

Cash Transfers and Social Protection



Interview with Stephen Kasaija from the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development in Uganda.

Date: 09/06/2007

Stephen Kasaija comments on the start-up of the pilot cash transfer programme in Uganda, which has been deemed necessary in order to reach chronically poor and extremely poor individuals. He explains that the programme will rely heavily on communities to identify poor households but will verify their decisions through means testing based on census data. The programme will also test the usefulness of both conditional and non-conditional approaches to transfers. In this regard, he does not regard the supply of infrastructure for health and education as a binding constraint on the programme.

IPC: The Government of Uganda is going to start a pilot cash transfer scheme. Why did the Government decide to try this kind of programme?

Stephen Kasaija: This type of programme has been found relevant for Uganda because of the extent of extreme poverty and chronic poverty. For the case of Uganda, earlier intervention strategies to address poverty had tended to ignore, to exclude chronically poor and extremely poor individuals. It is now, at this stage, after going through a study, an analysis that we have done, on who is affected by poverty and how best you can reach them that we have found that some social cash transfers would be a good intervention to reach and provide services to these chronically poor and extremely poor individuals.

IPC: Could you give us some details on the budget and on the package strategy that you are planning to use for the implementation of the cash transfer programme?

S. K.: We are going to start with a pilot scheme, and this is expected to cost us about 8.4 million US dollars over a period of 3 years. And we shall be targeting about 9,000 households for a start, for us to test the systems which will be used to deliver the cash transfers so that we can see how feasible this scheme is. We are going to use the community approach, targeting communities to first do the identification of whom they think is poor and then we shall have a means test done by taking a census. This will then define which families have been confirmed by the communities to see if really they meet the set criteria.

IPC: Another question, in Latin America the programmes tend to have conditionalities. How is the design team thinking in terms of conditionalities. Is that something worth trying, or is something that is very difficult to implement in Africa and in Uganda, in particular?

S. K.: No, in Uganda we have decided to take both approaches, we are going to have within our pilot scheme, a testing of both conditionalities and non-conditionalities. We are going to have two options; there can be the moral decision of people... to address the issues of the human development, because I think our scheme is going to target mainly human development, human capital development, because we encourage access to education and access to health. We are going to test both approaches. While some groups will be subject to some of the conditions that, yes, children have to go to school and have to seek healthcare, but in other groups it will be just the community being left to see if it can adopt an approach without adopting conditionalities.

IPC: And how are you going to deal with supply problems in the districts... for example, if you don't have health clinics, if you don't have schools? How is that going to be targeted?

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S. K.: I think there is a provision, especially for health, that if the facility doesn't exist we may have to relax the conditionalities, but in Uganda... at least in the past we have really done a lot in terms of infrastructure development, at least in health and education. Services and infrastructure have been spread widely throughout the country. So we don't expect that to be a major constraint. The issue has been access in terms of transport... maybe for the elderly that may not move, or those with disabilities that may not move; there we are thinking of waiving some of those conditionalities, but I think it shows that infrastructure is not a major challenge in Uganda.

IPC: What have been the major challenges that you have identified in the design stage that the programme will face?

S. K.: I think the biggest challenge we are seeing is that of moving from a pilot to a nationwide coverage, because that would mean that we need to get more resources, a bigger budget and everything. We have to get the political will and support so we can get the provision and the funds that we need to implement this at the national level. The other challenge I would see is that of developing the capacity of staff; this may be a new intervention, a new approach, so we need also to bring an element of coordination. We require many other institutions to participate in the implementation. I see a challenge there that we need to build the buy-in of all these other institutions, which have a role to play such as in education. We have started already, we are seeing some response, but we need the response also at a higher level, a commitment from the political leaders from all these institutions so we can successfully run the programme. So we see that coordination may be one of the challenges for which we need technical know-how, we need to build capacity, monitoring and evaluation and the general management... So we still have challenges that will have to be addressed.

IPC: Which lessons do you learn from the experience in Zambia, from the experience with orphans and vulnerable children, from conditional cash transfers in Kenya? Were these experiences evaluated by the design team that is designing the Uganda programme?

S. K.: Yes. To a great extent we see that what we imagine is not much different from what is happening in other countries, only that for us we are trying blend a number of approaches from all these other schemes, avoiding the pitfalls, and picking all the good lessons. So I think to a great extent we have used what is happening there and so we should be able to move faster in our scheme as we already have a good starting point. Where the other people are exploring, discovering, for us we already have some readily available information which we may have to adapt to our situation and can move a bit faster.

IPC: Ok Stephen. Thank you very much.

*The International Poverty Centre is jointly supported by the Brazilian Institute for Applied Economic Research (IPEA) and the Bureau for Development Policy, United Nations Development Programme, New York.
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