

# Evaluation of Malawi's COVID-19 Urban Cash Intervention (CUCI)



Malawi's Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, with technical support from the Global Evaluation Initiative (GEI) and CLEAR Anglophone Africa, have successfully concluded the evaluation, titled: *'The Unintended Consequences of Malawi's COVID-19 Urban Cash Intervention (CUCI).'* CUCI is the program implemented under the Social Protection Programs in response to the economic and social effects of COVID-19 preventive measures on the urban population. It is our hope that this evaluation will contribute to informing the design and implementation of current and future interventions on social protection in Malawi. Evaluation that lacks utilization is the same as the cloud without rain.

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## Intervention Highlights:



The CUCI aimed to support urban poor populations in Malawi's major cities – **Lilongwe, Blantyre, Zomba, and Mzuzu**— to assist in alleviating the negative health and economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.



In 2021, the cash transfer **targeted 35 percent** of Malawi's urban population, providing MK 35,000 (equivalent to \$42.72 USD) per month for three months. Another round of cash transfers was completed in 2023. In total, more than 300,000 households benefited from the program.



The design and implementation of CUCI was led by the **Government of Malawi** with the support of development partners including the World Bank, KFW, EU, GIZ, UNICEF, WFP, and ILO.

## Exploring the Unintended Impacts of Social Protection Instruments:

Several evaluations and studies have been conducted exploring the intended impacts of using cash transfers as a social protection instrument. However, few evaluations have focused on the unintended impacts these programs have on both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. Building on existing evaluations that examined the CUCI's intended effects, **the evaluation explored three dimensions of unintended effects:** intra-household tensions and intimate partner violence, labor market participation and small-scale business investments, and financial inclusion.

## Methodology Overview:

Throughout **February 2023 to April 2024**, the evaluation involved extensive literature reviews, quasi-experimental statistical analysis, and qualitative data analysis. Through household surveys and in-depth interviews, the evaluation team engaged with beneficiaries and other stakeholders to gain a deepened understanding of CUCI's unintended impacts.

## Key Findings:

For a more comprehensive list and in-depth analysis of the evaluation's findings, look out for the upcoming evaluation report. Here are some of the **highlights**:

- ↓ Cash transfers led to a small reduction in Intimate Partner Violence, particularly through mitigating disagreements between spouses over financial matters.
- ↑ Cash transfers enabled beneficiaries to invest some of the resources in small businesses and household agriculture.
- ↓ As a result of the cash transfers beneficiaries reduced their engagements in casual labor.
- ↑ Cash transfers enabled beneficiaries to save some of the resources through participation in Village Loans and Savings Groups.
- The sustainability of the program's effects is constrained by the limited duration of the program and the amounts transferred to beneficiaries.

The evaluation received financial (and in-kind support) from the World Bank Social Protection team in Malawi and The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This initiative was part of a broader collaboration between GEI and OECD-DAC's Global Evaluation Coalition, which aims to provide technical and financial support to governments evaluating their national policy response to COVID-19.

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