Citation for published version:
Howard, N, Langridge, N, Remnant, F, Mishan, H, Ulfe Young, ME & Espinoza, M 2026 'Fighting the climate crisis with reciprocity: Towards Indigenous autonomy: Conservation Basic Income Pilot Evaluation' Bath Papers in International Development.

Publication date:
2026

Link to publication

University of Bath

Alternative formats
If you require this document in an alternative format, please contact:
openaccess@bath.ac.uk

General rights
Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy
If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Download date: 07. Nov. 2026

‘Fighting the climate crisis with reciprocity: Towards Indigenous autonomy’

Conservation Basic Income Pilot Evaluation

October 2026

All rights reserved. Attention is drawn to the fact that copyright of this working paper rests with the author and copyright of any previously published materials included may rest with third parties. A copy of this working paper has been supplied on condition that anyone who consults it understands that they must not copy it or use material from it except as permitted by law or with the consent of the author or other copyright owners, as applicable.

Published by:
Centre for Development Studies
University of Bath
Claverton Down, Bath
BA2 7AY

https://www.bath.ac.uk/research-centres/centre-fordevelopment-studies

ISSN 2040-••3151

Series Editors:
Aurelie Charles
Mihikia Chaterjee

Corresponding author
Neil Howard
Email: nph28@bath.ac.uk

Howard et al. 2026

October 2026

Bath, United Kingdom

CENTRE FOR DEVELOPMENT STUDIES BATH
PAPERS IN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND WELLBEING – October 2026

‘Fighting the climate crisis with reciprocity: Towards Indigenous autonomy’

Conservation Basic Income Pilot Evaluation

Abstract

This report provides a mixed-methods evaluation of *Fighting the Climate Crisis with Reciprocity: Towards Indigenous Autonomy* (hereon in referred to as “the pilot”). It was implemented by the NGO Cool Earth alongside the National Organisation of Indigenous Women of the Peruvian Amazon (ONAMIAP) and their local partner, the Asháninka and Yanesha Indigenous Women’s Organisation of the Central Sector (OMIAASEC). The pilot took place in three Indigenous communities in the central Peruvian Amazon. It sought to trial an alternative to traditional, market-based instruments of conservation financing and to the top-down, paternalist approaches to Indigenous affairs that have long been critiqued for assaulting Indigenous dignity and autonomy.

The pilot combined unconditional basic income delivered every four months over a two-year period with training on financial management, Indigenous rights, governance, environmental conservation and climate resilience. The integrated evaluation draws on quantitative survey data from 82 participants and qualitative evidence from 24 in-depth interviews and three focus groups.

Overall, all data sources point to substantial improvements in household wellbeing, food security, financial stability, housing conditions and community resilience. The strongest evidence suggests that the pilot enabled participants to reduce dependence on precarious wage labour outside their communities, allowing them to dedicate more time to their own farms, families and community initiatives. This shift appears to have

generated positive effects across multiple dimensions, including income generation, dietary diversity, educational investment, environmental stewardship and subjective wellbeing.

The convergence of quantitative and qualitative evidence and latent counterfactuals in the qualitative component strongly suggests that the combination of cash transfers and community-based training contributed meaningfully to improved household welfare, Indigenous autonomy and environmental stewardship. There is great potential in this approach for fighting economic and ecological ills in the age of climate chaos.

Executive Summary

1. Introduction

The *Fighting the Climate Crisis with Reciprocity: Towards Indigenous Autonomy* pilot was designed to strengthen Indigenous autonomy and resilience in the face of climate change through a "Cash Plus" model which combined an unconditional basic income with capacity-building activities. The programme was co-designed and implemented by the global climate charity Cool Earth, the National Organisation of Indigenous Women of the Peruvian Amazon (ONAMIAP) and the Asháninka and Yanesha Indigenous Women's Organisation of the Central Sector (OMIAASEC) between late 2023 and mid-2025.

The evaluation examined changes across multiple key outcome areas:

- Income generation and livelihoods
- Education
- Food security and nutrition
- Health and wellbeing
- Household and community relationships
- Women's autonomy
- Financial inclusion
- Environmental stewardship
- Community organisation
- Household and community infrastructure

This integrated report combines measurable changes identified through the quantitative analysis of household surveys with the lived experiences and perceptions captured through qualitative interviews and focus groups.

2. Methodology

Quantitative Component

The quantitative analysis compares baseline data collected in November–December 2023 with endline data collected in August 2025 from 82 participants across the three

communities. The survey measured changes in housing, assets, livelihoods, food security, savings, borrowing, migration and wellbeing.

Qualitative Component

The qualitative evaluation employed the Qualitative Impact Protocol (QuIP) methodology, conducting 24 individual interviews and three focus groups. Interviews explored changes experienced over the previous two years without directly prompting respondents to attribute these changes to the pilot, thereby providing insight into perceived causal pathways.

Together, the two methodologies provide complementary perspectives: quantitative evidence *demonstrates* what changed, while qualitative evidence helps *explain* what changed, including how and why.

3. Livelihoods, Income, and Economic Security

Agriculture remains the dominant livelihood across all communities, with 79% of participants identifying farming as their primary occupation and 89% having access to agricultural land. Quantitative findings indicate that:

- 30% of households expanded cultivated areas, reopening previously abandoned farms
- Labour migration declined from 43% to 18%
- Savings increased from 49% to 70%
- Loan usage declined from 19% to 6%

The qualitative evidence provides a coherent explanation for these shifts. Respondents repeatedly described the cash as a financial buffer that reduced pressure to seek temporary wage labour outside the community. Instead, participants were able to remain on their farms, dedicate more time to cultivation and invest labour into improving agricultural productivity.

Many interviewees explained that prior to the pilot they frequently left the community to earn daily wages. The basic income allowed them to remain at home, increasing agricultural production and seize opportunities for longer-term planning. The evidence suggests that the pilot did not simply increase income directly through the basic income. Rather, it altered livelihood strategies by enabling households to prioritise their own productive activities over short-term survival work.

4. Food Security and Nutrition

Food security is one of the areas where the quantitative and qualitative findings align most strongly. Survey results show dramatic reductions in food insecurity:

- Households unable to afford nutritious food decreased from 73% to 26%.

- Meal skipping fell from 49% to 22%.
- Hunger without eating decreased from 51% to 21%.
- Going an entire day without food declined from 24% to 15%.

Qualitative interviews reveal that households used both the cash transfers and increased farm production to diversify diets. Respondents described moving away from diets dominated by cassava, pituca and other staple foods toward greater consumption of fish, meat, eggs, vegetables and fruits. Interviewees consistently linked dietary improvements to greater household wellbeing, increased energy and better health outcomes. The qualitative research also highlighted renewed interest in Indigenous food systems, including seed conservation initiatives and exchanges of traditional crop varieties.

Together, the evidence suggests that the pilot improved both the quantity and quality of food consumed by participating households.

5. Health and Wellbeing

Improved health emerged as a significant outcome across both components. Qualitative respondents frequently associated improved health with:

- Better nutrition
- Reduced stress and financial anxiety
- Greater access to medicines and healthcare
- Improved household stability

Several participants reported that family members became ill less frequently due to more regular and nutritious diets. The broader wellbeing impacts were particularly striking. Nearly all interviewees described increased hope for the future, reduced pressure to meet immediate needs and greater confidence in their ability to plan ahead. Rather than focusing solely on day-to-day survival, households increasingly discussed future aspirations for education, agricultural investment and improved living standards.

6. Education and Future Aspirations

Education emerged as one of the most transformative longer-term outcomes. Quantitative findings indicate substantial household investment in education, with many families reporting financial support for children or relatives pursuing studies. Qualitative evidence adds important context. The shift was not only financial but aspirational. Respondents explained that the pilot enabled them to envision educational opportunities that had previously seemed unattainable. For many families, this was the first time they felt capable of supporting children through secondary or higher education. Parents described higher educational ambitions for their children and greater confidence in their ability to achieve them. This suggests that the pilot contributed not only to

immediate welfare gains but also to strengthening long-term human capital development.

7. Housing, Assets, and Living Conditions

The quantitative survey documented substantial improvements in material living standards. Key housing improvements included:

- Ceiling upgrades (55%)
- Improved water connections (51%)
- Lighting improvements (37%)
- Improved sanitation facilities (26%)
- Floor improvements (21%)

Access to toilets became nearly universal, with only 2% of households lacking sanitation facilities at endline. Asset ownership also increased significantly:

- Mobile phone ownership reached 95%
- Gas stove ownership rose from 23% to approximately 60%
- Refrigerator ownership increased substantially
- Internet access more than doubled
- Solar panel ownership became widespread

The qualitative findings support these results, with respondents frequently describing investments in housing, transport, agricultural equipment and household assets. Taken together, the evidence suggests that households used the basic income not only to meet immediate needs but also to accumulate productive and quality-of-life-enhancing assets.

8. Financial Inclusion and Household Resilience

The pilot appears to have strengthened household financial resilience. The proportion of households with savings increased from 49% to 70%, while two-thirds of participants reported saving through formal financial institutions. Interviewees frequently linked these improvements to financial literacy training provided through the pilot. Respondents reported increased understanding of budgeting, planning and financial management. Reduced reliance on loans further suggests enhanced long-term financial stability and a diminished need to borrow for emergencies or daily consumption. These findings indicate that the combination of cash transfers and financial education may have contributed to more sustainable household financial practices.

9. Community Cohesion and Collective Action

Both the quantitative and qualitative data identify meaningful improvements in community cohesion as a result of the pilot. Quantitative data show widespread

perceptions of stronger social ties and increased participation in collective activities. Qualitative evidence indicates that the 'plus' activities played a particularly important role in this respect. Importantly, from a conservation perspective, respondents described increased collaboration around:

- Environmental restoration projects
- Seed banks
- Fish farming initiatives
- Water source protection
- Community governance

10. Environmental Stewardship and Climate Resilience

The focus on environmental outcomes represents one of the most distinctive aspects of the pilot. Participants reported growing awareness of climate change impacts and stronger engagement in environmental conservation activities. Qualitative evidence documented:

- Reforestation efforts
- Protection of water sources
- Reduced forest burning
- Native species planting
- Indigenous seed conservation
- Community nurseries and fish farms

Approximately 80% of interviewees described adopting environmentally beneficial practices. The 'plus' component appears particularly important in driving these changes. Respondents frequently cited workshops and community discussions as influencing attitudes toward forest conservation, water management and climate adaptation. These findings suggest that the pilot contributed not only to household wellbeing but also to strengthening community-level environmental resilience.

11. Gender and Women's Autonomy

Evidence regarding women's autonomy is mixed. Quantitative findings suggest some movement toward shared household decision-making, particularly regarding use of the cash. However, qualitative interviews found limited evidence of substantial shifts in gendered power relations. Most respondents reported that traditional decision-making structures remained largely unchanged, especially regarding agricultural production. While women benefited significantly from improvements in financial security and wellbeing, evidence of transformative changes in gender relations remains relatively weak. This area may require more targeted interventions in future programme phases.

12. Conclusions

The integrated evaluation presents a consistent picture of positive change across participating communities. The most compelling finding is that the pilot appears to have altered the economic and social conditions that previously compelled households to rely heavily on insecure external labour. By providing predictable cash and complementary training/community building activities, the programme enabled families to invest time and resources in their own farms, households and communities. This shift appears to have generated interconnected improvements in:

- Food security and nutrition
- Financial resilience
- Housing and assets
- Educational investment
- Community cohesion
- Environmental stewardship
- Subjective wellbeing

These findings strongly echo findings in other basic income and basic income plus experiments and thus add to the body of evidence pointing towards the beneficial impacts of interventions like these (Lazarus et al., 2026; Mathur and Howard, 2026). Where this pilot breaks new ground, however, is around its framing of, and engagement with, conservation questions. Environmental implications have been largely neglected in the basic income literature to date (Langridge et al., 2022). The findings strongly suggest that the approach used in this pilot represents a useful baseline upon which to build future interventions and scalable policies.

Introduction

This report provides a mixed-methods evaluation of *Fighting the Climate Crisis with Reciprocity: Towards Indigenous Autonomy* (hereon in referred to as "the pilot"). The pilot—implemented by the global climate charity Cool Earth, the National Organisation of Indigenous Women of the Peruvian Amazon (ONAMIAP) and the Asháninka and Yanesha Indigenous Women's Organisation of the Central Sector (OMIAASEC)—trialled the use of unconditional basic income (UBI) as a radical alternative for distribution conservation finance. Traditional market-based instruments—such as payments for ecosystem services (PES) and REDD+ (reduced emissions through avoided deforestation and forest degradation)— have failed to halt biodiversity loss and deforestation and to alleviate poverty (Fletcher and Büscher, 2020). They have also tended to reproduce the top-down, paternalist approaches to Indigenous affairs that have long been critiqued for assaulting dignity and autonomy, leading to calls for alternative approaches (Osborne et al., 2024).

UBI is defined as "a periodic cash payment unconditionally delivered to all on an individual basis, without means-test or work requirement" (BIEN, n.d.). It is a simple and increasingly popular policy proposal aiming to provide foundational material security to all and, through this, to alleviate the poverty understood to underpin varied social and ecological ills (Van Parijs and Vanderborght, 2017; Schutter, 2024). Since it is unconditional, many also claim that UBI will advance rather than harm human dignity (Mathur, 2026) and improve community cohesion through encouraging reciprocity (Neves, 2024).

Several scholars have taken this idea to advocate for a conservation basic income (CBI) (Fletcher and Büscher, 2020; de Lange and Saif, 2023; Sheehan and Martin-Ortega, 2023). This approach would provide unconditional cash to poor communities residing in, and protecting, important conservation areas. The underlying logic is that economic insecurity drives environmentally destructive practices, including through subsistence clearing, migration and cash-crop expansion. By alleviating this insecurity, communities are better positioned to support their own flourishing and that of the ecosystems they depend on. This may take the form of investment in sustainable agriculture, reforestation and collective environmental stewardship (Fletcher and Büscher, 2020; de Lange and Saif, 2023).

Fighting the Climate Crisis with Reciprocity was one of the first pilots anywhere in the world to put this idea to the test. In doing so, it builds on the growing evidence demonstrating the positive effects of UBI on outcomes including health, wellbeing, food security and economic resilience (Stanford Basic Income Lab, n.d.). It also breaks new ground, with its focus on ecological as well as socio-economic impacts (Langridge, 2024)

and, in the process, adds weight to calls for unconditional economic support to Indigenous communities as part of the fight against ecological breakdown.

The Pilot

The pilot — launched in November 2023 — provided every adult within three Indigenous communities in the Peruvian Amazon with a regular, unconditional cash payment. Payments were delivered every four months for two years, amounting to six transfers in total. Payments were distributed directly to each adult in the communities, giving individuals full autonomy and choice over how the money was used.

Alongside the cash, the pilot also delivered a complementary programme of community training — a "Cash Plus" model. Workshops covered financial education (including budgeting, avoiding fraud and setting up bank accounts), Indigenous rights and governance, environmental conservation and climate change. Community coordinators visited each month to run workshops or monitoring sessions, with attendance voluntary but widely taken up. The inclusion of this ‘plus’ component builds on emerging best practice within cash transfer and basic income programming, and aimed to enhance participant dignity, foster community power, and deepen community ownership (Roelen et al., 2017; Mathur et al., 2023; Howard et al., 2024)

Why the Pilot Was Run

The pilot was motivated by Cool Earth’s commitment to challenging rigid international climate finance structures, moving beyond the paternalistic and often restrictive practices associated with traditional frameworks such as PES and REDD+. Cool Earth’s institutional vision recognises that different contexts require different, adaptive models of financial support.

The communities engaged in the pilot are Asháninka and Yanesha Indigenous peoples whose ancestral territories sit within the Peruvian Amazon. These communities face converging pressures: the direct and accelerating impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss on their land and livelihoods and deep-seated economic precarity that compels many residents to leave their communities in search of casual wage labour. This outmigration weakens community cohesion and reduces time available for farming and environmental protection. The economic precarity also leaves forests vulnerable to exploitation for necessary income generation (Angelsen et al., 2014; Börner et al., 2016; Ding et al., 2016).

