



Oxford Policy Management

Kenya Hunger Safety Net Programme Monitoring and Evaluation Component

Summary Extract from Impact Evaluation Final
Report: 2009 to 2012 – Conclusions and Policy
Implications

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Conclusions and policy implications

1. A rigorous scientific evaluation of the Hunger Safety Net Programme (HSNP) pilot phase has now been completed. Quantitative and qualitative data have been collected and analysed over a period of 24 months of programme support to households in order to provide a comprehensive and robust assessment of the impact of the programme. Impact was measured across a multitude of domains and we are now in a position to make some conclusions as to where there is definite evidence of impact, where there is definite evidence of no impact, and where evidence of impact is inconclusive or ambiguous. Following on from these conclusions are some implications for policy.

Strong evidence of programme impact

2. **HSNP stops or slows the slide into poverty, particularly for the poorest households.** HSNP households are *10 percentage points* less likely to fall into the bottom national poverty decile than control households. In addition, both the poverty gap (how far on average a household is below a given poverty line – in this case the bottom national decile) and the severity of poverty (a measure giving more weight to poorer households) improve in comparison to control households by *seven percentage points* each. This impact is driven by poorer and smaller households.

3. **HSNP households spend approximately KES 213 more on food per month per adult equivalent than control households.** *Eighty-seven percent* of HSNP households report eating more and/or larger meals. This impact is again driven by poorer and smaller households.

4. **HSNP is enabling households to spend more on healthcare *per capita*,** without negative impacts on food consumption or asset retention.

5. HSNP households are seven percentage points more likely than control households to have cash savings, and 10 percentage points more likely to access loans.

Clear evidence of where the HSNP is not having an impact

6. There are some areas where there is clear evidence that the programme is not having any impact. This underlines how, in this context, cash transfers are not a panacea. Some areas of impact are determined by broader or more powerful factors than a cash transfer on its own is able to counteract. For some of these, complementary initiatives, or perhaps conditions, may assist a cash transfer to have an impact. Others may require different sorts of interventions altogether.

7. **Child nutrition is determined by factors beyond HSNP.** The HSNP impact evaluation found no evidence that the programme was having an impact on child nutrition rates. This is not surprising given that child nutrition is an area heavily influenced by factors beyond access to food, such as hygiene and feeding practices, cultural beliefs, and knowledge about what constitutes an appropriate diet. This suggests that the HSNP is unlikely on its own to positively impact child nutrition rates, meaning that complementary interventions are required.

8. **HSNP beneficiaries are not being deprioritised for food aid and other supplementary feeding programmes,** probably because food aid distributions are driven by their own programming decisions. There were concerns that HSNP households would be deprioritised for food aid and other support such as school and supplementary feeding programmes, but this has not happened. In terms of the mode of support, **HSNP households expressed a clear**

preference for cash support over food aid, since it provides the flexibility to meet a wider range of needs. However, it was also clearly expressed that, **at current levels, the value of the transfer is not large enough to fully replace food aid.**

9. **The evaluation finds that the HSNP is not enabling households to retain or accumulate non-livestock assets.** The level of the transfer is perceived to be too low and households overwhelmingly report spending it largely on food and basic needs.

10. **HSNP beneficiaries do not have reduced incidence of illness or injury.** While there is a possible link between receipt of the HSNP and the type of health care that beneficiaries choose (because the cash transfers give people access to more expensive health care providers), increased health expenditure by HSNP households is not translating into reduced incidence of illness or injury. These findings indicate that incidence of illness or injury is the combined effect of individual, social, economic and environmental circumstances, as well as being heavily influenced by supply-side factors such as quality of care. In this context cash transfers may remove some of the financial barriers to healthcare but are not likely to significantly reduce incidence of illness or injury.

11. **HSNP is not improving school enrolment, attendance, or expenditure on education.** The HSNP can be expected to improve access to and expenditure on education only where costs are the chief barriers. However, findings at baseline showed that the most common reasons for having never attended school were the need to perform domestic duties, work for the household's self-production, and parental attitudes. One possible way to counteract these barriers and thereby increase the impact of cash transfers on education enrolment and attendance is through the use of conditions. However, internationally the evidence is mixed as to how effective such conditions can be, with much depending on local context and the quality of education services delivered. Moreover, the choice of applying conditions to a cash transfer should be determined by the primary goal of the transfer. If the transfer's main aim is to get more children into school, in the hope of improving human development outcomes, then conditions may help to achieve that. However, if the aim is to act as a safety net for the poorest households, then conditions are less appropriate.

