Summary

Ending poverty is the first sustainable development goal that the United Nations, supported by governments and other international organizations, has set for 2030. Governments around the world have therefore adopted social protection programmes as one of the key elements of their poverty reductions strategies. Social protection, and more specifically non-contributory transfers or social assistance, is crucial to reduce poverty and increase the resilience of the poor. Investment in social protection programmes has increased significantly in the developing world. However, many poor households do not have access to, or are not covered by government interventions. Remittances -or money sent back home by emigrants from abroad- can contribute to improving the living conditions of the poor by diversifying the sources of income available to a household. Consequently, migration (through remittances) can be understood as a form of informal social protection.

By drawing on longitudinal household surveys from South Africa and Kyrgyzstan and using quantitative methodologies of impact evaluation, this thesis looks at the effects of both social assistance and remittances on a wide range of outcomes, from expenditure patterns to food insecurity and subjective well-being. Even though social assistance transfers and remittances share many similarities, there is scant literature comparing them. This book, therefore, explores and compares their role in the fight against poverty, one of the primary goal of both transfers.