Cool Earth has partnered with indigenous communities in Peru on unconditional communal grants. This work has demonstrated that community-level funding is effective for territorial defence and collective governance. However, in areas where severe

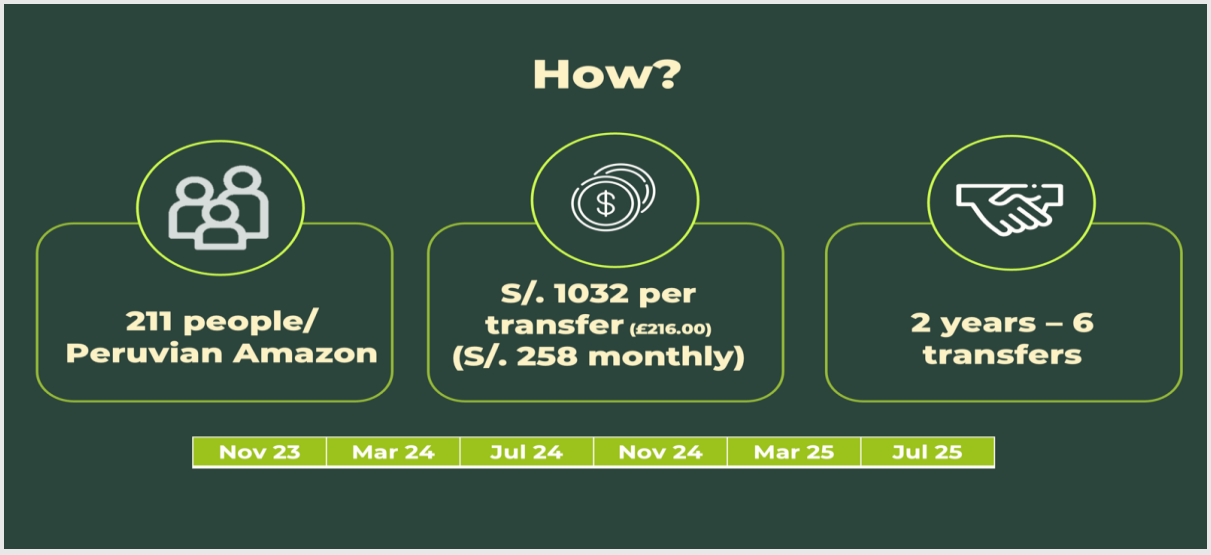
economic precarity is causing household-level outmigration, Cool Earth recognised that a complementary mechanism for stabilising family economies is also required.

The purpose of the pilot was to examine whether and how direct financial security at the household level, through an unconditional basic income, can act as a shield to reinforce, rather than replace, collective land stewardship. Co-designed with the indigenous organisations ONAMIAP and OMIAASEC, the intervention embedded rigorous social, environmental and financial safeguards and employed complementary 'plus' activities to explore how cash transfers given directly to individuals could complement and strengthen the community fabric.

Critically, the pilot was not framed as charity but as reciprocity, recognising that Indigenous communities are disproportionately affected by an ecological crisis they did not cause and that their continued presence on and care for their territories is itself a necessary form of climate action. The pilot designers recognised the potential for this pioneering intervention to point in new directions for global climate policy.

Ultimately, Cool Earth's motivation is to demonstrate that to effectively tackle the climate crisis, climate finance must respect indigenous self-determination, showing that when secured by proper safeguards, individual economic stability is a powerful, rights-respecting pillar for collective forest preservation.

Figure 1: The How



Pilot Location and Participants

The pilot enrolled 211 participants across three Indigenous communities located in Junín Province in the central Peruvian Amazon. The communities comprised of both Asháninka

and Yanesha peoples and included a mix of primary and non-primary forest habitats. The first cohort began receiving cash transfers in November 2023.

Across all three communities, women made up 56% of the 82 endline survey respondents. The age distribution skewed toward working-age adults: 55% of respondents were between 26 and 45 years old, 18% were younger adults aged 18–25, and only 6% were over 60. Average household size across the pilot was 3.8 members, with an average of 1.6 minors per household.

The overwhelming majority of participants (79%) identified farming as their primary occupation, consistent with the strong dependence of these communities on small-scale agriculture and family labour. Almost all households (89%) had access to farmland, with average farm sizes of around 3 hectares. At the start of the pilot, 43% of households reported labour migration — the temporary movement of household members outside the community to take casual work — underscoring the economic precarity the programme was designed to address.

Partners

The pilot was co-designed and co-implemented over three years by four partner organisations, each bringing distinct roles and areas of expertise.

Cool Earth is a climate change charity (No. 1117978) that works with rainforest communities around the world to halt deforestation and strengthen the resilience of the people best placed to protect rainforest environments. Cool Earth's approach centres on the principle that the most effective forest protection comes from strengthening the resilience of the Indigenous and local communities who live within and around rainforest. The pilot extends Cool Earth's well established cash transfer programme by moving to a true UBI model, providing greater freedom and autonomy to recipients. Cool Earth provided the programme design, funding facilitation and technical support — via AidKit — throughout the pilot and commissioned this independent evaluation.

ONAMIAP (Organización Nacional de Mujeres Indígenas Andinas y Amazónicas del Perú — the National Organization of Andean and Amazonian Indigenous Women of Peru) is a national-level organisation of indigenous women, built on a 30-year history of struggle and organisation. ONAMIAP emerged from a long process of training, debate and collaboration amongst indigenous women from across Peru's regions, establishing itself as a platform through which indigenous women could make their voices heard after years of discrimination and invisibility. ONAMIAP formalised its partnership with Cool Earth through an inter-institutional cooperation agreement, with the aim to articulate efforts toward strengthening the autonomy, territorial protection, women's participation and resilience of Indigenous communities in the face of the climate crisis. ONAMIAP brings

national advocacy capacity at national and international levels, as well as a firm commitment to centring Indigenous women's leadership in the design and governance of the programme.

OMIAASEC (Organización de Mujeres Indígenas Amazónicas Ashaninka de la Selva Central — the Regional Organisation of Amazonian Ashaninka Indigenous Women of the Central Jungle) is the regional-level Indigenous women's organisation directly rooted in the communities involved in the pilot. OMIAASEC maintains strong, long-standing relationships with the Ashaninka and Yanesha communities of the central Peruvian Amazon, providing community-level coordination, support, and the trust necessary to implement both the cash transfers and the training programme. OMIAASEC coordinators visited the communities on a monthly basis, delivered workshops, and administered the endline survey data collection, ensuring strong community engagement and local ownership of the process.

UBI Bath (the University of Bath's Basic Income Research Group) provided pro-bono intervention design and ethics advice to the core pilot team, drawing on its world-leading UBI plus pilot experience and coordination of the global UBI Piloters Network. UBI Bath also led the independent impact evaluation of the pilot, pulling together partners including the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru and Bath Social and Development Research Ltd to deliver the present report.

AidKit is a social impact company building faster, fairer aid and relief programs through a unified technology platform and expert services. AidKit helped overcome extreme connectivity and geographic limitations by securing sensitive participant data (full names, physical addresses, contact numbers, and bank details) while ensuring privacy compliance, enabling remote one-to-one messaging (payment updates, custom safety guidance), and enabling offline data collection of initial and final socioeconomic information.

Evaluation Methods

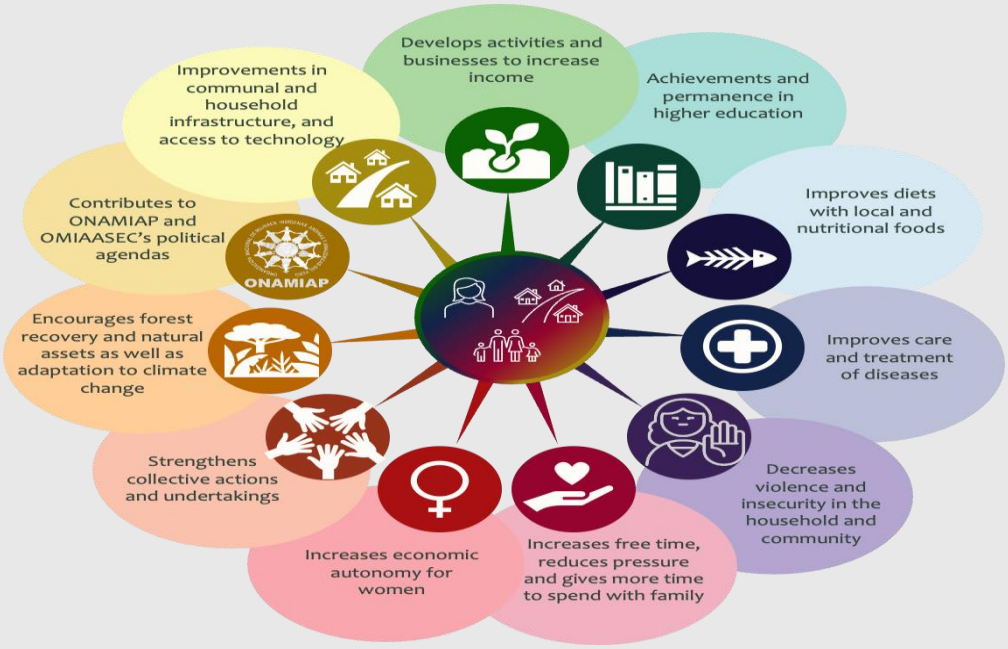
The evaluation employed a mixed-methods approach, combining the quantitative analysis of survey data with a qualitative examination of the perceived causal mechanisms behind observed trends.

Theory of Change

The evaluation broadly examined whether the results of the pilot conformed with its proposed Theory of Change (ToC) (see Figure 2). The pilot's ToC envisaged improvements in the lives of community members in a range of ways. The core hypotheses were 1) that the provision of cash would reduce economic stressors and provide opportunities for participants to increase their wellbeing and that of their natural environments and 2) that

the ‘plus’ activities would empower the communities to address problems and respond to opportunities.

Figure 2: Theory of Change



Both the quantitative and qualitative questionnaires featured sections covering each of these major desired outcomes.

Quantitative Methods

The quantitative analysis draws on two rounds of household surveys implemented in the three participating Indigenous communities. The baseline survey was conducted in November–December 2023, immediately before the start of the pilot. The endline survey took place in August 2025, after the completion of six cash transfer cycles. Both rounds collected information at the household level on housing conditions, assets, livelihoods, savings, food security and perceptions of wellbeing, among other indicators.

The endline included 82 participants, of whom 56% were women. The age distribution shows that most participants were between 26 and 45 years old (55% overall), reflecting a predominantly working-age population. Younger adults (18–25) accounted for 18% of respondents, while older participants (above 60) represented only 6%. This composition suggests that the survey largely captured the perspectives of economically active household members directly involved in farming or other income-generating activities.

Table 1: Surveyed participants by community and gender at endline

			Gender distribution		
	Freq.	**Percent**	**Female**	**Male**	**Total**
Community 1	16	19.5	50%	50%	100%
Community 2	27	32.9	67%	33%	100%
Community 3	39	47.6	51%	49%	100%
Total	**82**	**100.00**	**56%**	**44%**	**100%**

The survey was administered in coordination with OMIAASEC, one of the partner organisations leading the implementation of the pilot, to ensure strong community participation and local ownership of the data. While this participatory approach enhanced trust and response rates, it may also have introduced a degree of response bias in self-reported perception and satisfaction indicators.

In addition to direct comparisons with baseline data, the endline questionnaire included a set of retrospective questions on changes and improvements over the last two years. These questions were designed to capture respondents' perceptions of before-and-after conditions in domains where baseline information was not collected. The reference period of "two years" was used consistently across modules to facilitate comprehension and to approximate the duration of the pilot's implementation period.

Qualitative Methods

The qualitative component employed the Qualitative Impact Protocol (QuIP) method (Copestake et al., 2019). QuIP studies are designed to collect credible evidence on the household-level impacts of an intervention. This information is gathered directly from intended beneficiaries and based on their perceptions of what has changed in their lives over a set period of time, in this case the last two years, and across a series of domains related to the project's theory of change. The method uses latent counterfactuals to imply causation; 'what if' scenarios where participants are asked to consider how the outcomes would change under alternative scenarios and their likely outcomes (Copestake, 2025).

Interview data was collected by researchers from Pontifical Catholic University of Peru who were experienced in working within Indigenous communities. The researchers and respondents were aware of the different organisations involved in the study and of the pilot, but not of the specific focus of the evaluation. The outcomes-led nature of the questionnaire is designed to increase the potential of uncovering unintended outcomes or unexpected stories of change and so increases the likelihood that field researchers

will collect a broad range of information about changes in the community. Informed consent was obtained from respondents prior to starting interviews.

Questions were broad and open-ended to allow the respondents to speak freely about what they believed to be significant changes in their lives. Researchers were trained to use the additional questions to probe further and establish what the perceived drivers of these changes were. Closed questions were also used throughout the questionnaire to capture overall perceptions of change in some specific areas. It is important to stress that these closed questions are by their nature limited in their scope, and in this case were not always answered consistently. The open questions provide a more detailed narrative of the pathways of change which are presented in more detail in the form of causal maps in the following sections.

Sample

The sample size for the qualitative component of the evaluation was 24 individual interviews and three focus groups, according to the QuIP protocol. The QuIP method does not rely on statistically representative sampling but instead uses purposive sampling to give maximum variation and capture as many different perspectives as possible. Participants were collaboratively selected by University of Bath researchers, Cool Earth, OMMIAASEC and the research team to this end.

The interviews were split across the three communities, with eight individuals interviewed in each location. The sample was split by male and female respondents to understand any differences in the impact of the programme for these two groups. Focus group discussions comprising of between three and five participants were also conducted in each location. While mixed in gender, two had a slight male bias while one had a slight female bias. The timing of focus groups in two of the communities coincided with other community activities and so participation was limited.

The focus group discussions followed a similar structure to individual interviews and were used to check for any differences in the experiences shared in the individual interviews which may have occurred as a result of random sub-sampling within each location. The research team also had informal (unrecorded) conversations with a community leader in each location to resolve any queries that arose during the interviews.

As discussed above, the QuIP uses an outcomes-based approach to interviews, meaning that the interviews do not revolve around, or even mention, the intervention or programme being evaluated. This helps to reduce potential confirmation bias in the way people respond to questions (Remnant et al., 2025). The researchers did know the project being evaluated but not the specific areas of focus. They were given an interview schedule to follow and did not discuss or suggest details of the basic income project during the interviews. This helped to ensure that respondents only mentioned drivers of change that they felt were important and these were not always related to the project,

such as environmental factors, food and farming costs, changes to wages and government initiatives.

Data Analysis

The researchers recorded the interviews and produced verbatim transcripts from these recordings and their notes. These transcripts were then translated by students studying for a master's degree in Interpreting and Translating Spanish at the University of Bath. Each transcript was quality checked by the course leader, Dr. Nick Regan—who also has specific knowledge of South American Indigenous languages—before they were shared for analysis. Throughout the coding process, clarifying questions were answered by the researchers who undertook the interviews.

An experienced QuIP trained analyst reviewed and coded the translated interview transcripts using the Causal Map App, an online data analysis tool. Influence (driver) and consequence (outcome) factor labels were allocated to respondents' statements to create visual depictions of their causal claims (Powell et al., 2024). The factor labels used were unique to this project and were developed iteratively by the analyst based solely on the participants' responses. The causal chains were then aggregated and visualised in the form of causal maps which summarise the findings from the interviews and are included at various points throughout this report. Links are scaled proportionately to the number of people who made that causal claim. Numbers in the factor labels refer to the number of people who cited that factor. Each factor may have multiple different drivers, some of which may have been cited by the same person. All causal maps presented in this report are saved in the Causal Map database and can be viewed by users who have access.

Findings

This section of the report provides an integrated overview of the findings across the evaluation methods. Findings are grouped thematically.

Livelihoods, Income, and Economic Security

Agriculture remains the dominant livelihood across all communities, with 79% of participants identifying farming as their primary occupation and 89% reporting access to agricultural land (see below).