12. **HSNP is not creating dependency or disrupting pastoralist livelihoods.** It is the broader forces of drought and economic, social and political change that have disrupted pastoralist livelihoods rather than the HSNP. Nor is the HSNP causing dependency, with adults in HSNP households no less likely to be engaged in productive work than those in control households.

13. **Older people do not benefit from the HSNP any differently to other groups.** Older people are not more likely to suffer illness or injury than the rest of the population as a result of the programme, nor are they less likely to be engaged in productive work.

14. **HSNP is not causing tension within or between communities.**

Areas where the evidence of impact is inconclusive

15. Some areas of impact that were assessed produced inconclusive, ambiguous, or even contradictory evidence as to whether the HSNP was having a positive influence or not.

16. **The HSNP is having a positive impact on dietary diversity for poorer and smaller households, but is not reducing the proportion of households going entire days without eating.** The programme does have a clear positive impact on food expenditure, and at least for a given period and for poorer households it has had a positive impact on dietary diversity. However,

it does not appear to be a factor affecting whether some or all members of households go entire days without eating. This implies that at current levels of transfer and coverage, the HSNP alone will not fully assuage the problem of food insecurity.

17. The impact evaluation finds strong, but not fully conclusive evidence, that the **HSNP is having a positive impact on retention of livestock, with HSNP households six percentage points more likely to own any livestock (seven percentage points for goats/sheep).**

However, this result is not robust when you control for community- and household-level factors¹, nor for any specific categories of households. While there is much qualitative testimony in regard to the positive impact of the programme enabling households to retain livestock, the evidence is thus not fully conclusive. The results indicate that the potential for the HSNP to increase or maximise its impact in this area may reside in complementary interventions. Improvements in livestock markets and livestock support services (such as insurance and veterinary services) may produce the type of conditions in which small improvements to household budgets of the magnitude provided by the HSNP make bigger differences to households' ability to destock and restock their animals more productively.

18. There is **some evidence to suggest that children from HSNP households are improving their performance in school. These children are seven percentage points more likely to have passed Standard Grade IV as a result of the transfer.** HSNP children also reach a higher grade on average than control children. These results are again driven by smaller and poorer households, as well as households for whom the cumulative *per capita* value of the transfer is greater. This impact appears to be the result of an improvement in the psycho-social experience of school for beneficiary children. Arriving at school better fed, more presentable, and adequately equipped with uniform and school supplies, is reported to be improving children's confidence and capacity to concentrate, which in turn seems to be positively impacting their school performance.

19. **The HSNP may be making households more creditworthy.** The evaluation finds that the programme is increasing households' uptake of credit, but this result only becomes apparent once we control for community- and household-level factors² and adjust for variation in the cumulative per capita value of transfers received. As with many other impacts, this result is being driven by poorer HSNP households. High numbers of HSNP households are purchasing goods on credit (around 72%), but an even higher proportion (80%) claim that **the HSNP has increased their ability to access items on credit.** This evidence is made more compelling when viewed in the light of the kinds of strategies HSNP households claim to use when coping with shocks, where access to credit is prevalent.

20. **HSNP helps households avoid some, but not all, negative coping strategies, and reduces the need to sell assets in the face of shocks.** The evaluation does not find conclusive evidence to suggest that the HSNP is impacting households' ability to avoid negative coping strategies. However, analysis shows that the programme is having a small but positive impact by reducing households need to sell assets in the face of shocks. These results are driven by smaller

¹ The impact of the HSNP may be affected by particular factors or characteristics of communities, households and individuals, which could differ or vary over time. One of the estimates of impact produced by the evaluation derives from a model which controls for these. For example, at the community level, such factors could include: supply of food aid and other aid programmes including emergency support; road access; severity of drought. At the household level they might include the size and labour capacity of the household. While at the individual level they could include age, gender, marital status or whether the person has a disability or chronic illness. Such factors can affect the impact of the HSNP on a household so are controlled for in the model. The exact number and type(s) of factor included depend on the indicator and whether it is estimated at the household or individual level. More detail on the econometric methods used by the evaluation is provided in Annex B and C of the main report from which this document is an extract. See Kenya Hunger Safety Net Programme Monitoring and Evaluation Component Impact Evaluation Final Report: 2009 to 2012, March 2013.

