

# The Effect of a Nutrition-Focused Livelihoods Program on Child Health and Nutrition in Burkina Faso



Households living in extreme poverty face a wide range of challenges that limit their ability to make productive investments or cope with unpredictable shocks such as droughts or disease. Recent research has shown that holistic livelihoods programs can have a wide range of benefits for these poor families, from increasing household consumption and income to improving food security and mental health. The aim of this study is to test if and how adapting the design of these programs to focus on strengthening households' ability to cope with crises leads to improvements in child nutrition and household food security, and how the various components of the program compare.

## Policy Issue

Over 700 million people live on less than US\$1.90 per day.<sup>1</sup> Many of these families depend on insecure and fragile livelihoods. Globally nearly half of all deaths in children under 5 are attributable to undernutrition, translating into the loss of about 3 million young lives a year.<sup>2</sup> Recent research has shown that holistic livelihoods programs, such as the [Graduation Approach](#) can have a wide range of benefits for these poor families, from increasing household consumption and income to improving food security and mental health. While the Graduation model provides families with a range of services, including income-generating assets, training, access to savings accounts, consumption support, and coaching visits, variations of the model have been successfully replicated in several contexts. The aim of this study is to test whether an adapted program design, which focuses on strengthening the household's ability to cope with crises, leads to improvements in child nutrition and household food security.

## Evaluation Context

Burkina Faso, like most of sub-Saharan Africa, has made significant progress in the last 10 years in reducing extreme poverty. Despite this, more than 40 percent of people in Burkina Faso live on less than \$1.90 dollar per day, the international benchmark for extreme poverty. Agriculture, much of it seasonal, employs nearly 80 percent



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### COUNTRY

Burkina Faso

### PARTNERS

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### PROGRAM AREA

Social Protection

### TOPICS

Cash Transfers, Food Security, Human Capital & Skills, Livelihoods, Ultra Poor

### TIMELINE

2017-2020

of the active labor market leaving many parts of the country vulnerable to food insecurity during the lean season. Twenty one percent of children under five suffer from chronic malnutrition (stunting or low height-for-age) and 10 percent suffer from acute malnutrition (wasting or low weight-for-height).<sup>3</sup> Childhood mortality was more than double the global average: 814 out of every 1000 children born die before their fifth birthday.<sup>4</sup>

## Details of the Intervention

Innovations for Poverty Action is working with researchers to evaluate the effects of variations of the holistic livelihoods program, also known as a Graduation Model, to on poor rural households' economic activities, wealth, and nutrition. The program will be implemented by a consortium of local non-profits lead by Terre des Hommes (TDH) and Action Contre la Faim (ACF). To select the poorest members of participating communities, the project team will conduct a census of all individuals in the poorest neighborhoods in the selected communities and use a short set of questions.

Households will receive a combination of four interventions:

1. **Community-based interventions:** Participating households will be offered commune-level interventions to improve the commune/village governance and collective behavior and to raise awareness about malnutrition. Governance interventions will include developing accountability mechanisms in town halls, early warning committees and surveillance systems Nutrition interventions include malnutrition awareness campaigns and training mothers to recognize the signs of malnutrition.

(Note: Community based interventions will not be randomly distributed. All villages, including the comparison group, will receive community-based interventions)

1. **Cash grant:** Participating households will be offered a total of 20,000 West African Francs (about US\$35) each month over the duration of the lean season (July to September) in the first year, and 15,000 West African Francs (about US\$25) each month the following year.
2. **Asset + farm support:** Participating households will be offered the option to choose from livestock vouchers which can be exchanged for sheep or chickens, or seed vouchers which can be exchanged for improved seed varieties. Vouchers are valued to purchase approximately 3 sheep or 11 chickens, or improved seeds. Participants will receive farm training according to the asset they've chosen: animal husbandry, or water and soil conservation and restoration techniques.
3. **Nutrition (fortified food):** Participating households will be offered an allotment of enriched flour each month for any pregnant or nursing women, or young children aged 6 to 23 months. Households will also be given materials to grow small gardens for personal consumption.

One-hundred and sixty eight villages will be randomly assigned to either the comparison group, which will receive the community-based component only, or to the participation group. The households in the participation villages will then be randomly assigned to one of the following groups. (Note: all households will take part in the community-based intervention)

**Cash grant:** Participating households receive the financial component in addition to the community-

based component.

**Cash grant + asset:** Participating households will receive the financial component and the asset component in addition to the community-based component.

**Cash grant+ asset + nutrition (full program):** Participating households will receive the financial component, the asset and farm support, and the fortified food, in addition to the community-based component.

The evaluation team will gather information on household income, assets, nutrition, health, child growth, consumption, and food security to evaluate the impact of the different program packages on participants' wellbeing.

## Results and Policy Lessons

Research is ongoing; results forthcoming.

## Sources

[1] <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2018/09/19/decline-of-global-extreme-poverty-continues-but-has-slowed-world-bank>

[2] <https://data.unicef.org/topic/nutrition/malnutrition/>

[3] [USAID fact sheet 2018](#).

<https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1864/Burkina-Faso-Nutrition-Profile-Mar2018-508.pdf>

[4] UNICEF Data: monitoring the situation of children and women. <https://data.unicef.org/country/bfa/>

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