Figure 3. Participant main occupation at endline

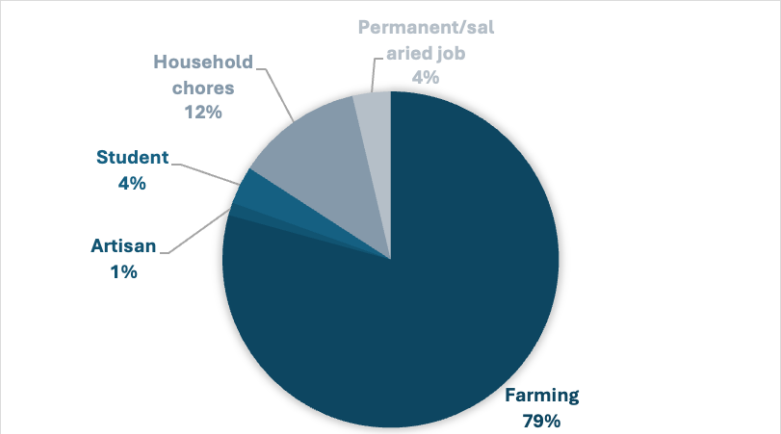


Table 2. Farming characteristics by community (endline)

Community	1	2	3	Total
Has a farm (%)	88%	78%	97%	89%
Average farm size (ha)	3.18	3.55	2.71	3.04
Cultivated area (ha)	1.86	1.76	1.21	1.49
Reports the cultivated area increased in the last two years (%)	25%	30%	33%	30%
The household acquired new plots (%)	6%	4%	5%	5%
By occupying abandoned land	0%	4%	0%	1%
By opening of a new land	6%	0%	0%	1%
By purchase	6%	0%	3%	2%
By Inheritance	0%	0%	3%	1%
Sold/donated/transferred their land to relatives or third parties	0%	4%	5%	4%
Rented their land to another person or family member	0%	0%	0%	0%
Belongs to a farmers' association or agricultural cooperative	6%	11%	5%	7%

Quantitative findings indicate that 30% of households expanded cultivated areas over the course of the pilot, largely through the restoration of previously abandoned farm plots. The qualitative data suggest that these trends, and indeed consequent trends around increased agricultural productivity and income, are widely attributed to the interventions. For example, more than half of respondents reported using the UBI to invest in agricultural inputs and equipment or spend more time working their farms, which in turn led to improved crop yields and increased overall income (see Causal map 1).

"When the initiative started, with what it's giving us, we don't do day labouring anymore... now every couple of days we work on the smallholding. ...We've just

recently started planting. Since the project started... we are planting coffee... Yes, now we sell."

SF1

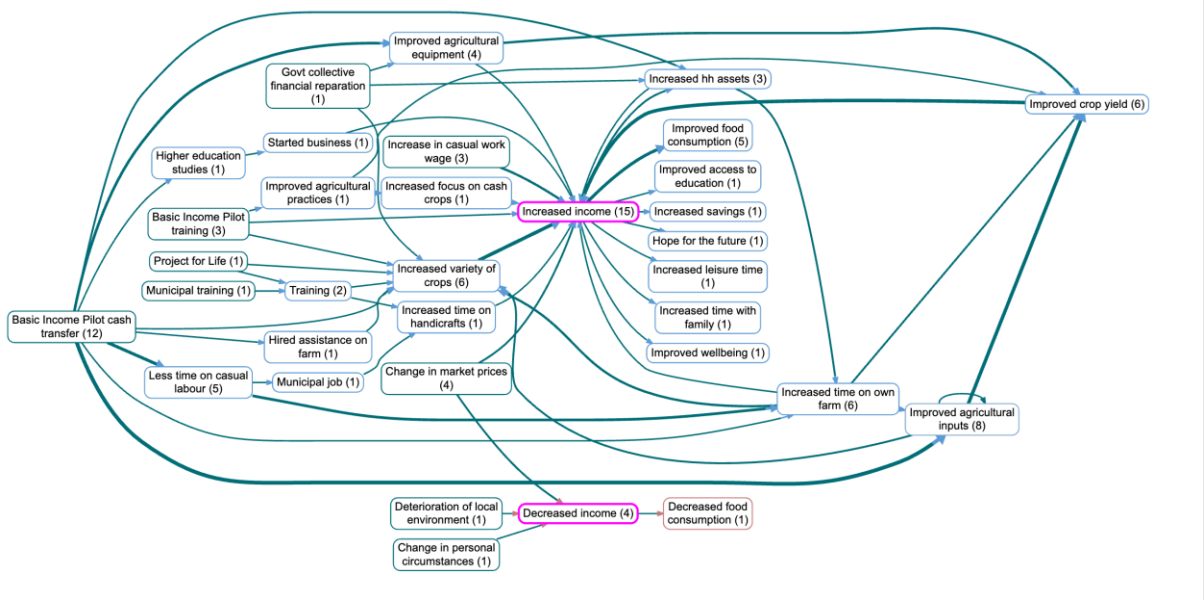
"Before, my smallholding didn't produce much, you know? Now I have plants, coffee plants. Thanks to Cool Earth, that's changed me a lot. ...Now I haven't been worried about anything. I've just been working on my little farm, not going out to work with my shovel for my neighbours."

EM8

"Before, my mother's farm was abandoned. And since the project came, I thought, since my mother's farm has turned to forest, I'd better grow something on it myself".

EF7

Causal map 1: Changes in Income Levels



Various respondents within the QuIP study also attributed increased crop yields to the pilot, noting three main pathways through which the cash contributed to better yields: 1) use of improved agricultural inputs, 2) upgrading farming equipment and 3) reallocation of household time away from casual labour and into personal farms.

"I've stopped using a chafle (hand-held tool) to cut things by hand. Now it's easier with the electric weed cutter because for 1 hectare, doing it with a machete takes 10 days. With the machine you can do it in 3 days. It saves you time... I mean, less time more production."

EM1

"I'm grateful for this project, that they are giving me a little bit. I no longer go out to work to do day labouring."

EF6

> *"Before, I went out to work, but not around here. Now, I put almost all of my time into the farm, planting my produce, like my cocoa, my achiote... Yes, it's improved. The quantity has improved."*

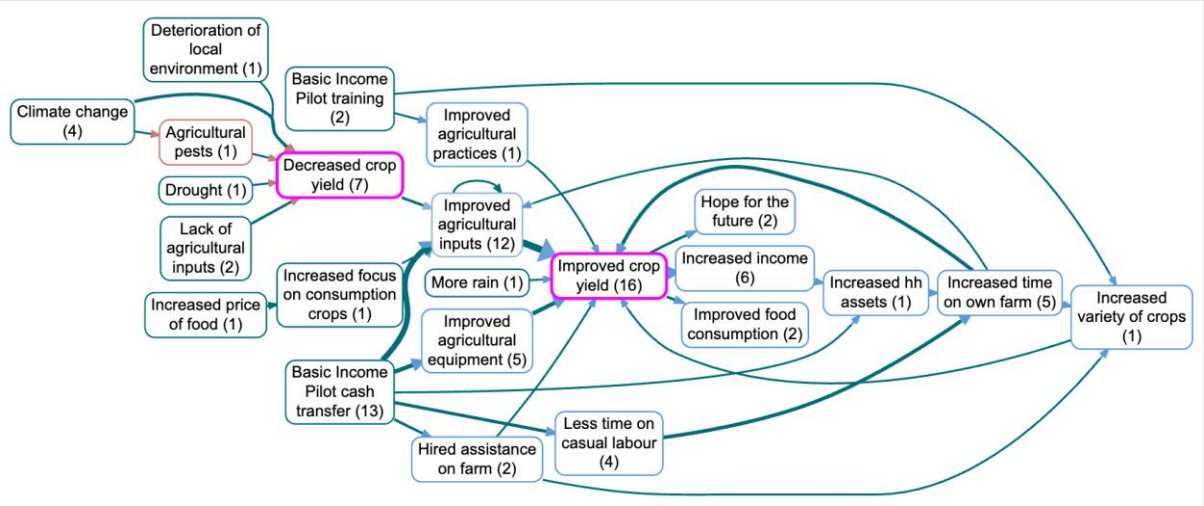
EM8

Increased time spent on farming was mentioned by 14 respondents. Most used this time to clear more productive space within their existing farms, leading to increased yields and a wider variety of crops being grown. Money was also used to invest in new plants to improve the variety of cash crops.

> *"Now with the latest... reimbursement, I've got plants that I've made into nurseries now. Coffee. ...I've also put banana plants in between. Those are the two crops that I've grown for this project, which is more healthy. That's where I invested the money... because we don't have much land space, what I did was get rid of the shade trees that were there. I mostly grow coffee. So, I got rid of the shade and put banana trees in between."*

FGD participant

Causal map 2: Changes in Crop Yields

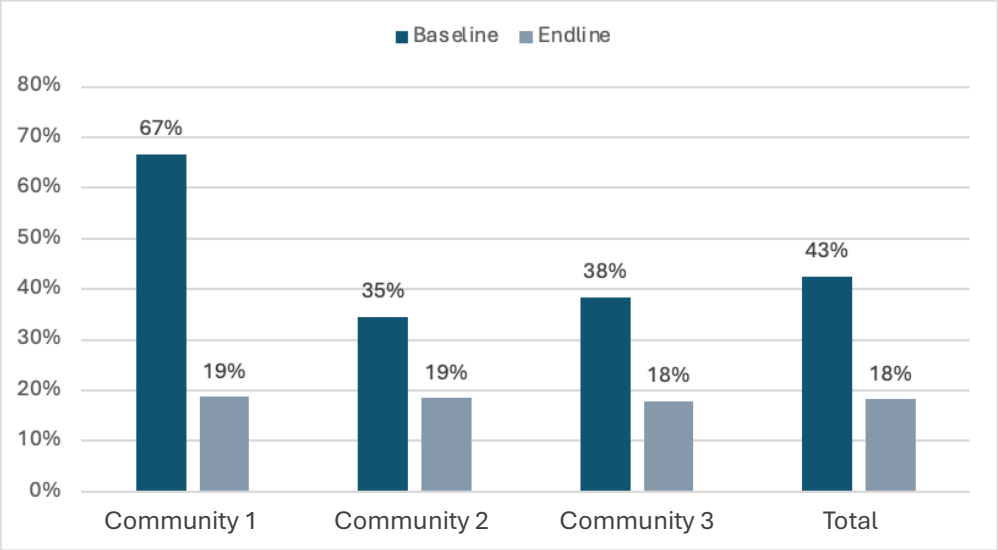


Increased income from farming is not just an end in itself; rather, it has fuelled a positive feedback loop, leading (alongside the cash itself) to increased investment in assets such as motorbikes or improved housing. These assets further supported farming efforts, for example, by reducing travel time to fields. They also enabled people to make money from other businesses. Within the qualitative sample, one participant reported setting up a food business (facilitated by accessing higher education with money from the UBI), one a handicrafts business (facilitated by being able to work in a municipal job rather than on the farm thanks to the UBI allowing them to hire in labour) and another a taxi business (with a car purchased from the UBI).

Crucially, data from the qualitative and quantitative samples suggest that a major impact of the pilot was on out-migration from the community, with more and more participants

able to make enough money to meet needs at home and thus not migrate, creating a beneficial feedback loop that increased productivity. Figure 4 shows a clear reduction in labour migration, understood here as the temporary movement of household members outside the community to work in jobs other than farm labour. In all three communities, the share of households reporting such migration declined sharply—from 67 to 19% in Community 1, 35 to 19% in Community 2, and 38 to 18% in Community 3. Overall, the proportion fell from 43 to 18% between baseline and endline.

Figure 4: Labor migration at baseline and endline



Discussions in the focus groups described the cash received from the pilot as replacing the income previously received from casual labour for meeting basic needs, meaning additional income is now used as a way of saving for other investments and costs such as education and health. These discussions also pointed to the importance of the training they received on budgeting, which reduced the need for reactive migration.

> *"And now, with that [cash transfer], we only go away to work for certain things, and we know we're going to get that money, and we budget for education and for health. We already know several things we're going to keep that for."*
>
> *FGD participant*

> *"[Before] there's nothing to eat, let's go out and look for a contract, let's go and work. With what they paid us we'd go and buy things, for example, to feed ourselves, you know, that's where perhaps yes it has changed quite a lot. They've taught us on the practice of how you generate that economy and how you manage your expenses. But sometimes there were, as they've taught us, those day-to-day expenses that they've taught us here, how we have to look after... So, what we've done is to plan in the family... This is going to be for our health, and this is going to be for the smallholding, etc. You had to keep something aside... Because illness doesn't let you know in advance. So, at any*

time your little capital, you can generate a little bit more to maybe do some other activities, you might say, a support or something like that."

FGD participant

Notably, some participants within the pilot did nevertheless point to economic stressors including decreased crop yields, primarily driven by exogenous environmental factors. Some people described it as climate change, others described extreme heat, rains, pests and drought. There was a consistent awareness amongst respondents that things were not the same as before in the way things grow.

"Because of the heat, because of the drought. ...Now the plants are suffering a lot."

PM8

"Could it be because of the weather? Because of climate change? Because there's no other reason, it's not like before."

PM7

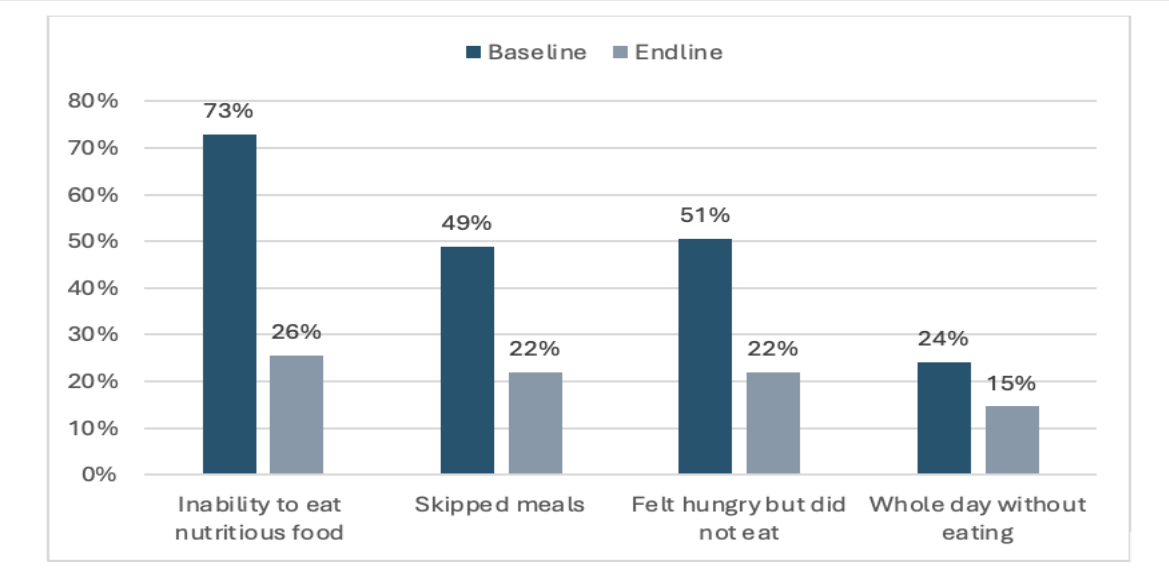
"In recent years it is due to pollution... it is as if there is no oxygen for our plants and that's why we need to strengthen our crops with something, so they survive. We use chemicals for that more than anything."

PF2

Food Security and Nutrition

A second major domain of impact was on household food security and quality of nutrition. Quantitative data showed a marked reduction in food insecurity across the three communities over the last two years (Figure 5, Table 2). The proportion of households reporting that they were unable to eat healthy and nutritious foods due to a lack of money or resources fell from 73 to 26%. Likewise, the share of those who had to skip meals decreased from 49 to 22% and of those who felt hungry but did not eat dropped from 51 to 21%. The most severe form of deprivation—spending a whole day without eating—declined from 24 to 15%. These findings indicate a broad improvement in food access and stability among participating households.

Figure 5. Food insecurity among participants at endline and baseline



At the community level, the decline in food insecurity was particularly strong in Community 3 where the proportion of households unable to eat nutritious foods fell from 63 to 10%, and the other indicators of food deprivation all dropped to around 10%. Community 1 also showed substantial progress, especially in the reduction of skipped meals and fasting days, while Community 2 recorded moderate but still meaningful gains. Overall, these changes suggest that food shortages have become less frequent and less severe across the pilot areas.

