

OPERATIONAL MONITORING BRIEF

HSNP Payments & Case Management

September 2015

Overview

Operational Monitoring Reports provide qualitative feedback every two months on the operations of the Hunger Safety Net Programme (HSNP) from the perspective of recipient households and pay agents. It covers mainly procedures relating to payments and case management. Each round of monitoring will take place at a different set of pay points across the four HSNP counties. In this round of monitoring, 25 pay agents and 208 recipients were interviewed across the four counties between 5 and 8 September 2015.

Key findings from interviews in September

- The good news is that most respondents that we spoke to in September reported learning of the payment date within a week in advance through social networks such as a neighbour or pay agents.
- The majority of those interviewed, (145 out of 208), report walking to the pay point in less than two hours (one way). The time waiting in queue to collect cash averaged 90 minutes.
- 80 respondents were aware that the value of the transfer is now KES 5,100. All 24 agents interviewed indicated that every single recipient withdrew the total amount in his or her account and this is likely due to the fact that they don't inquire on balances or know that they can leave money in the account as savings.
- More than half of the pay agents visited were not paying out at the time of visit.
- Half of the pay agents interviewed (12) reported days when more recipients came to withdraw funds than available cash. These liquidity challenges have led to some pay agents debiting recipients accounts and paying them later after collecting money from the Equity branch.
- Several pay agents reported challenges with broken machines—both the frequency of occurrence and the time it takes to make repairs. Furthermore, nearly all the agents interviewed (21 of 24) reported issues of internet connectivity.
- A large number of pay agents were either missing signature books, not completing the signature books, or not gathering signatures / thumb prints to confirm receipt of payment.

Recommendation

For follow-up by the PILU, FSD and Equity Bank:

- Clean the list of pay agents using records of those who paid out anything in the most recent payment cycle, to understand the current number of active agents.
- Discuss with Equity Bank urgently about the possibility of providing short-term overdrafts to agents around the start of each payment cycle so that the agents do not have to oblige households to swipe their cards without receiving any cash
- Equity Bank to contact agents who have missed two consecutive cycles to identify and resolve the problem (e.g. broken POS machines, liquidity issues, etcetera).

Overview of special themed study on rights committees'

OPM will be conducting special themed studies every two months and the themes are focused on pertinent issues facing the HSNP programme that have been flagged by stakeholders as key topics to look into. The Rights committees' was the topic selected for the September 2015.

Key informant interviews were conducted with rights committee members, pay agents, recipients, county SPR partners and HSNP administrators were conducted between 8th and 15th September 2015.

Common findings across counties:

- Rights committees are quite active in reporting complaints.
- Resolution of complaints is considered to be much less timely and effective than the reporting of them.
- Rights committees generally are not very active in overseeing payments.
- The limited literacy of members presents a challenge to the rights committees efficient operation.
- The coordination between rights committee members and formal HSNP structures is uneven and unclear.
- Motivation of rights committee members is a challenge.
- Overall, there is a lack a consistency among rights committee members themselves as to their perceived responsibilities
- The role of the rights committees is still not well understood among recipients. Only 77 out of 208 recipients interviewed during the operations monitoring reported knowledge on the presence rights committee; and of those, only 12 indicated an understanding their roles

Suggested recommendation

As the substantive set of responsibilities placed on rights committee members is not consistent with a voluntary position, it may be prudent to consider either:

- Strengthening the rights committees into a more formalised structure that is properly staffed, resourced, and trained, and that might eventually be aligned with the beneficiary welfare committees that serve other cash transfer schemes under the NSNP; OR
- Converting the rights committees to a system that leverages local government structures (e.g. chiefs) who report directly to county-level officials. In this context, complaints and grievance reporting and oversight of payment processes would fall under the direct responsibility of HSNP in close cooperation with sub-county chiefs and other recognised local structures.