² See Footnote 1.

and relatively better-off HSNP households and corroborated by the qualitative research. There is also evidence that the HSNP is increasing households' propensity to access credit as a coping strategy. These findings point to a situation in which households resort to a variety of negative coping strategies, but for some types of household the need to pursue certain strategies is reduced by the HSNP.

21. **The majority of nominated HSNP beneficiaries are women, and the programme seems to be benefiting women's economic and social empowerment by enabling some women (specifically those in female-headed households) to take more control of the household budget and to increase their potential for undertaking income-generating activities.** Once again these findings are driven by smaller and poorer households. However, there is also some evidence that in some individual cases this is having the unintended consequence of creating tensions within households, especially between female HSNP recipients and their husbands. These findings could be interpreted as indicative of women being empowered to claim more equality with their husbands, but such an interpretation is far from clear cut. Complicating the matter further is the evidence that control over how the transfer is spent seems to be shifting to older male household heads.

22. **The HSNP may be helping to reduce non-domestic child labour.** To assess the HSNP's impact on children in particular we look at whether children suffer less incident of illness or injury as a result of the transfer, or whether they are less likely to be engaged in paid or unpaid work. With regards to health status we do not find any impact on children especially. However, after controlling for other factors³ we do find a positive impact on the propensity of children to be engaged in non-domestic work as their main activity. As we have seen with many of the results considered, these impacts are being driven by poorer and smaller households.

23. **The HSNP interacts with informal social networks in complex ways.** Some 25% of beneficiary households reported sharing at least some of their transfers with other households. In northern Kenya these norms of sharing and mutual support are strongly grounded in cultural practices and religious obligations. The evaluation gathered data on whether households give and receive informal transfers to and from other households, either in cash or in-kind. It found some evidence to suggest that the programme is promoting sharing of in-kind resources for certain types of household, but does not seem to be causing beneficiary households to be frozen out of extant informal transfer networks. Such social networks are complex and difficult to fully capture using quantitative measures. These results should therefore not be interpreted as categorical. The HSNP is likely to be interacting with informal transfer systems and social networks in various evolving ways, but fully understanding these requires further in-depth research.

24. The evaluation found some puzzling results in relation to the impact of the HSNP on household composition. However, **it is not viable to make clear inferences on the impact of the HSNP on household composition** because of the complexity of factors influencing these and the recent population dynamics in HSNP areas. It is possible that analysis of programme registration data, especially Phase 2 and subsequent rounds of retargeting data, would provide a better vehicle for attempting to assess programme impact on household composition.

25. **The HSNP may be benefiting the local economy.** The evaluation has produced a significant amount of qualitative testimony as to the positive impact of the HSNP on the local economy. Traders claim the influx of cash increases demand to which they respond. Beneficiaries claim to have started or improved their businesses where they have them. Non-beneficiaries claim to benefit from the provision of goods and services to beneficiaries. However, this evaluation does

³ See Footnote 1.

not provide a definitive robust quantitative measure of programme impact on the local economy. This would be a very useful area for a future impact evaluation to focus on.

Implications for social protection policy

Implications for HSNP design and other potential interventions

26. The evaluation deployed a mixed method approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative data to assess impact. The quantitative analysis provides a robust estimate of aggregate programme impact. The qualitative data demonstrate a diversity of individual experience behind that aggregate impact, indicating that **different types of household respond in different ways to the transfer**. This could be dampening the overall average impact of the programme.

27. The heterogeneity analysis broadly shows that **the impact of the programme was more pronounced on smaller and poorer households and households that received a greater cumulative *per capita* value of transfer**.

28. These findings indicate that **in order to maximise impact and value for money, the HSNP must target the poorest households and ensure the payments system functions effectively so that each household receives its full entitlement**. In addition, they raise questions about the *effective minimum value of the transfer*. Indexing the value of the transfer to household size could provide an efficient mechanism to further increase or maximise programme impact.