Table 2. Measures of food insecurity by community, baseline and endline

Measures of food insecurity	Community 1		Community 2		Community 3	
	Baseline	Endline	Baseline	Endline	Baseline	Endline
Inability to eat nutritious food	75%	31%	85%	44%	63%	10%
Skipped meals	44%	19%	59%	41%	44%	10%
Felt hungry but did not eat	47%	25%	56%	37%	49%	10%
Whole day without eating	13%	6%	44%	26%	14%	10%

Perceptions of the current household food situation (Table 3) suggested that although dietary diversity may remain limited, the majority of households perceive their food supply as sufficient. Most participants (59%) reported that their households eat enough but not always the foods they would like, while 29% said they always eat enough and the foods they want. Only a small minority—around 10%—stated that they sometimes do not eat enough, and just 2% said they frequently lack food.

Table 3. Perceptions of household food security by community

Food security perception	Community 1	Community 2	Community 3	Total
They often do not eat enough	0%	0%	5%	2%
Sometimes they do not eat enough	13%	22%	0%	10%
They eat enough but not always the foods they want	69%	56%	56%	59%
They always eat enough and the foods they want	19%	22%	38%	29%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

When asked to assess changes in their food situation over the last two years (Table 4), nearly nine in ten respondents perceived improvement. Over half (55%) stated that their food situation had improved somewhat, and one-third (32%) reported that it had improved a lot, while only one percent felt it had worsened. The largest perceived gains were observed in Community 1 and Community 2, where more than two-thirds of respondents reported an improvement. Taken together, the evidence from both experience-based and perception-based indicators points to a clear enhancement in household food security, likely supported by the combined effects of regular cash transfers, local production and reduced reliance on temporary out-migration.

Table 4. Perceived changes in food security over past two years by community

Perception of change in food security status	Community 1	Community 2	Community 3	Total
Worsened a little	6%	0%	0%	1%
Stayed the same	0%	11%	18%	12%
Improved a little	44%	67%	51%	55%
Improved a lot	50%	22%	31%	32%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Qualitative data strongly support these trends. Out of the 24 total respondents, 19 provided direct evidence of improved diets and food consumption pathways. The most commonly cited pathway was that the UBI was used to purchase items they previously couldn't afford, such as rice, noodles, tuna and meat.

> *"Before, we used to eat... yuca with a bit of salt, like that. When things changed, we had better food. We bought rice, a chicken to raise, and we were set."*
>
> *SM6*

> *"We didn't buy food before. Before we would buy very little but now it's different... In my case I have bought more groceries. I've bought plenty more."*

PF6

> *"It has changed. We buy chicken, we buy fish, we buy beef, we buy pork - yes there is improvement... If you had yuca, pituca for stew, we only bought salt, sugar, oil. And if you had yuca, then that was everything."*

PM4

There is evidence that diets are becoming more nutritious (Causal map 4). While not all respondents gave details of exactly what they were eating, meaning the numbers are not necessarily representative, we can see a reported increase in the consumption of meat, vegetables, pulses and fish – enabled by the cash transfer. Alongside purchased goods, the consumption of locally grown foods also improved. Respondents reported increased varieties of crops like avocados and plátano and some reported investing in raising chickens for meat and eggs.

> *"I can honestly tell you that I have improved in terms of food too, because I've been rearing animals. And that's also useful; we're not buying, so we're not buying chicken or anything anymore; we're eating through our own efforts now. Buying, as I say, we used the money to buy chickens for the farm, and so, like I said, we feed ourselves now. Both for the meat and for the eggs they have. It has been very useful to us."*

FGD participant

Individual sources in Community 2 and the focus group in Community 3 mentioned the rediscovery of ancestral food, linked to community training and projects.

> *"The ancestral foods that were perhaps being lost, disappearing. The little that there was, it's been gathered together to make a sort of seed bank, and we can have our own space for ancestral food... Well, what I remember is maona [a type of yuca], pituca blanca [taro, Colocasia esculenta], watermelon and so on."*

PM3

> *"We've created a nursery on each person's plot to sow seeds. We are going to sow our ancestral plants...because food sovereignty."*

PF6

> *"For the most part it is getting to know the... the plants we used to consume in the past, all the food from the community's plants... most of these plants don't exist here anymore. So, we're beginning to grow them again from scratch."*

PF2

> *"[Before] we didn't eat so many vegetables and fruit. Why? Because there might not be enough for us, you know? So what did we do? We might cut down a chonta or a pijuayo and eat the soft middle part of those as a salad. Because our food was a bit extremely poor. Perhaps that's why we see our children, as they say, the state itself says it, having symptoms of malnutrition or of having anaemia. But in that sense, sometimes we've forgotten, our ancestors told us what this is, you can eat it, a 'guide' more than anything, to what the pijuayo is, the coconut, the shapaja palm. ...Perhaps we as indigenous groups, they used to say about us, the Ashaninka, how are they going to eat vegetables? But we*

always listen to our training, no? The palms or the fruits, more than anything, that are there in the forest."

FGD participant

The move away from a reliance on casual labour (a key outcome of the cash transfer) was also cited as a cause of having more time to find and cook local foods.

"She likes to eat roasted food, and now she has more time to roast her produce. She also has time to go and look for wild mushrooms and some wild animals for them to eat."

PF1

Five respondents explicitly linked improved diet to a reduction in household illness.

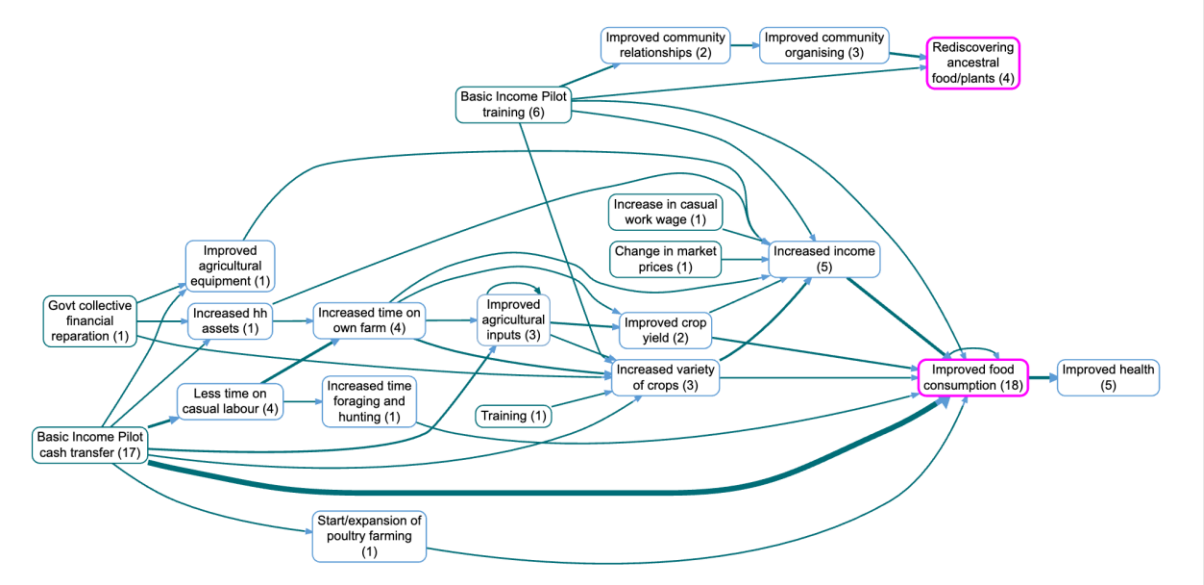
"Because now we look after ourselves, our health, we eat on time... We also didn't do that before... Sometimes we didn't have enough, we would eat, we wouldn't eat on time. Now we eat on time."

EF3

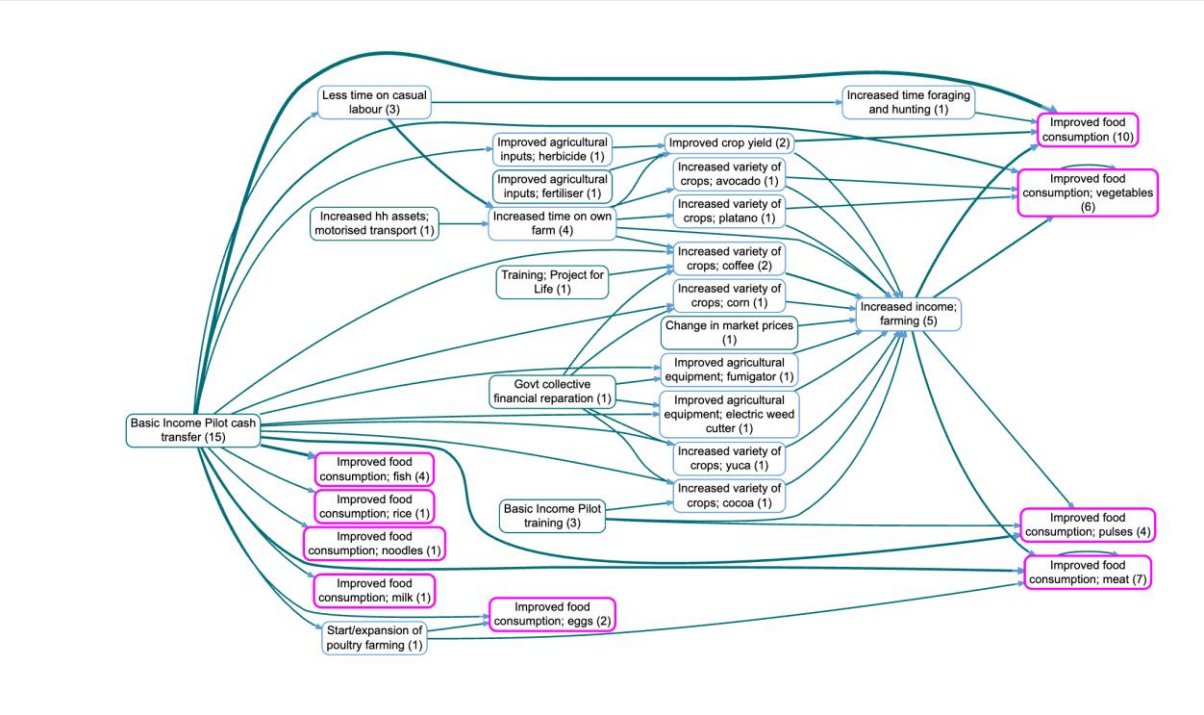
"They hardly get sick... because of the food."

EF5

Causal map 3: Changes to food consumption (top level)



Causal map 4: Changes to food consumption (secondary level)



Health and Wellbeing

This section considers three main aspects relating to health and wellbeing: Health or access to health services, leisure and family time and reported improved wellbeing. The quantitative data show that perceptions of access to health services improved over the last two years across all three communities (Table 4). Around 61% of respondents reported better access to *Western medicine and health services*, while 62% perceived an improvement in access to *ancestral and traditional medicine*. In addition, 67% felt that their *ability to obtain medicines and treatments* had improved. These findings reflect a dual dynamic: not only has access to formal medical services expanded, but traditional health systems—which are culturally embedded and locally trusted—have also strengthened.

Table 4. Perceived changes in access to health services by community

Perception of changes in access to health services	Community 1	Community 2	Community 3	Total
Perception of improvement access to western medicine and health services	50%	56%	69%	61%
Perception of improvement access to ancestral and traditional medicine and services	69%	59%	62%	62%
Perception of improvement in their ability to access medicine and treatment	50%	70%	72%	67%

Qualitative data provides similar findings. Respondents from all three locations reported changes to their health status. Five from each reported either improvement to their health or in their access to health services. All 15 attributed some changes to the cash element of the pilot while two also cited other drivers of increased income. The increased cash worked through different pathways: The ability to pay for medical services and treatments, improved food consumption, reduced reliance on casual labour and enhanced household assets and overall wellbeing. The most frequently cited pathway links the cash transfer directly to improved access to health services when needed. This was cited by ten respondents who gave examples of using the funds to purchase medicines and vitamins and pay for medical appointments.

> *"Before my daughter was ill and I didn't have money to be able to buy her medicine. ...when I didn't have any money, I would use credit and... they don't wait for you, they take it back quickly."*
>
> *EF7*

> *"For example, two, three months ago, when I fell, the money helped me with getting treatment. I couldn't move; I was bedridden for a month. With that money I got injections, I took vitamins and that's how I got up again. This has helped me a lot. Thank God, and thanks to the organisation too. The fall caused a kidney infection. So, with that I got injections for the infection. That helped me greatly."*
>
> *PF5*

Although many people talked about being able to access health services more easily, the strongest single direct link to reported improved overall health was using the cash transfer to purchase food and diversify diets. As we saw above, households have moved away from a reliance on basic staples and are now including proteins and vegetables. Five respondents attributed improved health to this change in diet, noting that their families fall sick less frequently.

> *"Because now we look after ourselves, our health, we eat on time... We also didn't do that before... Sometimes we didn't have enough, we would eat, we wouldn't eat on time. Now we eat on time."*
>
> *EF3*

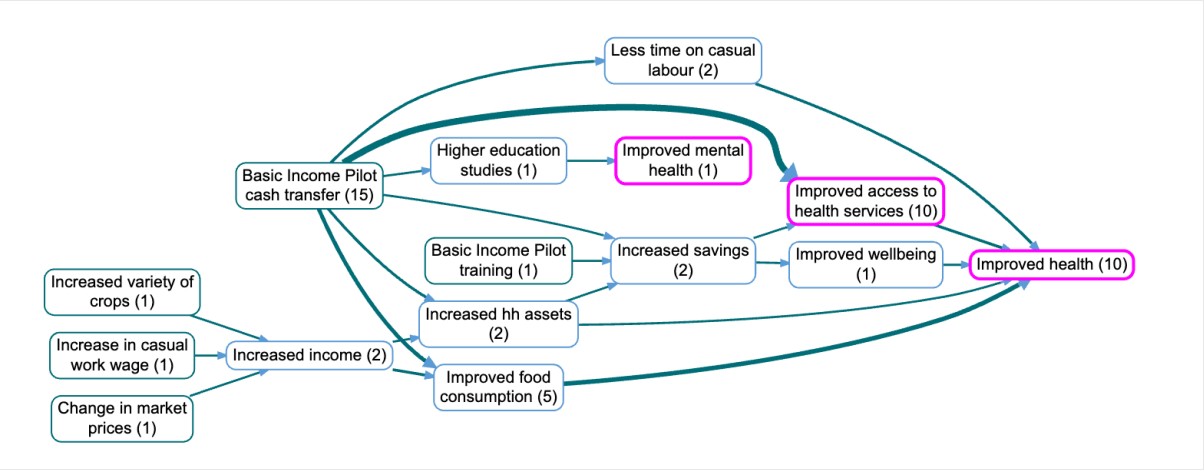
Other changes included less pressure and tiredness as a result of not having to work as much on casual labour, improved living conditions from household assets such as an improved stove and mattresses, and increased savings which in turn fostered improved wellbeing. There was a mention of the pilot training having a component to encourage budgeting and saving specifically for health emergencies.

> *"As there have also been talks on finance, we are now saving more money. [What talk was there?] To save our money, how to save, we should save for our*

health. [And do you remember what organisation gave the chat?] When there was the pilot that came, a psychologist that came."

SF1

Causal map 5: Drivers of improved health



Fifteen respondents (split across the three locations) attributed changes in the amount of leisure and family time to the cash transfer. The biggest driver of change was the reduced time spent on casual labour. Another driver was the investment of the cash into labour and time saving assets which cut down on hours spent on farming or housework. Fifteen respondents directly linked the cash transfer and training to improved wellbeing, including amongst children and young people. This was primarily due to fewer financial worries, more time with family and improved community relationships.

"Previously I left my family here. I went to other places to work. I came back fortnightly... Now in these recent times, I'm with them constantly... Sometimes [before], to provide them with well-being I've spent all my time working."

