**Authors**
Rohit Naimpally

**Researchers**
William Jack
Georgetown University

Jenny Aker
Tufts University

Dean Karlan
Northwestern University

# From Uganda: Savings and Payments Conference Wrap-Up, Day 2

*For a short summary of Day 1 of the conference, click here.*

Day 2 at the Evidence on Innovations in Savings and Payments conference in Kampala focused on the exciting sphere of mobile financial services. Topics covered included the use of mobile services to effect changes in financial behaviors and the impact of mobile money on welfare outcomes.

Intermedia Africa's Anastasia Mirzoyants set the stage for the day's discussions by presenting survey findings on mobile money usage in Uganda and Tanzania. Lack of awareness about mobile money, poor agent services, and insufficient understanding about the products amongst users were found to be key barriers to the adoption and active usage of mobile money in the two countries. Functioning networks of authorized mobile money representatives were found to be vital to the successful adoption of mobile money, a point driven home further by Georgetown University's William Jack in his presentation about the mobile money revolution in Kenya. In Kenya, Safaricom Ltd's M-Pesa gave users an effective insurance tool, the researchers found that after a shock, users of the insurance tool didn't experience any drop in consumption, while non-users experienced a 7-10% drop. Although not a randomized trial, the study ran a number of tests to establish the robustness of the results.

Tufts University's Jenny Aker also examined the impact of mobile financial services in the aftermath of a shock. In response to a drought in Niger, households were provided with monthly unconditional transfers, either in cash or via mobile phones. People receiving the transfers via mobile phones were found to have more diverse diets and were able to consume more food, an impact attributed to the lower cost and greater privacy of the mobile transfer mechanism.

A presentation by Yale University's Dean Karlan highlighted the uses of mobile phone text messages to change savings behaviors. A cross-country study conducted in Bolivia, Peru, and the Philippines, found that households receiving text message reminders to save increased their savings balances by 6 percent. In particular, the study in Peru found that reminders mentioning a specific expenditure goal led to a 16 percent increase in balances. This suggests that reminders might help households pay attention to and plan for future expenses. Further research in this area is ongoing, with a focus on figuring out the specific channels through which text message reminders work to change financial behaviors.

For more information about all the other exciting research presented at the conference, do check out the conference agenda (PDF) and follow our Twitter stream. We also blogged about some highlights from Day 1 of the conference here.

*Rohit Naimpally is a Senior Project Associate with IPA's Global Financial Inclusion Initiative.*
July 02, 2013