

POLICY BRIEF



How is social protection building resilience in Kenya?

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KEY POLICY MESSAGES

KENYA'S HUNGER SAFETY NET PROGRAMME (HSNP) and Cash Transfer for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (CT-OVC) highlight how providing regular and predictable cash assistance to poor and vulnerable people is critical to help people absorb shocks and stresses.

INTEGRATING RESILIENCE OBJECTIVES from the start into cash transfer programmes can increase the anticipatory capacity of national systems, for example the HSNP's emergency response mechanisms, to respond to disasters.

PUTTING LINKAGES between cash transfers and sustainable livelihood programmes in the Ending Drought Emergencies (EDE) framework into practice is needed to create adaptive capacity and long-term resilience of vulnerable livelihoods into practice.

BRACED aims to build the resilience of up to 5 million vulnerable people against climate extremes and disasters. It does so through 15 projects working across 13 countries in East Africa, the Sahel and Asia.

Box 1: What is BRACED and the Knowledge Manager?

Building Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Extremes and Disasters (BRACED) is a UK-government funded programme which aims to increase the resilience of up to 5 million people.

The BRACED Knowledge Manager generates evidence and learning on resilience and adaptation in partnership with the BRACED projects and the wider resilience community. It gathers robust evidence of what works to strengthen resilience to climate extremes and disasters, and initiates and supports processes to ensure that evidence is put into use in policy and programmes.

This brief is one of three country studies (Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda) that analyse the role of social protection programmes in building resilience to climate-related shocks and stresses.

SOCIAL PROTECTION IN KENYA

As part of the Knowledge Management component of the Building Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Extremes and Disasters (BRACED) programme (see Box 1), this briefing summarises evidence from Kenya on how large-scale national social protection programmes contribute to resilience. In particular, the conceptual framework adopted here suggests evaluating resilience-building efforts on the basis of three outcomes:

the capacity of both people and national systems to absorb, anticipate and adapt to climate-related shocks and stresses (see Box 2). This allows us to break down a concept that is widely used yet difficult to define and operationalise, by assessing how programmes contribute to one or more of the three capacities.

The overall objective of social protection in Kenya's Vision 2030 medium-term economic development strategy is to invest in vulnerable groups to reduce poverty, which has remained persistently high at 45% since the 2000s. The Hunger Safety Net Programme (HSNP) and the Cash Transfer for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (CT-OVC) are two national flagship programmes that both offer cash-only support (between \$20–27 USD per household per month) yet differ in terms of the policy discourse they emerged from and the implementing agency. The CT-OVC was introduced in the 2000s as a response to the HIV/AIDS crisis (Pearson and Alviar, 2009) and is managed by the Ministry of East African Community, Labour and Social Protection. The more recent HSNP forms an integral part of the national Ending Drought Emergencies (EDE) framework and sits within the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and focuses support to drought-affected people in the arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs). Despite the different objectives, both programmes deliver a similar amount of cash to vulnerable households over several years. In this study, we conducted qualitative research in Nairobi, as well as focus group discussions with beneficiaries of both programmes in peri-urban and rural sub-counties in Turkana.

CASH TRANSFERS CAN HELP PEOPLE ABSORB SHOCKS

As a drought-response programme, the HSNP has been successful in achieving positive impacts on food security, and increased the number and size of meals of 87% of beneficiary households in its first phase (2009–12). This highlights how the HSNP functioned successfully as a safety net to protect households from the negative impacts on poverty of the 2011 drought that affected the Horn of Africa (Merttens et al., 2013).

According to the majority of participants interviewed for this study, the cash from the HSNP and the CT-OVC is used to purchase food throughout the year, yet the proportion of the transfer spent on food increases particularly in the dry months. The use of the cash and the impacts on household consumption are similar for the HSNP and the CT-OVC, despite both programmes having different objectives. In the CT-OVC, real household consumption increased by KSh 274 (\$3.40) per adult equivalent per month on average, whereas in the HSNP the increase is KSh 247 (\$2.40) – but, unlike with the HSNP, it is not possible to say from the existing evaluation data whether consumption levels are maintained in the CT-OVC during times of extreme drought (Ward et al., 2010; Merttens et al., 2013). However, the timeliness of payments continues to be a challenge in the CT-OVC: the vulnerability of recipients can increase if transfers are not received when predicted and thus fail to fulfil their absorptive function.

THE DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF PROGRAMMES CAN INCREASE THE CAPACITY OF PEOPLE AND SYSTEMS TO ANTICIPATE SHOCKS

Cash transfers can have a positive impact on people's ability to save, and, although they are not 'earmarked' for specific shocks, they provide an overall buffer for a range of risks or expenditures. Recipients of the CT-OVC save money or invest it in livestock. Similarly, the HSNP has had a positive impact on households' ability to save and access credit (Merttens et al., 2013). Investing in social networks, as well as livestock,

is a traditional risk management strategy for pastoralists and agro-pastoralists who have always had to live with drought. Climate change, however, is increasing the frequency, duration and severity of drought and is putting these customary coping strategies under pressure. High levels of dilution of the HSNP transfer highlights how the cash has been used to invest in these. At the household level, cash transfers can increase the capacity of people to anticipate shocks by saving in the form of cash or livestock to increase their asset base and have a buffer in the case of an emergency.

