Assessing the effects of a combined economic and social intervention in Uganda on child protection and economic outcomes

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS FROM THE ASPIRES FAMILY CARE PROJECT

E. Namey,¹ S. Zissette¹, D. Onena,² W. Okello,³ L. Laumann,⁴ | 3 September 2018

¹ FHI 360, Behavioral, Epidemiological, and Clinical Sciences, USA;
² AVSI Foundation Uganda, Family Resilience Project, Kampala, Uganda;
³ ChildFund Uganda, Economic Strengthening to Keep and Reintegrate Children into Families, Kampala, Uganda;
⁴ FHI 360, Global Education, Employment, and Engagement, USA

Accelerating Strategies for Practical Innovation and Research in Economic Strengthening (ASPIRES)
Background

- A range of economic, social, and structural issues contribute to family-child separation

Extra-HH Moderators
- Presence of CCI
- Presence of child labor markets

Intra-HH Moderators
- Death, absence, disability, or illness of caregiver
- Violence, abuse, neglect, harsh discipline practices
- Substance abuse
- # dependents in HH
- Parenting skills

Namey, Laumann, Brown, in press
Background

- Different types of interventions are theorized to address different drivers of separation.

Economic

Family

Combined

Namey, Laumann, Brown, in press
ASPIRES Family Care project

OBJECTIVE: Assess the effects of different types of economic strengthening activities integrated with family strengthening activities among families reunifying a child and families at risk of family-child separation

• Two learning projects in Uganda
  – ChildFund’s Economic Strengthening to Keep and Reintegrate Children in Families (ESFAM)
  – AVSI Foundation’s Family Resilience (FARE)
ASPIRES Family Care project - Activities

### Case Management and Family/Social Strengthening Activities

Family assessment, household plans, visits/monitoring, counselling, parenting skills training, life skills training

### Economic Strengthening (ES) Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic Strengthening (ES) Activities</th>
<th>Number of HHs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>At-risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash transfers (CTs)</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village Savings and Lending Associations (VSLA)</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTs + VSLA</td>
<td>377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matched savings accounts</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other ES (e.g., financial literacy training, apprenticeships)</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No ES</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### ASPIRES Family Care project - Indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic Vulnerability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Median monthly income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Median household savings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ability to pay for basic needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Food, shelter, water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Health care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ability to handle financial shocks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child Protection &amp; Well-being</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Children living outside of family care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Caregiver and child integration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Caregiver-child attachment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Use of harsh discipline practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Regular school attendance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ASPIRES Family Care project – Assessment methods

• Collected longitudinal **quantitative data on economic vulnerability and index child and caregiver well-being** from all enrolled households
  – Baseline June/July 2016
  – Endline January/February 2018

• Descriptive statistics on aggregated sample
  – One small sub-sample: reintegrating VSLA HHs

• Collected longitudinal **qualitative data** from a sample of 80 HHs
Findings: Baseline Snapshots

**Median monthly income (UGX)**

At-Risk HHs at baseline

- CT: $20,000
- VSLA: $90,000
- CT+VSLA: $30,000

Reintegration HHs at baseline

- CT: $100,000
- VSLA: $70,000
- CT+VSLA: $40,000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CT</th>
<th>VSLA</th>
<th>CT+VSLA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Median HH size</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median # children</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings: At-risk HHs, Economic Vulnerability

**Median monthly income**
- CT and CT+VSLA doubled
- VSLA increased ~40%

**Median household savings**
- CT and CT+VSLA tripled
- VSLA quadrupled

*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001
Findings: At-risk HHs, Economic Vulnerability

Ability to pay for basic needs

- Increases across all categories of expenditure among all HHs
  - CT, VSLA, and CT+VSLA all showed statistically-significant increases
  - All HHs able to pay for basic needs ~90% of the time at endline

Self-reported ability to handle financial shocks

- At baseline, the majority of HHs in all groups reported being unprepared or very unprepared to handle a financial shock
- At endline, the majority (55-65%) of HHs in all groups reported being prepared or very prepared
Findings: At-risk HHs, Child Protection & Well-being

Children living outside of family care
- Decrease in HHs of all groups

Caregiver & child integration index

*\( p<0.05 \), **\( p<0.01 \), ***\( p<0.001 \)
Findings: At-risk HHs, Child Protection & Well-being