PM3

"And I'm thankful for the support, because instead of looking for work, we now have money that can pay for things and support us. So now you don't need to exert yourself working. In other places, so now you can worry about your family, your smallholding, your crops"

EM1

"Since last month when we bought the washing machine, she has more free time, because she helps her son with his homework, supports him, guides him, teaches him."

PM4

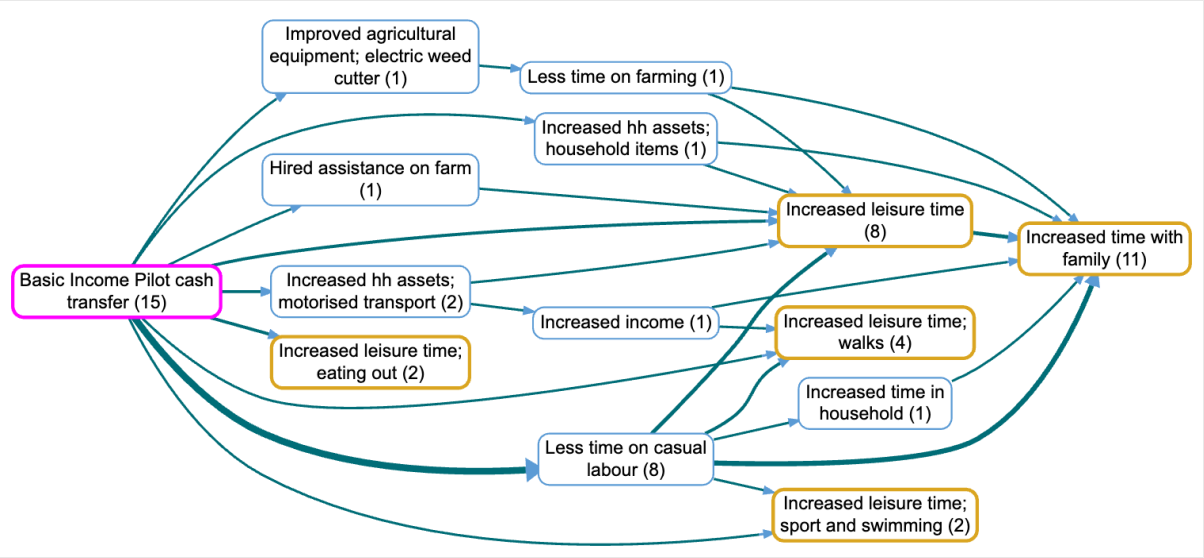
"Before I didn't look over my child's notebook, but now I do. I see how he's doing, what marks he is getting... Before I didn't check them at all, I didn't look at them. He studied just for the sake of studying... Before, I didn't have any time."

PF6

"We go out for a walk, to eat, to see other places. We didn't have a means of transport. Now we've been as far as Tolopampa. We went to eat trout."

SF8

Causal map 6: Increased leisure and family time



The basic income was the most direct and frequently cited pathway to improved wellbeing. Eleven respondents attributed it directly to reducing stress and worry. A critical mediating factor in this pathway is the reduction in time spent on casual labour. A reduction in daily economic anxiety and the ability to plan and save, rather than living day-to-day, translates directly into psychological relief.

"We have fewer worries. What has eased our concerns is the income they give us. That's what has improved for us. First, as I said, my main concern was that I used to work and go out without eating. Now we hardly ever do that. We're calm, we eat. We don't go out to the farm anymore."

EM8

"In the past we didn't think we would receive any extra money, that it would be there in the account. And we thought, next month it's coming, what are we going to do... We'll save so much and invest in food, health, or what are we going to need... And that's what we've done."

SF8

The alleviation of financial stress has downstream positive effects on household relationships and individual outlooks, contributing to improved household relationships and hopes for the future.

"The reason is, maybe I'm not so worried maybe about going to work far away, you know? Because I have something that produces and which is diversifying... My hope is that my daughter continues studying, to be a professional, for her to be better than me."

SM3

Five respondents also cited increased motivation and wellbeing of children. This was linked to increased time spent with them and also being able to support their studies and provide other basics. One respondent talked about the pilot's role in creating educational opportunities and aspirations, and in reversing youth out-migration.

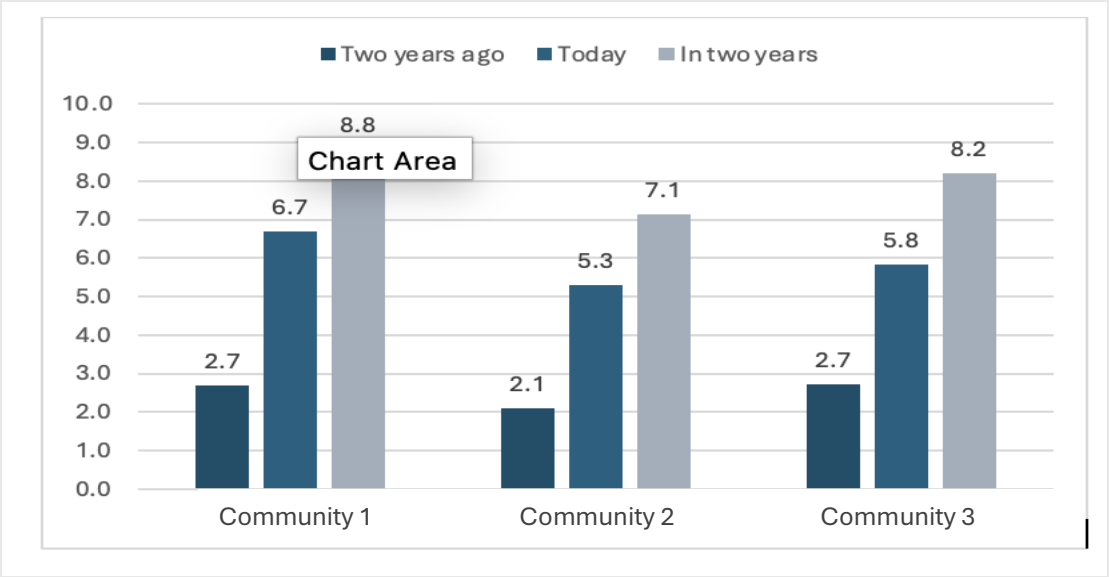
> *"More of the young people, they didn't stay here, they went to work in Lima, to look for jobs... But now they're coming back. Yes, young people who are 18 years old are enrolling in the pilot now. Yes, at least the young people are studying now... Nobody thought about studying further, or going to secondary, because there was no money. That's how it is. Now there is a change."*
>
> *PM4*

Community-level improvements are also noted as contributing to improved wellbeing. Improved collaboration on community-level projects and investments was attributed by a few people to an increased sense of safety and belonging. The reduction in out-migration for casual labour also means that community members are more physically present to collaborate and build infrastructure.

> *"And here, lots of people used to leave, we used to leave to find work. But now thanks to this... now I see the members of the community working on their own smallholdings. We're here, almost all of us together. It's like we've been reunited. So, now we see each other often, we can have meetings."*
>
> *EM1*

Unsurprisingly, quantitative measures of subjective wellbeing echoed this strong sense of progress and optimism among participant households (Figure 6). On a 10-point wellbeing scale—where 1 represents households unable to meet their basic needs and 10 represents those with sufficient income to live well and save—participants rated their situation at an average of 3 two years ago, rising to 6–7 at the time of the survey, and projecting further improvement to 8–9 within the next two years. This pattern is consistent across the three communities, with the highest current and expected wellbeing scores in Community 1, followed by Community 3 and Community 2. The results point to a widespread perception of socioeconomic recovery and future confidence.

Figure 6: Percentage changes in perceived wellbeing: Past, present and future expectations (wellbeing score 1-10)



Education and Future Aspirations

Quantitative data reveal broad engagement with schooling and continued investment in education (Table 5). Although only 7% of respondents themselves attended an educational institution at the time of the survey—reflecting the adult age profile of participants—an overwhelming 77% reported financially contributing to the education of a family member.

Table 5. Education participation and support by community

	Community 1	Community 2	Community 3	Total
Attends educational institution	0%	4%	13%	7%
Contributes to education of a family member	75%	78%	77%	77%

Qualitative data suggest that the basic income was helpful in supporting this educational investment. Respondents with younger children reported using the money to help pay school fees, with aspirations for them to finish schooling at a higher level. Five respondents reported using the transfer to access higher education institutes. The ability to pay for children to travel and stay in local urban centres to study beyond local schools has been transformational for those with older children.

> *"I can see that there's been a change. There wasn't before. They finished primary school, secondary or primary, and that was it. Nobody thought about studying further, or going to secondary, because there was no money. Now there is a change and now, as I say, we have students who are going to the University of Atahualpa in Satipo."*

PM4

"My sister has mainly used it to help with her studies. That is what I did too. Of course, I used some of it to help myself, yes, but... some things are more essential you know? Like when you are in the city, you need more resources, right? It also helped my brother a bit. And I topped it up with what I was earning."

PF2

"During the pilot scheme that they gave me, apart from work, it helped me to pay for myself. I pay 330 monthly on studies."

SF2

"And to pay my wife's monthly fees for her studies, at that time they helped me. Or we had it put by and we just took it out and paid."

SM7

A secondary pathway to higher education should emerge in time, through increased savings and an improved investment in younger children's basic education. Eleven respondents overall reported improved access to education, by being able to cover fees and other costs associated with school.

"I didn't have much money, much finance. I couldn't go, sometimes the teachers asked for donations, all that. Because I couldn't afford to buy textbooks or any of that ... Now I can."

EF7

"Before no. We used to go around from here to there looking for work more. At times there's no work, we're in debt with the school. But now it's less like that."

EM4

The reliability of the transfers across the year also plays a critical role, bridging seasonal income gaps. An increased sense of financial stability changed the aspirations of young people and parents with regard to completing higher education and accessing professional jobs. These causal pathways can be seen in Causal Map 7.

"For us, in the March period it was quite difficult. At those times, there's no harvest. So with the support yes we can respond to what secondary and primary school ask for. We can cover everything without a problem."

PM3

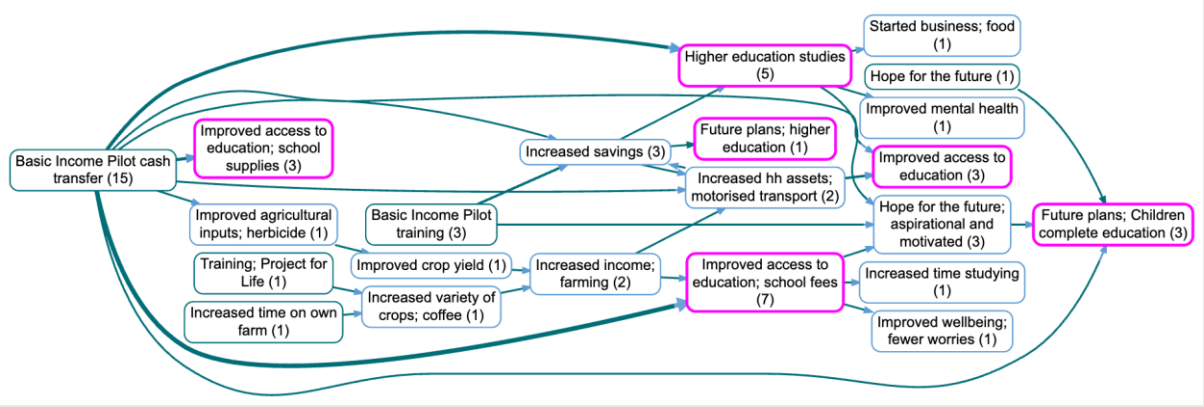
"a month before class started, I was worried. Why? Because where to get money to buy my daughters their supplies, shoes... All that worried me. Now I'm not worried anymore."

EF3

"Yes, my wellbeing will improve, because I am very thankful for the aims, also I will be able to finish my degree and continue forward, Early Childhood Education Assistant. And with that, I'll also be able to work and support myself more. I'm no longer worried, I will work on the smallholding, train and do something else."

FGD participant

Causal map 7: Changes in education attendance and aspiration



Housing, Assets, and Living Conditions

As we have seen, material circumstances improved substantially over the course of the pilot with considerable improvements in subjective wellbeing. This is most apparent with regard to people's housing, assets and living conditions.

Within the quantitative data, significant improvements in housing quality were observed across all three communities (Table 6, Figure 7). More than half of participants (55%) reported upgrading their ceilings—mainly through the installation of calamine sheets—while 51% improved their water connections. One in three households also reported improvements in lighting (37%) or sanitary facilities (26%) and about one in five upgraded their floors (21%). Ceiling and water improvements were particularly frequent in Community 3 while Community 1 showed the highest rates of lighting and sanitation upgrades. By contrast, kitchen refurbishments remained limited (7%).

Figure 7. Major improvements in housing conditions over the last two years

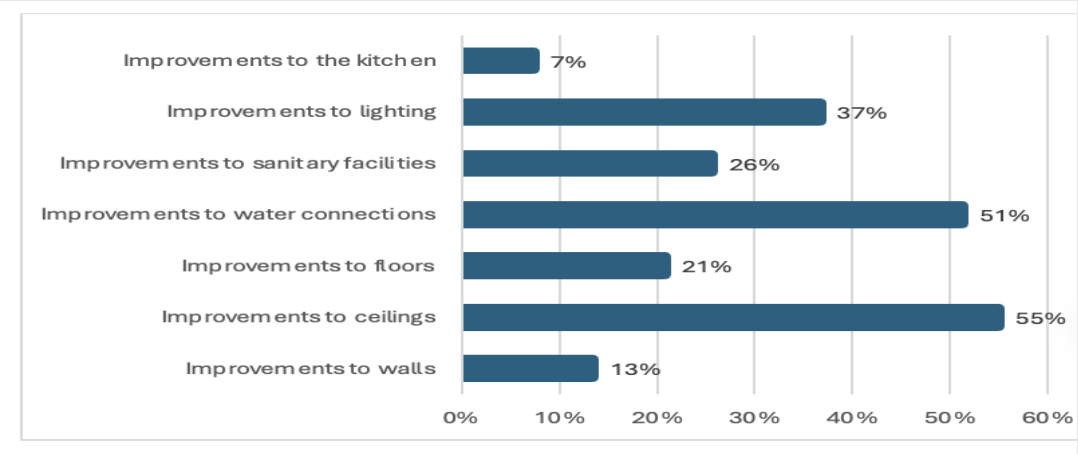


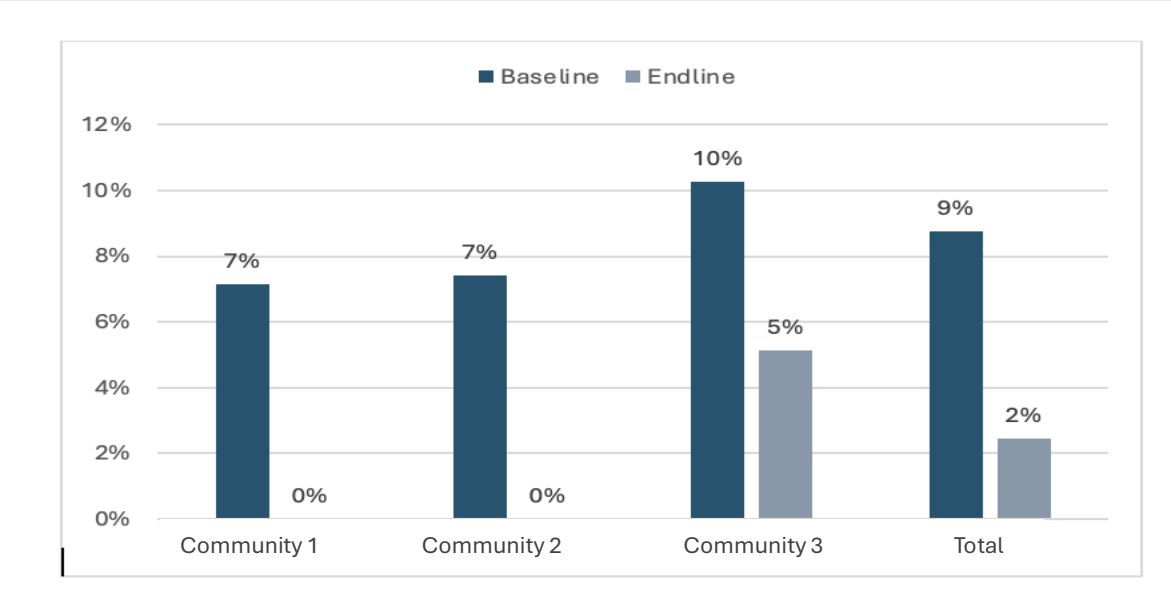
Table 6. Major improvements in housing conditions over the last two years, by community (% of participants)

Type of improvement	Community 1	Community 2	Community 3	Total
Improvements to walls [1]	6%	4%	23%	13%
Improvements to ceilings [2]	63%	37%	64%	55%
Improvements to floors [3]	19%	11%	28%	21%
Improvements to water connections [4]	63%	41%	54%	51%
Improvements to sanitary facilities [5]	38%	30%	18%	26%
Improvements to lighting [6]	50%	37%	31%	37%
Improvements to the kitchen [7]	0%	7%	10%	7%

Notes: [1] Remodelling, brick installation; [2] installation of calamine; [3] installation of concrete or wood flooring; [4] installation of water connection by pipe or hose; [5] Toilet installation, structure construction; [6] installation of electrical or solar power connection, wiring, [7]; kitchen roofing, furniture installation.