The way cash transfer programmes are designed can also increase the anticipatory capacity of national disaster response systems. In comparison with the CT-OVC, the HSNP from the start put in place targeting mechanisms, operational procedures for scale-up and contingency funds that allow it to now be an innovative tool that increases the preparedness and capacity of institutions at national level to respond in the event of an emergency. This system meant the HSNP was able to scale up assistance within two weeks to 90,648 additional households following severe and extreme drought in April 2015, which was a faster and more efficient response 'than any other previous humanitarian distribution mechanisms on the continent' (Fitzgibbon, 2016).

WE NEED MORE THAN CASH TO BUILD ADAPTIVE CAPACITY AND LONG-TERM RESILIENCE

The contributions social protection programmes can make to climate change adaptation currently are hypothetical because evidence is limited. In Kenya, neither of the social protection programmes aims specifically to build adaptive capacity, although they do have an impact on asset accumulation. The CT-OVC evaluation highlights that the programme at national level has had a significant impact on the accumulation of livestock assets, particularly for beneficiaries in smaller-sized and female-headed households (Asfaw et al., 2013). The HSNP does not explicitly aim to make long-term impacts on livelihoods, since its main objective is to reduce hunger. However, beneficiaries who have received lump sum payments – for

example those who have been formally registered for several months but have not been able to receive the transfer – have made investments in income-generating activities (e.g. livestock, small businesses).

Box 2: Resilience can be broken down to three capacities

Absorptive capacity is the ability to cope with climate variability and extremes during and after a disturbance to reduce the immediate impact on people's livelihoods and basic needs.

Anticipatory capacity is the ability of social systems to actively anticipate and reduce the impact of climate variability and extremes through preparedness and planning.

Adaptive capacity is the ability of social systems to adapt to multiple, long-term and future climate change risks, and also to learn and adjust after a disaster.

Source: Bahadur et al. (2015).

These investments may lead to long-term changes in livelihoods, but currently the evidence to substantiate this assumption is limited. Asset accumulation alone does not necessarily translate into increased capacity to adapt or to move out of poverty, unless people have access to complementary interventions that support livelihoods at the systems level. Kenya's EDE framework, for example, sets out a roadmap for building sustainable livelihoods in the ASALs. These actions are focused on supporting pastoralist livelihoods and strengthening existing coping mechanisms (reducing/increasing herd size, mobility, loaning animals) through better access to markets, value chain development and access to veterinary services. Additionally, improved management of water, crops and rangeland resources aims to contribute to more sustainable natural resource management and water-use efficiency. Without these complementary programmes, social protection's contribution to long-term adaptation will be limited, since

resilience policy and programming in Kenya's ASALs need to recognise multiple livelihood stressors. This will require not only a policy framework but also strategies to better integrate interventions across sectors, actors and different levels of governance to ensure resilience-building programmes contribute to strengthening the capacity of national systems to reduce drought emergencies (Carabine et al., 2015).

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Evidence from Kenya makes a strong case for social protection's primary role being that of a safety net that allows people to absorb shocks without suffering significant negative setbacks. It does so most convincingly by providing regular and predictable cash assistance to poor and vulnerable people.

Focusing on the quality of implementation is critical to achieve resilience objectives. Regardless of the specific objective of cash transfers, in the end it is programmes' ability to deliver cash transfers on time in a reliable way that contributes to people's capacity to absorb and anticipate shocks and stresses. The HSNP's design and implementation mechanisms not only provide a reliable safety net but also increased the quality and timeliness of humanitarian assistance following severe drought.

For long-term resilience-building, vulnerable households need to increase their capacity to adapt to recurring shocks and stresses. In Kenya, this means strengthening linkages between cash transfer recipients and complementary programmes, such as livelihood support, infrastructure development and natural resource management under the EDE framework.

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ACRONYMS

ASALs
Arid and Semi-Arid Lands

BRACED
Building Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Extremes

CT-OVC
Cash transfer for Orphans and Vulnerable Children

EDE
Ending Drought Emergencies

HSNP
Hunger Safety Net Programme

NDMA
National Disaster Management Authority

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How can social protection build resilience? Insights from Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda. BRACED Working Paper. London: ODI.

Ulrichs, M. and Slater, R. (2017)
How is social protection building resilience in Uganda? BRACED Policy Brief. London: ODI.

Slater, R. and Ulrichs, M. (2017)
How is social protection building resilience in Ethiopia? BRACED Policy Brief. London: ODI.

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processes to ensure that evidence is put into use in policy and programmes. The Knowledge Manager also fosters partnerships to amplify the impact of new evidence and learning, in order to significantly improve levels of resilience in poor and vulnerable countries and communities around the world.

The Knowledge Manager consortium is led by the Overseas Development Institute and includes the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre, the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center, ENDA Energie, ITAD, Thomson Reuters Foundation and the University of Nairobi.

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