

Evaluation of multiannual and seasonal cash transfers to prevent acute malnutrition

► Project Duration

28 months on the field, starting from May 2013

► Area of intervention

The project is implemented in the East region of Burkina Faso, in the Tapoa province.

► Project objectives

The MAM'Out research project aims at assessing a context-adapted preventive approach, which is likely to influence several underlying causes of under-nutrition and not based primarily on food supplementation. The objective is to provide an evidence base for this alternative approach, in order that proven intervention be taken into account for scale-up at policy-making levels.



Burkina Faso map
(Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs – France)

► BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

With 55 million wasting children in the world (Black and al, 2008), wasting is a crucial public health issue. Although treatments for severe acute malnourished children exist and have proven their efficacy (Bhutta and al., 2008; WHO, 1999), curative approaches remain very expensive (USAID, 2011). Besides, there is evidence showing that preventive program can be more effective for the reduction of childhood under-nutrition than traditional recuperative one (preventive supplementation – Ruel and al, 2008). In addition, the World Health Organization highlighted in 2010 the need to consider prevention strategies when implementing programs aiming at reducing acute malnutrition rates. However, surprisingly little is known on preventive schemes for acute malnutrition, not primarily based on products.

It is well known nowadays that the causes of undernutrition are numerous and also relate to inadequate health and care practices, lack of food diversification, food insecurity... Moreover, products are not always locally available nor affordable for the target population. Considering the paucity of data pertaining to alternative context-adapted strategies for the prevention of acute malnutrition, research studies must be developed in order to produce evidence on effective, reproducible and cost-effective approaches (Cattaneo, 2008).

► PROJECT SUMMARY

The MAM'Out research project aims at evaluating a seasonal and multi-annual cash transfer program in the framework of a safety net to prevent acute malnutrition by children under 36 months, in terms of effectiveness and cost-effectiveness in the Tapoa province (East region of Burkina Faso, Africa). The program is targeted to economically vulnerable households with children less than 1 year old at the time of inclusion and the cash distributed to mothers. The transfers are assimilated to unconditional ones, leading to beneficiaries' self-determination on the use that will be made of cash.

This study is designed as a two-arm cluster randomized intervention trial, based on randomization of rural villages of the Tapoa province. One arm receives cash transfers via mobile phones and one is a control arm. The main outcomes are the cumulative incidence of acute malnutrition (or wasting) and the cost-effectiveness.

Anthropometric measures (height, weight and MUAC) are taken, and indicators of dietary diversity, food security, health center frequentation, families' expenses and morbidities measured. Questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions and 24-hour food recalls are also analyzed. Finally, based on a model theory framework built *a priori*, the pathways used by the cash to have an effect on the prevention of under-nutrition are assessed.

▶ OVERALL OBJECTIVE

The MAM'Out research project aims to evaluate the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of multiannual and seasonal cash transfers (MCTs) to prevent acute malnutrition in the East region of Burkina Faso.

▶ SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- ◆ To measure the contribution of MCTs in the reduction of the incidence of acute malnutrition and morbidity for the young children;
- ◆ To evaluate the input of MCTs in the young children's growth and development;
- ◆ To contribute to the creation of evidence base on efficient preventing activities for child wasting;
- ◆ To assess the influence of MCTs on determinants of acute malnutrition, such as food security and access to health center;
- ◆ To evaluate the ratio of cost-effectiveness of the MCTs for the prevention of acute malnutrition in order to improve their sustainability.

▶ EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- ◆ Children participating in the intervention have a lower risk to become wasted and demonstrate a better growth than the control group.
- ◆ Morbidity is lower for the children in the intervention group compared to the control group.
- ◆ CTs improved access to basic goods and services related to enhance nutrition.
- ◆ The pathways by which cash transfers have an effect on the prevention of acute malnutrition are known.

▶ Executing agency

- ◆ Action Contre la Faim - France

▶ Sponsor and funder:

- ◆ Action Contre la Faim – France
- ◆ Center for Disease Control (CDC), Etats-Unis
- ◆ NEEP
- ◆ ECHO

▶ Scientific partners

- ◆ Ghent University, Belgium
- ◆ AgroParisTech, France
- ◆ IRSS, Burkina Faso
- ◆ Center for Disease Control, USA

▶ For more details...

Do not hesitate to contact:

Audrey Papucci
MAM'Out Project Manager
apapucci@actioncontrelafaim.org
+33 1 71 28 02 54