29. The above findings also show that, **in the context of northern Kenya, an unconditional cash transfer such as the HSNP cannot be expected on its own to improve so many aspects of socio-economic well-being**. There is a need to be realistic about in which areas, and how, such an intervention can make a real difference.

30. **In some areas, complementary interventions may be required** in order to enable the cash transfer to make a more tangible impact. An example of this might be in child nutrition. **In other areas, conditions may be considered** in order to help achieve a given policy objective. An example in this regard might be in education. **In yet other areas, different interventions altogether may be required, which focus much more on improving the quantity and quality of services available**. An example here might be in health.

31. The question of whether to apply conditions to a cash transfer is not easy to answer. Internationally, evidence is mixed and there are inherent difficulties with comparing different programmes in different contexts. In addition, conditional cash transfers require significant bureaucratic capacity in order to monitor compliance. Low administrative capacity may result in uneven implementation of monitoring mechanisms and therefore weakened impact on desired outcomes. Even further, while conditions may help achieved desired *outputs*, such as increased attendance at school, it is not evident that they will necessarily improve associated *outcomes* (e.g. learning outcomes), which are heavily influenced by supply-side constraints. **Evidence from the evaluation of the Kenya Cash Transfer for Orphans and Vulnerable Children programme suggests that conditions may not be the most appropriate method of achieving policy aims**. If the HSNP did consider increasing education enrolment or improving children's health status a key policy objective, then the viability of utilising conditions would need to be investigated further.

Implications for social protection policy

32. Cash transfers in Kenya are being consolidated into a single National Safety Net Programme (NSNP). This incorporates the HSNP, the Cash Transfer for Orphans and Vulnerable Children, the Older Persons Cash Transfer, the Persons with Severe Disability Cash Transfer and the Urban Food Subsidy Cash Transfer. **Lessons from this evaluation will be useful for the NSNP as whole, and not just the HSNP.**

33. This evaluation provides further evidence that:

- **Cash transfers have positive impacts without creating dependency, but alone they are not a panacea.** A useful next step for the NSNP would be to explore complementarities with other programmes, in particular with regard to supply-side activities (for example, to improve nutrition outcomes, investment in service delivery to improve water and sanitation and health services is required).
- **Impact is stronger for smaller and poorer households across a variety of domains.** This may imply that the NSNP as a whole considers an option for *per capita* rather than per household transfers.
- **The HSNP seems to have stronger impact on food security and other domains during shock periods.** This underlines the usefulness of cash transfers as a shock response system and provides justification for introducing a shock responsiveness function across the NSNP.

34. For Phase 2, the HSNP is moving under the control of the National Drought Management Agency under the Ministry of Devolution and Planning. This will require careful management as the current operational arrangements are complex and HSNP impacts are sensitive to effective programme implementation.

Areas for future research

35. The goal of the NSNP is to reduce poverty and vulnerability for the poorest Kenyan households. The aim of the HSNP is to reduce poverty, hunger, and vulnerability for the poorest in Kenya's arid and semi-arid lands. **A cost-effectiveness assessment** should estimate the cost to achieve these objectives, broken down into different types of costs as specified by the NSNP M&E framework. This assessment would help to identify areas in which efficiency savings could potentially be made and assess their effectiveness compared with other programmes.

36. The HSNP Phase 2 is producing a comprehensive registration dataset which theoretically includes information on every household in the HSNP target counties. These data will provide a useful resource for the conducting of future evaluations and will thus help minimise the need for and/or cost of future independent impact evaluations. However, further evaluation across a variety of domains is advisable in order to monitor programme performance and achievements.

37. **A future impact evaluation could usefully provide a robust estimate of programme impact on the local economy.** One way to assess the impact of the HSNP on the local economy would be to estimate the multiplier effect. This shows how much income is generated for the local economy for each dollar transferred to the community by the programme. The latest generation of Local Economy Wide Effects models are able to construct this estimate, as well as showing who, both inside and outside of the community, benefits from those multiplier effects.

38. In addition, there are some areas of special complexity that further qualitative research could usefully illuminate. These include the impact of the HSNP on **gender relations** and its interactions with **informal transfer networks**. Understanding these interactions would be useful for comprehending how the HSNP does or does not achieve particular impacts and for fine tuning the design of the programme and devising alternative or complementary interventions.