Safe and Smart Savings Products for Vulnerable Adolescent Girls in Kenya & Uganda*. Case Study no. 3. (Washington, DC: Making Cents International, Population Council, and MicroSave, September 2009).

building opportunities for adolescent girls, financial inclusion, and electronic-delivery of social protection payments involves a diverse set of stakeholders and interests. While momentum is building toward leveraging e-payments for savings opportunities, policymakers continue to struggle with program-design issues that are often context-specific.

In short, the shift to electronic payments provides a prime opportunity to experiment with new asset-building strategies aimed at adolescent girls—whether that means piloting in-school banking with the delivery of cash transfers, harnessing the power of biometrics to count adolescent girls and help thwart early marriage, or paying attention to the role of habit formation in developing savings habits. Further experimentation, topical and comparative analyses, and facilitated coordination on the

regional and national levels will help ensure these opportunities are well capitalized upon.

Further research and experimentation, with careful monitoring and evaluation plans, must be designed to allow shared best practices where cross-contextual lessons can be gleaned. Very few social protection programs have been evaluated using proper baseline measurements, let alone a randomized design. Most program evaluations are relegated to estimating causal effects. There is real and vast potential for further ambitious yet smart experimentation and research. Technology has just begun to open the door for the development of an innovation renaissance aimed at helping adolescent girls—the most vulnerable population on the planet. The challenge is to walk through that door aware of its true potential.

Annex 1: Girl Targeted Cash Transfer Program Payment and Delivery Details⁴⁵

Table 1: Current Girl Targeted Cash Transfer Programs*

Country	Program Name	Payment Method*	Delivery Method*	Number of Girls Reached
Bangladesh	Secondary Education Sector Improvement Project II (As Part of the National Female Stipend Program)	Cash Payment via Cash	Electronic Delivery via Bank	276048
India	Apni Beti Apna Dhan (ABAD)	Cash Payment via Cash	Electronic Delivery via Bank	6548
India	Balika Samridhi Yojana, Gujarat	Cash Payment via Cash	Electronic Delivery via Bank or Post Office	132684
India	Balika Samridhi Yojana, HP	Cash Payment via Cash	Electronic Delivery via Bank or Post Office	17038
India	Bhagyalakshmi, Karnataka	Cash Payment via Cash	Electronic Delivery via Life Insurance Corporation of India	144749
India	Dhanlakshmi or Income Transfer Scheme for Girls with Insurance Cover	Electronic Payment via Bank Account	Electronic Delivery via Bank	42077
India	Girl Child Protection Scheme, Andhra Pradesh	Cash Payment via Cash	Electronic Delivery via Life Insurance Corporation of India	70302
India	Kanyadaan, Mandhya Pradesh	Cash Payment via Cash	Electronic Delivery via UTI Mutual Fund	1891
India	Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalay Scheme (as part of SSA)	Electronic Payment via Bank Account	Electronic Delivery via Bank	18511
India	Ladli Scheme- Ladli ("Dearest") programme, Delhi	Electronic Payment via Bank Account	Electronic Delivery via Bank	140006
India	Ladli Lakshmi Yojana, Mandhya Pradesh	Cash Payment via Cash	Electronic Delivery via Life Insurance Corporation of India	40854
India	Kunwarbainu Mameru Scheme, Gujarat	Cash Payment via Cash	Electronic Delivery via Bank	7628
India	Ladli Scheme, Haryana	Cash Payment via Cash	Electronic Delivery via Life Insurance Corporation of India	105113
India	Mukhya Mantri Kanya Suraksha Yojana, Bihar	Cash Payment via Cash	Electronic Delivery via Bank	475220
India	Mukhya Mantri Kanya Vivah Yojana, Bihar	Cash Payment via Cash	Electronic Delivery Bank	157256
Pakistan	Punjab Female School Stipend Program (FSSP)	Cash Payment via Cash	Electronic Delivery via Post Office or Pay Points	455259
Yemen	Basic Education Development Project	Cash Payment via Cash	Electronic Delivery via Bank	34000

⁴⁵ GSSP Database. <http://gssp.newamerica.net/>

Delivery channels* are defined as the way in which funds leave a program source for distribution. Generally, these are either **electronic (via a bank, ATMs, point of sale machines, post office accounts, or mobile phones) or **non-electronic** (via pay points). *Payment method* refers to the way in which an individual has access to funds and is classified as either **cash** (via physical currency, or cash) or **electronic** (via an individual's bank account, cash card, mobile phone or other non-bank storage mechanisms). As you can see in the table above, all of the girl centered programs in our database use electronic delivery—which is an indication that electronic payments are possible. This distinction helps us highlight the nuances in the delivery and receipt of G2P payments.

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