Access to sanitation facilities was almost universal by the end of the pilot. Roughly half of households reported having a toilet inside the dwelling (49%) while another 49% had one outside. Only 2% reported lacking any toilet facility. This represents a clear advance relative to baseline conditions.

Figure 8. Percentage of participants who lack a toilet



Asset ownership also expanded substantially during the pilot period (Table 7, Figure 9). Cell phone access became nearly universal, reaching 95% of households. The most notable change was the increase in gas stove ownership—from 23% to nearly 60% overall—indicating an important shift toward cleaner energy use. Households also reported higher possession of radios, televisions and refrigerators, particularly in Community 3. A notable new item in the endline questionnaire was solar panels, which were not recorded at baseline but were already present in 34% of households at endline. Internet connectivity, though still limited, more than doubled (from 8% to 21%), while ownership of motorcycles, bicycles and small appliances such as washing machines also increased modestly.

Overall, these patterns point to broad improvements in living standards and household assets across communities. While the pace of change varies, the quantitative findings suggest that households strengthened their material conditions—particularly in housing quality, energy use, and connectivity—during the period of the pilot.

Figure 9. Asset ownership at baseline and endline

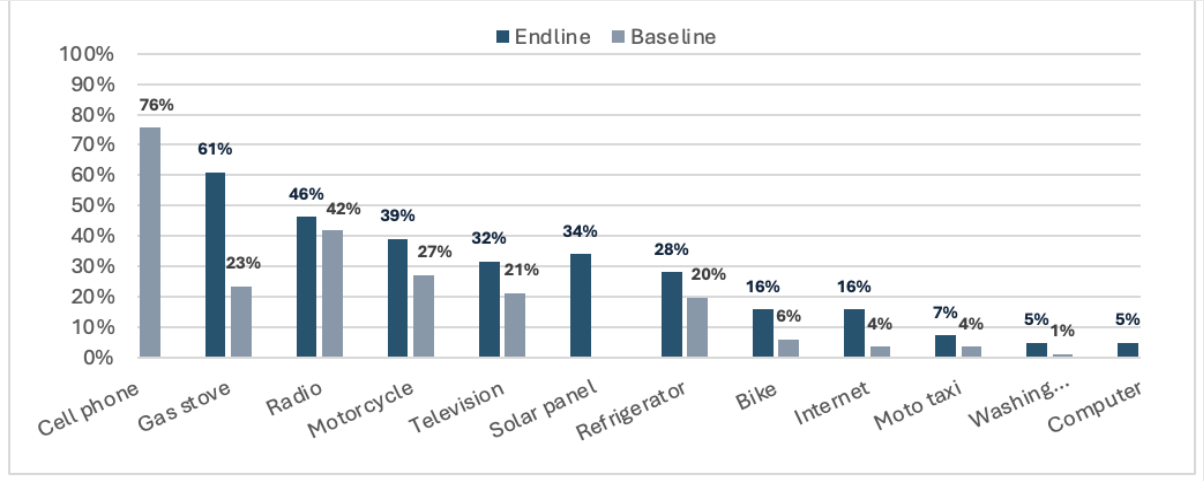


Table 7. Ownership of household assets by community (baseline and endline) (% of participants)

Asset/service	Community 1		Community 2		Community 3	
	Baseline	Endline	Baseline	Endline	Baseline	Endline
Cell phone	81%	94%	70%	78%	77%	92%
Gas stove	13%	69%	35%	59%	21%	59%
Radio	31%	38%	46%	30%	44%	62%
Motorcycle	50%	50%	12%	41%	28%	33%
Television	25%	38%	27%	41%	15%	23%
Solar panel	-	25%	-	56%	-	23%
Refrigerator	25%	44%	19%	22%	18%	26%
Bike	6%	31%	7%	19%	5%	8%
Internet	0%	13%	0%	11%	8%	21%
Moto taxi	0%	0%	8%	15%	3%	5%
Washing machine	0%	0%	0%	4%	3%	8%
Computer/laptop	0%	6%	0%	7%	3%	3%

This picture is confirmed by the qualitative data. Respondents mentioned using their basic income to purchase corrugated iron for roofing (rather than straw), guttering, mattresses, kitchen appliances (three mentioned cookers, one a fridge and one a washing machine) and, most notably, motorised transport. Motorbikes allowed families to access their farmland more easily and to bypass daily transport fees for schooling, freeing up capital for other needs.

> *"So, before I used to pay someone to take my daughter to school, that was my daily expenses. I pay 5 soles every day for her to be taken to school. But I also had a motorbike which was in bad condition, I've had that fixed too. Now, I take my son to school on the motorbike and bring him back. So now, I don't have to pay someone. Now I save that"*
>
> *EM1*

"Now, the last time we received the support, we bought, splitting it with my daughter, a washing machine... we used to carry clothes by hand, pay a person to wash them. A day like that, but now we have a lot of help"

PM4

"Since the pilot came, we buy more supplies, ...we bought a mattress to sleep on. We used to sleep without a mattress so that's something we now have. ... more pots and pans. What we need at home. Rice, pasta, food."

SF1

"Beyond just meeting basic needs, she feels more than grateful because she also grows crops, sells some of them, and adds that to what she is given, so that she can have, perhaps more than just the basics for the house."

PF1

Some respondents talked about saving to buy more assets in the future or to improve their housing. The knowledge that they had a guaranteed income, whether from their own farm investments or from the income pilot, gave them the confidence to plan ahead. It was striking that having the confidence to think beyond meeting their basic needs was something new for many families.

"When we started, when we received the support, we talked with my daughter, what we were going to buy? Yes, we're going to buy this, this, that, we're going to buy this, that's fine. That's how we talked. ...since the support started, we've changed. We have things now, improvement. I started to buy my wardrobe. I bought a bookcase."

PM4

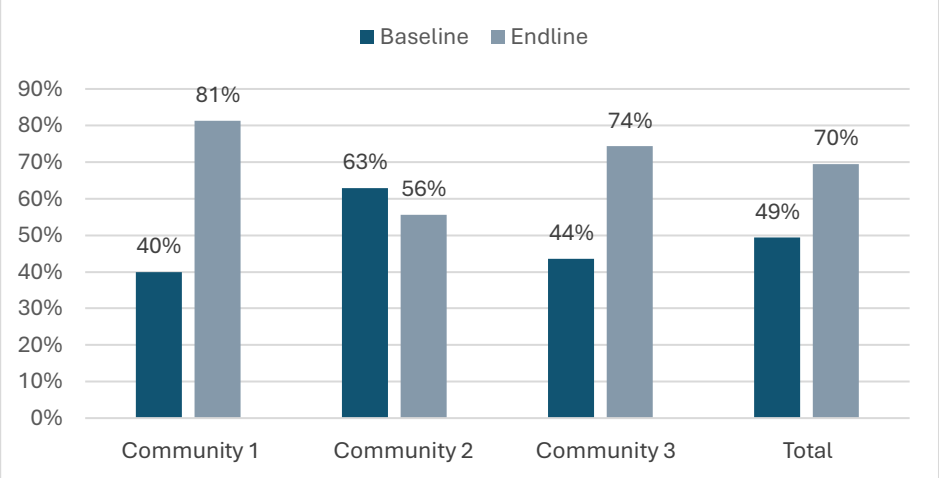
"My family and I are going to buy some motorbikes and make the first payment and we're also going to buy a macheteadora. ...now we want to buy a chainsaw. Because it's useful, you know?"

SM6

Financial Inclusion and Household Resilience

Financial practices among participants show clear progress between baseline and endline (Figure 10). Overall, the share of households reporting savings increased from 49 to 70%, with the most pronounced improvement in Community 1. In Community 3, savings also rose substantially while Community 2 showed a more modest increase.

Figure 10. Percentage of participants with savings at endline and baseline, by community



At endline, two-thirds of participants (66%) reported saving through a bank or financial institution, reflecting a shift toward more formal saving mechanisms. Saving at home, though still common, declined to 19% overall. The perception of improvement in saving capacity over the last two years was also widespread—reported by 42% of respondents.

Table 8. Savings behaviour and financial practices by community (endline)

	Community 1	Community 2	Community 3	Endline
Has savings	81%	56%	74%	70%
Place of saving				
Bank/financial institution	46%	63%	76%	66%
At home	46%	19%	7%	19%
Other	0%	6%	3%	3%
Prefer not to say	8%	13%	14%	12%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Perception of improvement in savings in the last two yrs	31%	40%	48%	42%

Borrowing activity, by contrast, declined over the same period. The share of participants requesting a loan in the last year dropped from 19 to 6% overall. This reduction likely reflects a lower need to resort to credit for basic consumption or emergencies.

Together, these results point to an encouraging shift toward greater financial security among participant households—marked by higher savings, more formal financial engagement and reduced reliance on loans. The qualitative data suggest that these trends can be explained, in part, by the way the pilot helped households to accumulate and manage resources more effectively, whether through the cash transfers themselves or through associated training and financial education activities. As we saw above, participants reported that due to "talks on finance, we are now saving more money" (SF1) and "They've taught us on the practice of how you generate that economy and how you manage your expenses" (FGD participant).

Community Cohesion and Collective Action

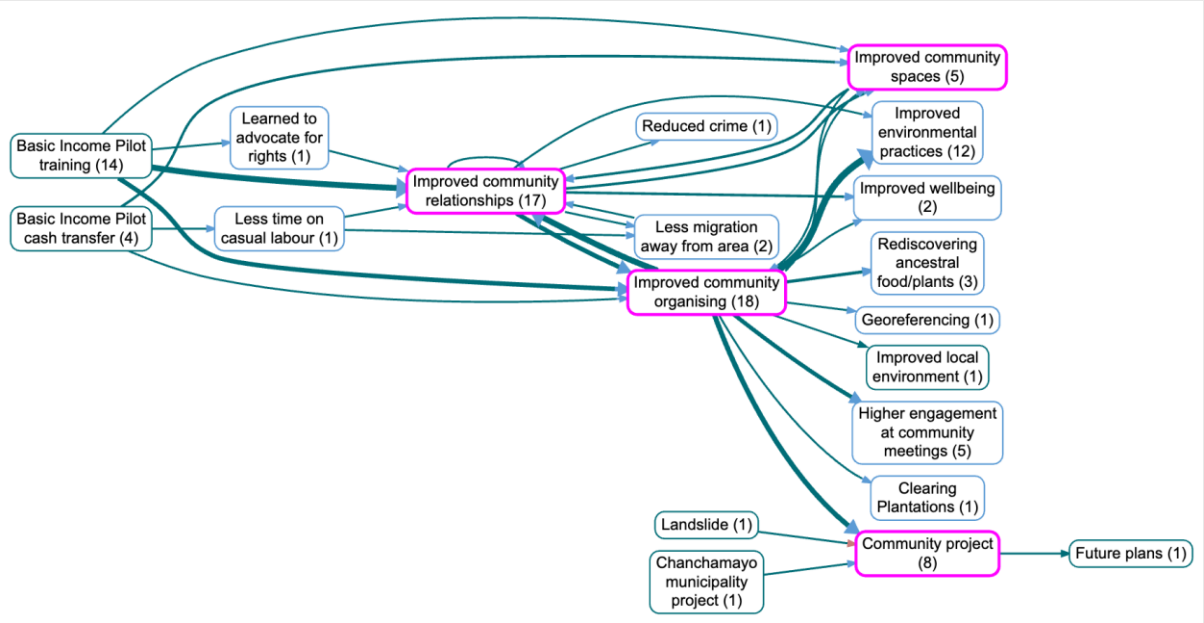
Participation in the training activities, or 'plus' component, offered through the pilot was nearly universal. Ninety-six percent of respondents attended at least one training session related to individual or collective rights of Indigenous Peoples and a similar proportion (93%) received training on financial security and education. On average, participants attended about 3–4 sessions on Indigenous rights and 2 sessions on financial education. Crucially, perceptions of the trainings' usefulness and impact were overwhelmingly positive: virtually all participants (98–100%) considered the training on Indigenous rights and financial education very useful for strengthening their knowledge and skills, while 85% believed that the pilot as a whole strengthened leadership and community empowerment.

Table 9. Perceptions of the usefulness of and satisfaction with the pilot

	Community 1	Community 2	Community 3	Total
1st dimension: Usefulness of the training received in improving understanding of individual and collective rights of Indigenous Peoples				
Have been somewhat useful	0%	4%	3%	2%
Have been very useful	100%	96%	97%	98%
Have not been very useful / useful at all	0%	0%	0%	0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
2nd dimension: Usefulness of the training received in improving financial education				
Have been somewhat useful	0%	7%	13%	9%
Have been very useful	100%	93%	87%	91%
Have not been very useful / useful at all	0%	0%	0%	0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
3rd dimension: Extent to which the Reciprocity Pilot helped improve economic wellbeing				
It helped a little	0%	22%	10%	12%
It helped a lot	100%	78%	90%	88%
It did not help much / at all	0%	0%	0%	0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
4th dimension: Extent to which the Reciprocity Pilot helped strengthen community leadership and empowerment				
It helped a little	13%	26%	8%	15%
It helped a lot	88%	74%	92%	85%
It did not help much / at all	0%	0%	0%	0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Overall assessment: General satisfaction with the Reciprocity Pilot				
Satisfied	19%	26%	13%	18%
Very satisfied	81%	74%	87%	82%
Indifferent / Dissatisfied / Very Dissatisfied	0%	0%	0%	0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

The central impact of the 'plus' was undoubtedly on community relationships, cohesion and action. The qualitative data clearly show that the workshops instilled a sense of shared purpose and responsibility in the communities, encouraging members to collaborate more effectively. The causal pathways visualised in Causal map 8 show a reciprocal relationship between social cohesion and community organising. Improved community organising leads to improved community relationships and a higher engagement with community meetings. At the same time, improved community relationships reinforce community organising, creating a positive feedback loop where better relationships make community organising easier and more successful organising builds stronger relationships.

Causal map 8: Changes to community relationships and organising



Respondents contrasted the improved community relationships with past divisions, attributing the shift to the training workshops and guidance provided by the pilot.

> *"Because now we are united. I mean before, we were divided, when we would have a meeting, nobody would show up... I mean, almost everyone was absent."*
>
> *EF7*

> *"Hermana, in reality in this community, so what it was before was not like it is now, on that front, before we were not united. But nowadays yes, we stand together."*
>
> *PM8*

> *"Yes, we have changed a lot. Now we're united, we all come together to do the work, the assemblies. No one argues anymore because we're all united, we all come together to do the work, the assemblies. No one argues anymore... In the recent two years [we have been reforesting]."*
>
> *SM6*

> *"Previously, it was chaos, but now there's more unity. Well, I think the project has done us good too."*
>
> *PM3*

> *"They have understood the guidance from the workshops... Living in harmony."*
>
> *PF1*

Improved community organising was also attributed to the initiation of new community projects which require sustained collective effort and coordination.

