Just Give Money to the Poor
The Development Revolution from the Global South

Joseph Hanlon, Armando Barrientos and David Hulme

Amidst all the complicated economic theories about the causes and solutions to poverty, one idea is so basic it seems radical: just give money to the poor. Despite its skeptics, researchers have found again and again that cash transfers given to significant portions of the population transform the lives of recipients. Countries from Mexico to South Africa to Indonesia are giving money directly to the poor and discovering that they use it wisely – to send their children to school, to start a business and to feed their families.

Directly challenging an aid industry that thrives on complexity and mystification, with highly paid consultants designing ever more complicated projects, Just Give Money to the Poor offers the elegant southern alternative – bypass governments and NGOs and let the poor decide how to use their money. Stressing that cash transfers are not charity or a safety net, the authors draw an outline of effective practices that work precisely because they are regular, guaranteed and fair. This book, the first to report on this quiet revolution in an accessible way, is essential reading for policymakers, students of international development and anyone yearning for an alternative to traditional poverty-alleviation methods.

"It remains to be seen if poverty can indeed be made history, but this book argues that the best approach is to trust the ingenuity and motivation of the poor by just giving them the money."

- Michael R. Carter, Agricultural & Resource Economics, University of California

"Just Give Money to the Poor makes a convincing case for a simple but powerful idea: that guaranteeing families an assured base income will create a platform upon which they can build their futures."

- Jonathan Morduch, Professor of Public Policy and Economics, New York University

"This is a book we've been waiting for: a lucid overview of an ongoing rights-based revolution in low- and middle-income countries. Hanlon, Barrientos and Hulme present the evidence with clarity and brio, and place it in a suitably big historical and ethical framework."

- Des Gasper, International Institute of Social Studies, The Hague

"In their inspiring, well-researched new book, the authors argue that simply giving money to the poor—no strings, no conditions, no kidding—may be the most promising approach not just for avoiding hardship and reducing poverty, but for long-term development as well."

- Ray Boshara, Vice President, New America Foundation, Washington
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