

PAUL SIRMA

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EDUCATION

University of North Carolina (UNC) at Chapel Hill

Chapel Hill, NC

Ph.D. in Public Policy

August 2016-May 2023 (expected)

Dissertation title: Three essays on human capital accumulation, farm households' productivity, and poverty: evidence from cash transfers in Malawi.

Dissertation committee: Sudhanshu Handa (chair), Brigitte Seim, Gustavo Angeles, Amber Peterman, Steven W. Hemelt

Colgate University

Hamilton, NY

B.A. in Quantitative Economics and Econometrics

August 2011-May 2015

RESEARCH INTEREST

International Development, Social Protection, Education, Poverty Reduction, Social Policy

PEER-REVIEWED JOURNAL ARTICLES

Handa, Sudhanshu, Otchere, Frank, & **Sirma, Paul.**; on behalf of the Evaluation Study Team (2022). More evidence on the impact of government social protection in sub-Saharan Africa: Ghana, Malawi, and Zimbabwe. *Development Policy Review*, 40, e12576. <https://doi.org/10.1111/dpr.12576>

WORKING PAPERS

Long-term impacts of unconditional cash transfers on schooling: evidence from Malawi (*Job Market Paper*)

Abstract: Unconditional Cash Transfers (UCTs) are among the most prevalent social protection programs around the world. The primary objective of these programs is typically to reduce poverty and hunger. Short-term evaluations of UCTs in Africa have documented their effectiveness in increasing school enrollment. However, we know little about the link between UCTs and long-term educational outcomes. This paper fills this gap in the literature by presenting long-term evidence (8 years since baseline) of how a UCT program in Malawi affected school enrollment and grade attainment. The delayed rollout of this UCT program meant that households in the treatment group were exposed to three more years of support compared to households in the control group. I find that the timing of the additional years of support are important among children who were not enrolled in school at baseline (out-of-school), and among older children (10-15 years old at baseline)—for whom the opportunity costs of schooling are the highest. On average, among all children in the sample, I find that out-of-school children in the treatment group accumulated about 0.2 more years of schooling than their peers in the control group. However, these differences are not statistically distinguishable from zero. But among older out-of-school children, SCTP increased

long-term grade attainment by about 0.4 years. The impacts are statistically significant for older out-of-school girls. These findings suggests that UCTs can increase households' long-term human capital accumulation, especially among marginalized individuals with the highest opportunity costs of schooling

The effect of unconditional cash transfers on labor allocation and farm productivity *(with Sudhanshu Handa)*

Abstract: In this paper, we show that liquidity is an important constraint that prevent households from allocating their labor efficiently. We estimate the impacts of unconditional cash transfer program in Malawi, 30 months since baseline, and find large positive impacts on agricultural production and on-farm labor. We also find negative impacts on casual or *ganyu* labor. To explain these results, we test and reject the separation assumption of the agricultural household models. We show that demographic variables are associated with on-farm labor demand. We also show that cash transfer enables treated households to invest in agricultural inputs which increases their on-farm productivity

WORK IN PROGRESS

Dosage effects of unconditional cash transfers: evidence from the Malawi Social Cash Transfer Program *(with Sudhanshu Handa)*

This paper studies whether there is a causal relationship between duration in a cash transfer program and poverty in the context of an unconditional cash transfer (UCT) program in Malawi

Authorship in economic development journals *(with Amber Peterman and Dharini Bhatia)*

This paper provides a rich description of the state of authorship representation—as it relates to authors' country of origin/affiliation and gender—in the economic development journals

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

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| Graduate Research Assistant | Carolina Population Center, UNC at Chapel Hill |
| The Transfer Project | 2019-present |
| Prepares longitudinal datasets for analysis. Produces descriptive analysis of the data. Creates balance tables and graphs of baseline summary statistics. Writes Stata programs (ado files) to produce publication-ready tables. Evaluates program impacts. Writes sections of reports. Review survey instruments. Assists with data collection fieldwork. | |

Quantitative Research Assistant
American Institutes for Research (AIR)

Washington, DC
July 2015-June 2018

Collaborated with senior researchers in the International Research and Evaluation Division at AIR in evaluating impacts of programs covering broad topics, including agriculture, education, reading and literacy, and social protection

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

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| Instructor | Department of Public Policy at UNC at Chapel Hill |
| Senior Capstone in Public Policy | Spring 2020 |
| Teaching Assistant | Department of Public Policy at UNC at Chapel Hill |
| Microeconomics Foundation for Public Policy | Spring 2019 |
| Justice in Public Policy | Fall 2018 |

PRESENTATIONS

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|---|------------|
| Center for the Study of African Economies (CSAE), Virtual | March 2022 |
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FELLOWSHIPS

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| UNC Graduate School Dissertation Completion Fellowship | August 2022-May 2023 |
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PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

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| Field Work | |
| Nkhata Bay and Zomba, Malawi | May 2022 |
| Rufiji, Tanzania | July 2013 |
| Reviewer | |
| The Journal of International Development | June 2022 |
| Technical Training Workshop | |
| Organized by African Economic Research Consortium & UNICEF | Nairobi, Kenya |
| Instructor | May 2019 |

REFERENCES

Sudhanshu Handa (PhD committee chair)
 Kenan Eminent Professor of Public Policy
 Department of Public Policy
 University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
 shanda@unc.edu

Gustavo Angeles (PhD committee member)
 Associate Professor
 Department of Maternal and Child Health
 University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
 gustavo_angeles@unc.edu