> *"If we have projects...I mean, thanks to those workshops that give us ideas, every day we're waking up to doing projects, right? But before, we were more conformist."*

PM4

Communities also explained how they had pooled resources and labour to develop shared infrastructure and productive projects, including fish farms, citrus fruit planting and the construction of community spaces.

> *"Well, I'd say where we've changed quite a lot is how we work together now, thanks to us working together, we have a house. This community house. This house wasn't here before... It's given us a lot of ideas about how we can do new things, how we can live."*
>
> *EM8*
>
> *"We have a 'demonstration smallholding'. The ancestral foods that were perhaps being lost, disappearing. The little that there was, it's been gathered together so as to make a sort of seed bank, and we can have our own space for ancestral food."*
>
> *PM3*

It is with such community asset creation and investment that we see the productive nexus between both the cash and the community organising elements of the pilot.

> *"Well, I'd say where we've changed a lot is how we work together now. Thanks to that, we have a house. This community house wasn't here before."*
>
> *EM8*
>
> *"I'm thankful for the support, because instead of looking for work, we now have money that can pay for things and support us. ...So now we've been able to build that kitchen for the storehouses, over there, lay the bricks. Together you know, communally, what before we maybe didn't have time for. People were all over the place, we could hardly ever get together."*
>
> *EM1*
>
> *"Since we have started with the transfers, we have had a lot of things, we have bought, at the beginning it was very disorganised, there wasn't anything, we have worked, we have bought our chairs for the community hall."*
>
> *EM2*

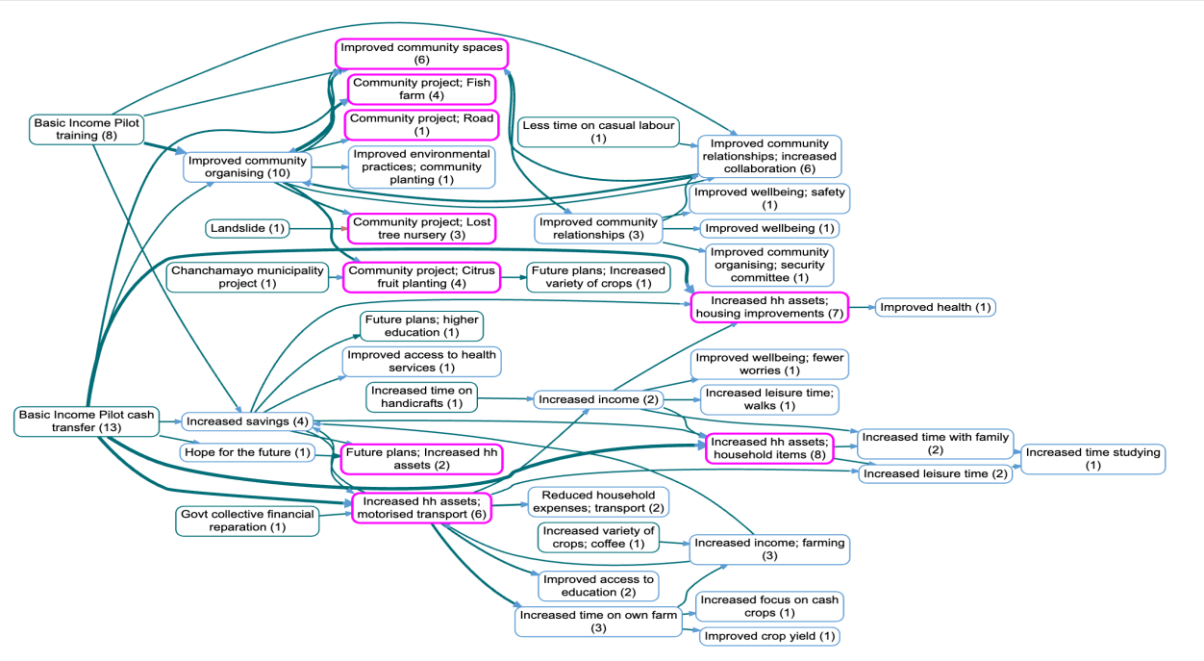
The focus group in Community 1 echoed these sentiments and discussed ambitious plans for the future, inspired by the previous community projects.

> *"SPEAKER_1 In 10 years? Wow... We'll have a bigger population by then too, maybe each person will have their own little house; maybe there'll be a shop, too; maybe we'll have a park by then, beyond that the football pitch, I don't know, we'll have to see down the line.*
>
> *SPEAKER_3 Community planning, that's community planning, I mean, improving the streets and the houses. And, above all, drinking water, too.*
>
> *SPEAKER_1 We wouldn't put them over here, we'd build more over there, because building more houses would mean they didn't benefit from water. And we'd make a different route over there, because we have eight springs within the*

community project. We're more prepared... because we have more communication now."

FGD participant

This change is reflected in Causal map 9, which demonstrates a parallel relationship between cash and training leading to improved community organising and, in turn, community project and collective assets.



Causal map 9: Investment in household and community assets (secondary level)

"We have a 'demonstration smallholding'. The ancestral foods that were perhaps being lost, disappearing. The little that there was, it's been gathered together so as to make a sort of seed bank, and we can have our own space for ancestral food."

PM3

"Now we have more activities than before. Citrus fruits, the fish farm, ...reforestation."

PF6

Feedback from OMIAASEC reported that the stable income provided by the basic income gave community members more time to take part in the 'plus' activities, as they faced less immediate pressure for daily subsistence. However, the relationship between the cash and the plus is complex. While it was emphasised that the 'plus' components were purely for personal development and not conditional for receiving the basic income it is difficult to isolate whether increased financial security was the main driver of attendance or whether it was also driven by other factors, including a sense of obligation.

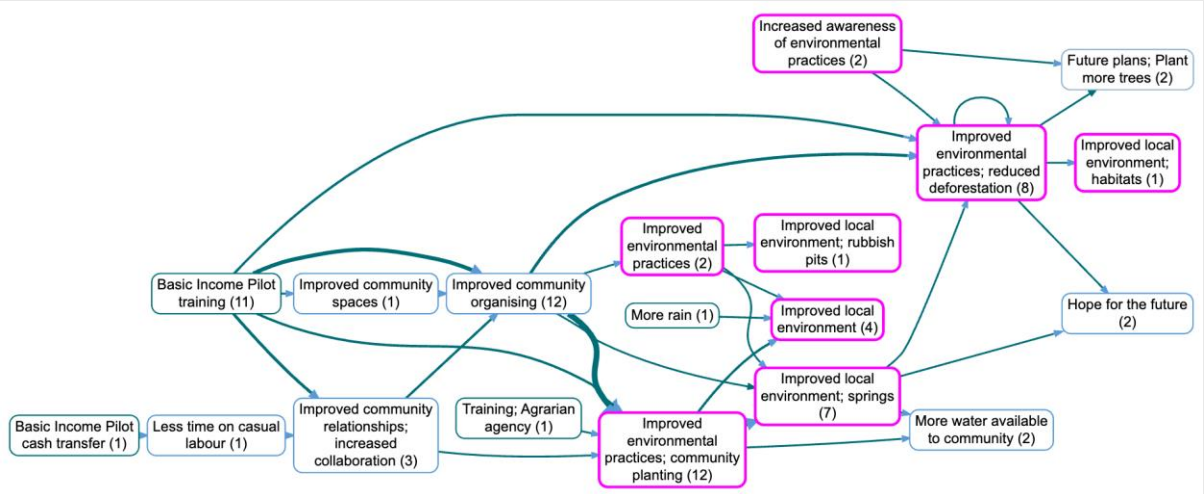
Environmental Stewardship and Climate Resilience

The evaluation also considered the degree to which socio-economic improvements translated into improved environmental stewardship or enhanced climate resilience.

The quantitative data demonstrate the awareness of pilot participants of climate change and its negative impacts on their livelihoods, including through the appearance of crop diseases (cited by 57% of respondents), declines in agricultural production (22%) and the occurrence of natural disasters such as floods or landslides (10%). This awareness translated into action with engagement in community-based environmental conservation initiatives high in all three locations. Nearly 60% of respondents reported participating *frequently* in collective activities for environmental protection—such as reforestation, monitoring or sustainable land management—while another 27% participated *sometimes*.

Crucially, the qualitative data make clear that this engagement was heavily influenced by the pilot, especially the 'plus' component. The transcripts provide substantial evidence that the training increased understanding of the risks of deforestation and the importance of protecting natural assets. This led to some work on climate change adaptation at the community level. The causal pathway visible in Causal map 10 shows that the community organisation and social cohesion fostered by the 'plus' drove collective environmental practices like reforestation and the protection of water springs. These practices are explicitly recognised by respondents as necessary adaptations to changing climate conditions, such as droughts and drying water sources. Nineteen of the 24 respondents said that something had changed with regard to environmental practices—whether at an individual or a community level—as a consequence of the pilot.

Causal map 10: Changes to local environment



The interview and FGD transcripts show how the training helped improve understanding of environmental issues. Respondents articulated a new awareness of the negative consequences of traditional practices like burning and clear-cutting and an understanding of the ecological link between tree cover and water retention.

> *"The changes, for me are important because we're really losing all our trees, forest. And that's really affected me because no one told us about… they would speak about destruction, progress, how we must work, we must cut down, we must knock everything down, we must destroy, leave. But thanks to the talks they've given, they've made us understand that we have to recover all of that."*
>
> *EM1*
>
> *"Yes, there's been a project… They've taught us, they've trained us, they've taught us not to burn the earth, the forests, to not cut down all the trees…"*
>
> *EF3*
>
> *"Before, we cut down all the trees, but now we're keeping all the trees… It's so that it adds a place, so that the little animals come to look for food."*
>
> *EM4*
>
> *"They've trained us on that, that's why we know the plants, the trees that attract water, that maintain the water. If we cut it, we cut that down, the water will go too, it will dry up. They told us we're going to plant bamboo around the springs too. As the hermana here says. There are trees that keep the water alive. And they've taught us not to cut those down. Because before, we used to cut everything. We all did it. And we looked and said no, no more. Why is the water drying up? Not now, now we have to leave all of it… those trees."*
>
> *FGD participant*

Focus group participants in Community 1 were able to articulate a lot of detail about the importance of planting the right trees and emphasised the positive role of the 'plus' component compared to previous external projects.

> *"The council doesn't focus on that need like we do. Instead they prefer, eucalyptus, in other words timber-yielding plants, that it wants to grow quickly and basically, you know? Trade in wood. It goes for that. So, a lot of the time we don't really accept projects for that reason… When it's crops, yes, but not like guanabo [soursop] or anything like that.*
>
> *But, analysing the issue with the team that came to give us training and talks over two years, we've been able to analyse ourselves, too. In the community, we can now see that there are no tall trees… and we now have productive plants, which maybe generate income for us. So, in that sense, we've always been careless in the past. Why? Out of necessity itself, you know? Sometimes we have to get rid of trees to plant crops, because in the shade they hardly grow. And that's why we ourselves maybe have destroyed nature. But the organisation gives us that strength so that maybe we can plant again. And maybe we won't harvest, but our generation and future generations will maybe be able to farm… If we don't pass on [our knowledge] to our children… They will never understand what we're doing. And we also have to be a part of passing on to them. So that*

they continue farming it. If we don't let our children keep farming or keep conserving that nature. What is being generated, and regenerated? So, what are our children going to do? They are going to be destructive too, like us.

... We see that trees are important because trees absorb. Especially heat making contact with soil penetrates the earth more, it gets more compact, harder. When there are trees, less heat reaches the ground. This also helps the earth to stay slightly loose, slightly humid. If I plant, let's say, yuca in soil that I've already farmed for two or three consecutive years, it doesn't grow because of the soil itself, the impact that the heat has on the earth. Because the ground is hard."

FGD participant

Reforestation is largely treated as a collective, community-wide endeavour rather than an individual activity, particularly for the planting of timber trees like cedar, mahogany and bamboo. The impacts of these improved practices focused heavily on water security and habitat restoration. Five respondents talked about community planting relating to renovating local springs.

"We have to look after our environment, we look after our water. The rivers, the forest, we look after them. We all go out and work on it as a group, at the 'Beso' spring we work together as a team to clear it. The river, too, we don't pollute, we have our own pits to put all the rubbish in from our organic pits. And we don't burn the forest either."

SM7

"We've planted trees to reforest the natural springs, because there were some plots of land, which we didn't know before, that had been completely cultivated... But now we've reforested it... because we've seen that not all of the ravines were like they used to be, before all of the ravines had a lot of water... And now, in the last few years, the water is drying out."

PF6

Gender and Women's Autonomy

The data do not offer many insights into the impact of the pilot on gender relationships and women's autonomy. However, the QuIP material does tell a nuanced story around improved household relationships and some impact deriving from the trainings.

On relationships, data show that the cash led to a reduction in financial stress and the ability to spend more time with the family, which was a critical driver of improved household relationships. Although many respondents linked this to an improved sense of wellbeing and family relationships, there was no overt reference to a reduction in gender violence due to the cash, as had been hoped by the pilot's ToC.

"I don't worry anymore, you don't know what you're going to do tomorrow, where you're going to work, what needs doing ...being calm is being happy with our family, right? With your children around. And your partner to also be calm, supporting you, happy. You haven't left me, you aren't complaining."

SM6

> *"She says it has improved because now she doesn't have to go out, doesn't have to worry about where she'll get a bit of money. So both emotionally and mentally, she feels calmer."*

PF1

The most overt references to changes in underlying relationships were linked to the training on open discussions and decision making within families. Although only seven sources explicitly described the results of external training, the connections made here are strong.

> *Because we didn't have knowledge here before, thanks to psychologists that came here, to the community, to guide us on how we could all be. ...Sometimes I didn't know how to handle my children... I would punish them all. And in front of my children I would fight... And I would speak to them all about it. And my husband has realised. We have all changed. ...Because before we didn't know anything, that's why now, with our training, all of that, it helped us more... My husband didn't pay attention to me before, well I didn't know anything. But now it's better, my husband has changed... But now we do discuss things, this goes towards such-and-such a thing, we organise it."*

PF6

> *"Before, anyway, our habit, we didn't talk, we didn't have conversations, we didn't discuss things, nothing. Whereas now we do... As a family, as we're here with my daughters, we only talk with them."*

EF3

> *"Because thanks to the training, that they came to give, guidance. Thanks to that, things have changed. The talks have made me feel like I can be heard, I have reasons to speak, someone to talk to, to say what's happening to me. To let it out, no?"*

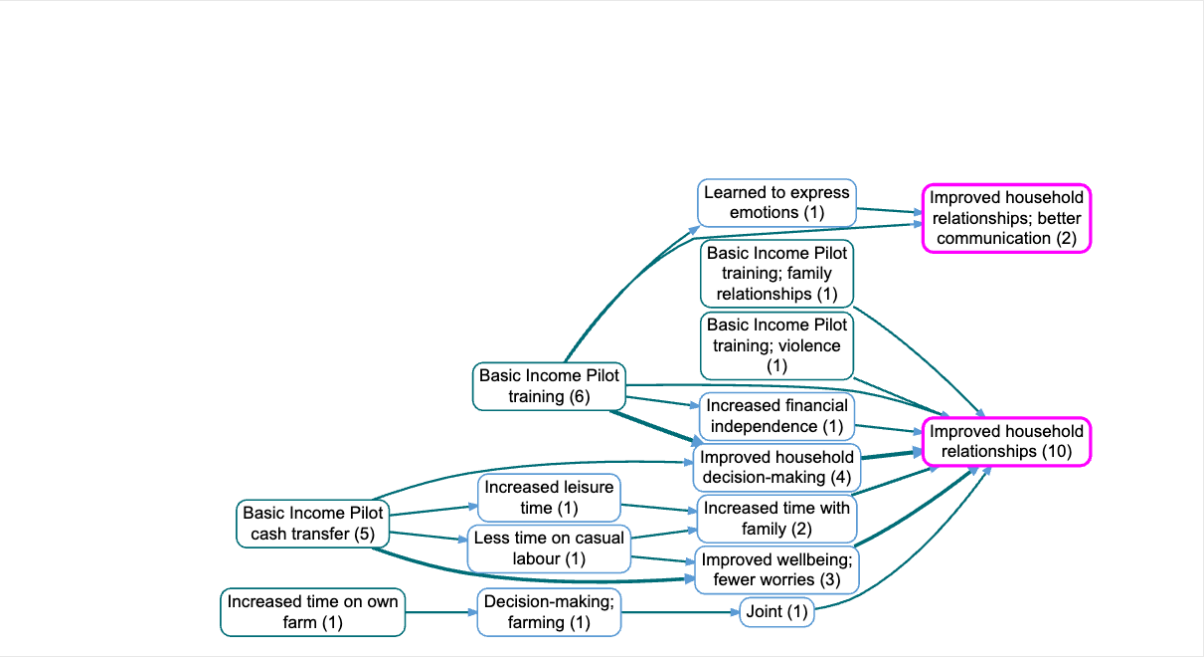
EF7

When probed for more about the content of the training, EF6 mentioned advice on domestic violence.