No use of harsh discipline practices

Regular school attendance

- Percent of HHs with all school-aged children attending school regularly increased for all groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>Endline</th>
<th>% points</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CT</td>
<td>45.6</td>
<td>54.4</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VSLA***</td>
<td>36.9</td>
<td>66.8</td>
<td>29.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CT+VSLA***</td>
<td>46.3</td>
<td>70.6</td>
<td>24.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001
## Findings: At-risk HHs, Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Savings</th>
<th>Basic Needs</th>
<th>Handle Shocks</th>
<th>Separated Children</th>
<th>CG/CH Well-being</th>
<th>Harsh Discipline</th>
<th>School Attend</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CT</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VSLA</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
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<tr>
<td>CT+VSLA</td>
<td>377</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
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- observed improvement in indicator
- observed decrease in indicator

* Significant at *p<0.05 or better
Findings: Reintegrating HHs*, Economic Vulnerability

*VSLA HHs n=14

**p<0.01

Median monthly income
- All increased 30-50%

Median household savings
- CT+VSLA doubled savings
- CT and VSLA decreased in value
Findings: Reintegration HHs, Economic Vulnerability

Ability to pay for basic needs
• Increases across all categories of expenditure among all HHs
  – Statistically significant increases (p<0.05) for CT and CT+VSLA

Self-reported ability to handle financial shocks
• At baseline, the majority of CT and CT+VSLA HHs reported being unprepared or very unprepared to handle a financial shock
  – Remained at endline: 81% of CT and 54% of CT+VSLA reported lack of preparedness for handling financial shock
  – 53% of VSLA HHs reported being prepared; 40% indicated they were unprepared
Findings: Reintegrating HHs, Child Protection & Well-being

Children living outside of family care

- Slight increase in CT HHs (n=5-6)

Caregiver & child integration index

- Graphs showing changes in % HHs over baseline and endline for CT, VSLA, and CT+VSLA.
Findings: Reintegrating HHs, Child Protection & Well-being

No use of harsh discipline practices

Regular school attendance
- Percent of HHs with all school-aged children attending school regularly increased for VSLA and CT+VSLA
  - Decreased for CT HHs

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CT</td>
<td>31.7</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>-4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VSLA</td>
<td>57.1</td>
<td>86.7</td>
<td>29.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>CT+VSLA</td>
<td>56.5</td>
<td>78.3</td>
<td>21.8</td>
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*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001
## Findings: Reintegrating HHs, Summary

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CT</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+*</td>
<td>+*</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VSLA</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+*</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CT+VSLA</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>+*</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+*</td>
<td>-*</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+*</td>
<td>+*</td>
<td>+*</td>
</tr>
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+ observed improvement in indicator  
- observed decrease in indicator  
* Significant at *p<0.05 or better
Key Take-aways

• For families at risk of separation CT, VSLA, and CT+VSLA all show promise for reducing drivers of family-child separation

• For families reunifying a child, VSLA* and CT+ VSLA show promise; CT alone may not be enough

• All of these activities were integrated with family strengthening activities
  – there are social benefits to economic well-being and economic benefits to social well-being
Key Take-aways

The 70,000 shillings that they send me every month has helped me a lot because it helps me to pay the rent for where we stay. My children now have a home to come to after schooling. Before the rent was stressing me a lot I could not sleep. The landlord would call even in the middle of the night. Sometimes she would come here and tell you to leave her house while other people are watching; this would get people talking behind your back. But now I sleep peacefully.

It also helped to increase on my income, because the money that I would have spent on rent, is now covered by the cash transfer. So I use that money to buy needs like food, sugar and milk for the children and also inject some in the business.

The children are happy because we are no longer bothered by the land lady. Our relationship is now better because we are no longer constrained by money problems. I am no longer worried as before, so I do not take out my stress on the children by shouting at them. I talk to them in case they have done something wrong.

Kampala at-risk CT HH
Research Next Steps

• Expanded quantitative analyses
  – Difference-in-differences modeling
  – Coincidence analysis

• Complete qualitative analysis and case summaries
About ASPIRES and ASPIRES Family Care

ASPIRES, supported by PEPFAR and USAID and managed by FHI 360, supports gender-sensitive programming, research and learning to improve the economic security of highly vulnerable individuals, families and children. ASPIRES provides technical assistance to US Government agencies and their implementing partners to advance and scale up high-quality interventions in the areas of consumption support, money management, and income promotion. It also designs and implements rigorous research to evaluate programs and inform a new understanding of best practices in ES for vulnerable populations. Please visit https://www.marketlinks.org/aspires.

With funding from USAID’s Displaced Children and Orphans Fund (DCOF), ASPIRES’ Family Care project is tackling the topics of how ES interventions can help separated children return to and remain in their families. It is also exploring how ES can help highly vulnerable families stay together. It will draw on evidence from two projects it funded and is conducting evaluation research on in Uganda, as well as learning from other projects addressing family preservation and reintegration, to develop programming guidance that will help projects match specific families with ES interventions that improve their economic circumstances and support family stability.

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APPENDIX: No ES – illustrative indicators (n=11)