Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

PtoP from PROTECTION to PRODUCTION

RESEARCH BRIEF

The impacts of the Social Cash Transfer Pilot Programme on community dynamics in Tigray, Ethiopia

BACKGROUND

The **Social Cash Transfer Pilot Programme (SCTPP)** was launched by the Tigray Bureau of Labour and Social Affairs (BOLSA) with support from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in the Tigray region of Ethiopia in 2011. The goal of the SCTPP is to improve the quality of life of orphans and vulnerable children, elderly and persons with disabilities and to enhance their access to essential services such as healthcare and education. Specific objectives include contributing to the reduction of poverty, hunger, and starvation; increasing school enrolment and attendance; improving the health and nutrition of children, and generating information on the feasibility, cost-effectiveness, and impact of the SCTPP.

The SCTPP operates in two woredas, rural Hintalo Wajirat and urban Abi Adi. SCTPP provides regular and predictable monthly cash transfers of US$ 7.88 to the poorest labour-constrained households. In addition, a household receives US$ 1.27 for each child plus an additional US$ 0.50 if the child is enrolled in school, up to a maximum of four children. Households with a disabled child receive an additional US$ 2, a disabled adult US$ 2.54, and an elderly dependent US$ 3.05.

Beneficiary households are selected through a community-based targeting process, facilitated by the Community Care Coalitions (CCC), the primary structure at local level, in cooperation with woreda social workers. By January, 2014 the programme reached 3 767 households, of which around 40% with children under 18 and 75% female-headed. The pilot phase finishes at the end of 2014.

THE EVALUATION

This brief is based on data collected during qualitative fieldwork in March 2014, and contributes to a wider evaluation of the SCTPP undertaken by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), and the Department of Economics, Mekelle University. The qualitative research forms part of a comparative six-country study that explores the impact of cash transfer programmes on household economic decision-making, the local economy and social networks in sub-Saharan Africa, under the auspices of the From Protection to Production (PtoP) project implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The research was carried out through focus groups, in-depth key informant interviews and household case studies, using participatory methods and tools, including social mapping, livelihood analysis, institutional analysis (Venn diagrams) and household income and expenditure analysis.

RESEARCH AREAS AND KEY FINDINGS

Household economy impacts: The SCTPP transfer serves as a safety net, enabling beneficiary households to meet immediate needs and smooth consumption. Most recipients reported considerable improvements in diets, personal hygiene, housing conditions, and access to and performance in primary and secondary schools.

Regular and predictable injections of cash enabled households to

Photo: SCTPP beneficiaries in Abi Adi sharing experiences of how the cash transfer has affected their lives and perspectives

plan expenditure allocations and minimize negative coping strategies such as begging or sharecropping. A number of beneficiaries scaled up or created new economic activities (such as telle making, petty trade and farming) and maintain savings, reflecting a degree of risk-taking and planning. The transfer particularly increased female-headed household access to and control over resources, allowing them to hire labour instead of depending on male sharecroppers.

Local economy impacts: The SCTPP provided a boost to local businesses. Households were able to maintain expenditures throughout the month due to increased credit from local shop keepers, who expressed confidence in supplying goods on credit due to increased trust in timely repayment. Beneficiaries said they were "feeling safer," were more easily able to obtain food and other items when needed. Monthly cash injections did not lead to local inflation.

Social networks: The SCTPP increased beneficiary social connectedness and risk sharing, important within the context of reliance on community-based networks for mutual aid and economic collaboration. Some beneficiaries joined informal rotating savings groups (Iqqub), providing greater opportunities for socio-economic engagement. Community contributions represent an important cultural solidarity practice; the transfer allowed households to contribute to institutions such as church and the CCC, as well as directly to other poor households, further building social capital, "if I make some progress, I must share." "Re-entering" social relations promoted reciprocity, heightening confidence and self-esteem and hope for the future, "I now feel I can change my life, I can make a restaurant … then others can be in the programme." However, social inclusion gains had limits. Beneficiaries were unable to join the most important network, burial societies (Iddir), because of high joining fees. The SCTPP was considered to be well targeted, engendering few feelings of jealousy.

OPERATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

CCCs could benefit from further institutional and capacity strengthening. In light of the tasks of the CCC, including management of an organized community care and support system, specific recommendations include: reviewing CCC membership, implementing a capacity development programme, more systematic planning of activities, agreeing upon a set of operational principles, and revising the CCC manual of operations, notably to tailor support to different categories of beneficiaries, such as those lacking available labour versus those able to engage in income-generating activities.

Institutional and capacity strengthening at woreda level is recommended to provide more effective oversight of the programme, including support to CCCs for better implementation. The role and responsibilities of social workers in implementation could be better defined and operationalized.

Promoting linkages between the SCTPP and livelihood initiatives would help improve beneficiary household economy and welfare. While CCCs limit household participation to one programme in order to avoid jealousy, beneficiaries would benefit from access to complementary services, which would contribute to reducing economic and social risks and promote well-being and self-reliance. For households able to engage in income-generating activities, this could serve as an exit strategy.

Consideration should be given to adjusting the cash transfer for inflation - deterioration of purchasing power can erode the impacts of the programme. Due to general inflation, many expressed a preference for food transfers.

REFERENCES

Oxford Policy Management. 2014. Qualitative research and analyses of the economic impact of cash transfer programmes in sub-Saharan Africa: Ethiopia Country Case Study Report, PtoP project report, FAO, Rome.

FOR MORE INFORMATION & RESOURCES

Please visit: http://www.fao.org/economic/ptop/programmes/ethiopia/en **or write to:** Benjamin.Davis@fao.org

The From **PROTECTION** to **PRODUCTION** (PtoP) programme is, jointly with UNICEF, exploring the linkages and strengthening coordination between social protection, agriculture and rural development. PtoP is funded principally by the UK Department for International Development (DFID), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) and the European Union. The programme is also part of a larger effort, the Transfer Project, together with UNICEF, Save the Children and the University of North Carolina, to support the implementation of impact evaluations of cash transfer programmes in sub-Saharan Africa.

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