> *"Since there have been training sessions, workshops, they've [relationships] improved. ...They've given us advice, 'this is how you should live with your children, with your families'... For example, teenagers, we shouldn't punish them. Talk to them. One had run away, my daughter. It was her brother who punished her... She left and now she's come back, now she's studying."*

EF6

Causal map 11: Improved household relationships



With regards to women's autonomy, five respondents (four women and one man) reported a change towards joint decision making on household matters as a result of the training received, but many couples said they already practiced mutual decision-making prior to the pilot. In most households, traditional gender roles persist around decision-making and men make the majority of agricultural decisions. More research would be required to understand what further impacts took place and a greater focus on gender equality would strengthen those potential impacts.

> *"It's always been that way. We both coordinate well, and we go from there."*
>
> *PM7*

> *"We've always been like this. Anything to buy there always has to be a conversation. So as not to have perhaps a bit of an argument, she doesn't like it. The conversation is essential."*
>
> *PM3*

Conclusion: Basic Income, Indigenous Autonomy and the Future of Conservation Finance

This evaluation has provided important preliminary evidence that unconditional cash, when embedded within and coupled with locally grounded processes of community organisation, training and Indigenous governance, may offer a promising alternative framework for addressing the intersecting challenges of poverty, inequality and ecological degradation. The *Fighting the Climate Crisis with Reciprocity: Towards Indigenous Autonomy* pilot represents one of the first attempts to operationalise the concept of CBI, testing whether unconditional financial security can strengthen both

human wellbeing and environmental stewardship and is one of the first pilots to combine this with collective efforts towards community transformation. The intervention was explicitly designed as an alternative to conventional conservation finance approaches, particularly market-based mechanisms such as PES and REDD+, which have been criticised for their limited ability to address structural inequalities and their tendency to reproduce unequal relationships between conservation actors and Indigenous communities (Fletcher and Büscher, 2020; Osborne et al., 2024).

The findings indicate that the pilot generated substantial improvements across multiple domains of household and community wellbeing, including livelihoods, food security, financial resilience, education, housing conditions, community cohesion and environmental engagement. While the pilot and evaluation lacked a control group to provide the most rigorous causal attribution, the convergence of quantitative and qualitative evidence and use of latent counterfactuals within the qualitative design provides strong support for the proposition that predictable unconditional income contributed meaningfully to these changes and that additional training helped catalyse them.

With regards to the impacts of the cash, most significantly, the intervention appears to have improved the livelihood strategies available to participating households. Rather than simply increasing consumption, the transfer reduced dependence on precarious forms of labour and enabled households to redirect time and resources towards their own farms, families and communities. Labour migration declined from 43% to 18% over the pilot period, while households reported increased agricultural investment, savings and productive activity. These findings contribute to longstanding debates within the basic income literature concerning the power of unconditional cash to address poverty and ill-being. They also speak to questions around the relationship between unconditional transfers, labour incentives and human agency. Critics of UBI have frequently argued that unconditional payments may reduce participation in productive work or create dependency on external assistance. However, a substantial body of theoretical and empirical literature argues that income security can instead enhance autonomy by expanding individuals' capacity to make meaningful choices about work, care and economic activity (Standing, 2017; Van Parijs and Vanderborght, 2017; Howard and Mathur, 2025). The evidence from this pilot aligns with the latter perspective. Participants did not withdraw from productive activity; rather, the removal of immediate financial pressures enabled greater investment in locally valued forms of labour, particularly smallholder agriculture, household production and community activities.

This finding is particularly important in Indigenous contexts, where economic insecurity is often shaped by historical marginalisation, limited market access and pressures that encourage migration away from ancestral territories (Osborne et al. 2024). The pilot demonstrates that unconditional income can function not only as a poverty reduction

mechanism but also as an instrument of territorial resilience. By reducing the necessity of temporary wage labour outside communities, the cash transfers supported participants' ability to remain engaged with their lands. In this sense, basic income may contribute to what Mathur (2026) describes as a shift from paternalistic welfare approaches towards models grounded in dignity, choice and recognition of individual and collective agency.

The evaluation also contributes to emerging debates concerning the role of complementary interventions alongside cash. The pilot adopted a "Cash Plus" model, combining unconditional payments with training on financial management, Indigenous rights, governance, conservation and climate resilience. This approach reflects growing recognition within development and social protection research that cash transfers or basic income can produce broader and more durable impacts when combined with respectful, relational measures that build collective capabilities, provide locally useful information, and reinforce collective organisation (Roelen et al., 2017; Mathur et al., 2023; Howard et al., 2024).

As has been found in similar, recent pilots that push beyond community organising or cash to combine both elements (e.g. Howard et al. 2024), the evidence presented here suggests that the relationship between cash and complementary activities is mutually reinforcing. The transfer provided households with material security, while the training activities helped translate this security into both individual and collective actions. Participants reported stronger community relationships, greater participation in collective action and the development of collective initiatives including seed banks, restoration activities, fish farming and community infrastructure projects. These findings contribute to an ongoing debate within basic income and cash transfer scholarship: whether unconditional transfers should remain deliberately simple and unrestricted, or whether additional interventions are required to address deeper structural constraints. The pilot suggests that these approaches need not be viewed as alternatives. In contexts characterised by historical exclusion and ecological vulnerability, unconditional income may provide the foundation upon which collective empowerment can be built.

One of the most exciting contributions of this pilot concerns the relationship between basic income and conservation. CBI has emerged from critiques of dominant conservation finance approaches, particularly PES and REDD+, which seek to align economic incentives with environmental outcomes. Although such mechanisms have achieved some successes, critics argue that they can commodify relationships with nature, narrow conservation objectives to measurable ecosystem services and insufficiently recognise Indigenous rights and existing forms of stewardship (Büscher et al., 2012; Fletcher and Büscher, 2020). Rather than compensating communities for performing conservation activities, advocates of CBI propose that ecological protection

may be better supported by strengthening the social and economic conditions that enable communities to govern and care for their territories.

The findings from this pilot provide initial empirical support for this proposition. Participants reported increased engagement in environmental activities, including reforestation, water-source protection, native species planting, seed conservation and community environmental initiatives. Approximately 80% of interviewees described adopting environmentally beneficial practices. Importantly, these outcomes do not appear to have emerged through a simple incentive mechanism whereby participants exchanged conservation behaviour for payments. Instead, environmental outcomes developed through a broader and more fundamentally relational process in which improved economic security, strengthened community organisation, and renewed attention to Indigenous knowledge systems created more favourable social *and* economic conditions for stewardship.

This distinction is central to debates about the future of conservation policy. Market-based approaches often conceptualise communities as economic actors whose behaviour must be altered through incentives. By contrast, the CBI approach tested here begins from the premise that Indigenous communities—including those selected for the pilot—already possess strong motivations for environmental protection, but that these capacities are constrained by economic insecurity and external pressures. Supporting autonomy, therefore, and providing appropriate information and organisational support may be more effective than attempting to purchase conservation outcomes. As Fletcher and Büscher (2020) argue, conservation interventions must move beyond narrow market logics towards approaches that recognise social justice and ecological protection as interconnected objectives.

The pilot also speaks to wider debates concerning Indigenous rights and climate justice. Indigenous peoples are disproportionately affected by climate change despite contributing comparatively little to historical greenhouse gas emissions. At the same time, Indigenous territories frequently contain areas of high biodiversity value, and Indigenous governance systems are increasingly recognised as central to global conservation efforts (Garnett et al., 2018). A reciprocity-based approach reframes conservation finance away from charity and towards recognition of Indigenous communities as essential partners in addressing ecological crises.

Nevertheless, several limitations and areas for further research remain. First, the evaluation was conducted over a relatively short timeframe and cannot establish whether observed improvements will persist after the pilot ends. Longer-term, legacy research is required to examine whether increased agricultural productivity, savings, educational investment and environmental stewardship become self-sustaining. Second, while the findings demonstrate positive environmental engagement, future studies should investigate ecological outcomes using more direct environmental

indicators alongside community-level evidence. Third, gender impacts require further attention. Although women participated substantially in the programme and experienced improvements in financial security and wellbeing, evidence of deeper changes in gendered decision-making structures remained limited.

Overall, this pilot and its evaluation contribute to a growing body of work challenging the separation of social protection and conservation policy. It demonstrates that unconditional cash can strengthen not only household welfare but also the social foundations required for collective environmental action. The findings suggest that CBI should not be understood as a replacement for Indigenous territorial rights, governance reform or broader climate action. Rather, it represents a complementary mechanism through which communities can gain greater autonomy, resilience and capacity to shape their own futures.

In the context of accelerating climate change and biodiversity loss, the central policy question is increasingly not only how ecosystems can be protected, but how conservation can be organised in ways that are socially legitimate, equitable and sustainable. The experience of this pilot suggests that supporting communities through unconditional income and collective empowerment offers a promising pathway towards a more reciprocal model of conservation—one that recognises human wellbeing and ecological resilience as mutually dependent rather than competing objectives.

References

Angelsen, A., Jagger, P., Babigumira, R., Belcher, B., Hogarth, N.J., Bauch, S., Börner, J., Smith-Hall, C. and Wunder, S., 2014. Environmental income and rural livelihoods: a global-comparative analysis. *World development,* 64, S12-S28.

BIEN, n.d. *About Basic Income* [Online]. Basic Income Earth Network. Available from: https://basicincome.org/about-basic-income/ [Accessed 18th November 2020].

Börner, J., Wunder, S. and Giudice, R., 2016. Will up-scaled forest conservation incentives in the Peruvian Amazon produce cost-effective and equitable outcomes? *Environmental Conservation,* 43(4), 407-416.

Büscher, B., Sullivan, S., Neves, K., Igoe, J. and Brockington, D., 2012. Towards a synthesized critique of neoliberal biodiversity conservation. *Capitalism nature socialism,* 23(2), 4-30.

Copestake, J., 2025. Mixed-methods impact evaluation in international development practice: distinguishing between quant-led and qual-led models. *Journal of Development Effectiveness,* 17(1), 1-20.

Copestake, J., Morsink, M. and Remnant, F., 2019. *Attributing Development Impact: The Qualitative Impact Protocol (QuIP) Case Book.* Rugby, UK: Practical Action.

de Lange, E. and Saif, O., 2023. A global conservation basic income is achievable for a fraction of the costs of inaction. *Nature Sustainability*.

Ding, H., Veit, P., Gray, E., Reytar, K., Altamirano, J.-C. and Blackman, A., 2016. *Climate Benefits, Tenure Costs*.

Fletcher, R. and Büscher, B., 2020. Conservation basic income: A non-market mechanism to support convivial conservation. *Biological Conservation,* 244, 108520.

Garnett, S.T., Burgess, N.D., Fa, J.E., Fernández-Llamazares, Á., Molnár, Z., Robinson, C.J., Watson, J.E., Zander, K.K., Austin, B. and Brondizio, E.S., 2018. A spatial overview of the global importance of Indigenous lands for conservation. *Nature sustainability,* 1(7), 369-374.

Howard, N. and Mathur, V., 2025. Basic Income, Labour Power, and the Exit Option–An Empirical Examination. *Basic Income Studies*.

Howard, N., Roelen, K., Ton, G., Espinoza, M., Aktar, A. and Al Mamun, S., 2024. CLARISSA Cash Plus Social Protection Intervention: An Evaluation. *CLARISSA Research and Evidence Paper 12*. Brighton: Institute of Development Studies.

Langridge, N., 2024. Unconditional Basic Income and a Degrowth Transition: Adding Empirical Rigour to Radical Visions. *Futures,* 159, 1-14.

Langridge, N., Büchs, M. and Howard, N., 2022. An ecological basic income? Examining the ecological credentials of basic income through a review of selected pilot interventions. *Basic Income Studies,* 18(1), 47-87.

Lazarus, J., Davala, S., Franchi, M., Howard, N., Langridge, N., Malviya, S. and Mathur, V., 2026. Evaluating a 'UBI Plus' Intervention: A Needs-based Analysis of WorkFREE. *Social Indicators Research,* 182(1), 16.

Mathur, V., 2026. 'Seen','Respected'and 'Empowered': Exploring the Dignity Dividend of a Universal Basic Income. *Progress in Development Studies*, 14649934261445713.

Mathur, V. and Howard, N., 2026. 'Improving, not leaving': exploring exit and voice in labour in a UBI pilot in slums in urban India. *Socio-Economic Review*, mwag022.

Mathur, V., Howard, N., Lazarus, J., Bhan, T., Ardhapure, S. and Devsharma, B., 2023. How to Set Up, Manage, and Study a UBI+ Experiment The Case of the 'WorkFREE'Project in Hyderabad, India.

Neves, C., 2024. How Unconditional Basic Income encourages reciprocity. *Análise Social,* 59(1 (250), 110-132.

Osborne, T., Cifuentes, S., Dev, L., Howard, S., Marchi, E., Withey, L. and Santos Rocha da Silva, M., 2024. Climate justice, forests, and Indigenous Peoples: toward an alternative to REDD+ for the Amazon. *Climatic Change,* 177(8), 128.

Powell, S., Copestake, J. and Remnant, F., 2024. Causal mapping for evaluators. *Evaluation,* 30(1), 100-119.

Remnant, F., Copestake, J., Powell, S. and Channon, M., 2025. Qualitative Causal Mapping in Evaluations. *Handbook of Health Services Evaluation: Theories, Methods and Innovative Practices*. Springer, pp. 207-227.

Roelen, K., Devereux, S., Abdulai, A.-G., Martorano, B., Palermo, T. and Ragno, L.P., 2017. How to Make 'Cash Plus' Work: Linking Cash Transfers to Services and Sectors. *Innocenti Working Papers 2017-10*.

Schutter, O.d., 2024. Eradicating poverty beyond growth: report of the Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, Olivier De Schutter.

Sheehan, C. and Martin-Ortega, J., 2023. Is conservation basic income a good idea? A scoping study of the views of conservation professionals on cash giving programmes. *Biological Conservation,* 279, 109914.

Standing, G., 2017. *Basic income: And how we can make it happen*. UK: Pelican.

Stanford Basic Income Lab, n.d. *Basic Income Experiments Map* [Online]. Stanford Basic Income Lab. Available from: https://basicincome.stanford.edu/experiments-map/ [Accessed 8th May 2024].

Van Parijs, P. and Vanderborght, Y., 2017. *Basic income: A radical proposal for a free society and a sane economy.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Authors

UBI Bath

Neil Howard

Nicholas Langridge

Bath SDR

Fiona Remnant

Hannah Mishan

Researchers

Mauricio Espinoza (Quantitative Lead)

María Eugenia Ulfe Young (Qualitative Field Team Lead)

Kerly Verónica Reynaga Soria

Ariana Garate

University of Bath Translation Team

Nick Regan (Project Manager)

Elen Boore

Abi Bowen

Sophie Elizabeth Chapman

Soibifaa Claude-Wilcox

Shay Cully

Eloise Davey

Jack Gay

Anna Hull

Tatiana Humphrey

Érin Kyle

Isobel Lingham

Archie McNicol

Isabel Neate

Cait Nicholl

Leila Powles

Nina Richmond

Georgia Simpson

Cool Earth

Patricia Quiñones Pareja

Sofía Vargas

Isabel Felandro

Caterina Cosmopolis