

Series F – Foundations : Ending Drought Emergencies – Planning for drought: An end to drought emergencies and food insecurity in Kenya.

Integrated Social Safety Nets: Building Community Resilience for Sustainable Food Security

Mark Ekiru, Dr Angeline Mulwa and Prof Dorothy Ndunge Kyalo

Key Messages

Cash transferred under social safety net programmes should be structured to include training and capacity building

Social safety net programmes should be linked with other long-term development initiatives

Social safety nets programmes should also consider bottom-up approaches in their design and management

Beneficiary involvement is crucial for understanding poor and vulnerable household needs rather than implementing blue-print programmes

Context

The release of the World Development Report in 1990 brought in the proposal of social safety nets as a way of protecting the vulnerable groups as well as helping countries achieve sustainable poverty reduction (Gross et al, 2008). By 2006, thirteen African countries had signed the Livingstone Call for Action which gives a platform for adoption of social protection and social transfers as some of the strategies to promote growth and reduce poverty among the most vulnerable groups. According to the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), it is recognized that to achieve a reduction in hunger, production-based investments should be complemented by targeted safety nets.

In Kenya, several social safety net programmes have been initiated to support lives, livelihoods and to enhance resilience to shocks. The existing social safety net programmes in the Country include the Hunger Safety Net Programme, Orphans and Vulnerable Children Cash Transfer, Older Persons Cash Transfer Programme, People living with Severe Disabilities Cash Transfer Programme, and the Urban Food Subsidy Cash Transfer Programme (NGEC, 2014). These are per Article 21 of the Constitution of Kenya which puts forward that it is the responsibility of the State to ensure that the economic and social rights of citizens are met (Constitution of Kenya, 2010). Government ownership of social safety net initiatives has shown some hope for the implementation of the

programmes. However, the sustainability of the programmes is a major worry due to their dependence on donors funding and technical support (Barrientos and Hume, 2009). Despite the approval of the National Social Protection Policy in 2011, Kenya has continued to record a high incidence of poverty coupled with food insecurity and malnutrition, made worse by disasters and stresses (Ministry of State for Planning and National Development, 2012).

The purpose of this study, therefore, focused on the current social safety nets in Turkana County, primarily on the use of cash transfer programmes and its role in community resilience and food security. Turkana County is among the semi-arid lands of Kenya prone to drought and suffers from historical marginalization, struggling with weak infrastructure as well as high rates of illiteracy (OPM 2011). The County is among the four ASAL counties where the Hunger Safety Net Programme (HSNP) was piloted as a viable solution to the eradication of poverty, hunger and malnutrition in the longer term.

Approach and Results

This study explored the experiences of pastoralist households and the perceived impacts of social safety net programmes in Turkana County on their food security and diversification to non-pastoralist-based livelihoods. The Food security situation was analyzed using the four standard measurements of food security: food availability, food access, food utilization, and food stability. Major assessment tools used included the Food



Consumption Score as well as the Dietary Diversity Index.

Households in Turkana County are exposed to frequent droughts and other climate-related disasters that make daily life hard for households which are already poor. The Kenya National Drought Management Authority (NDMA, 2015) puts Turkana County Poverty index at 94.3% affecting 481,442 people. Pastoralism is the main source of livelihood in the study area, which is usually vulnerable to the impacts of drought. With the death of livestock from climate-related disasters, households have always relied on humanitarian aid. The area is located in the remote periphery of Kenyan border with Ethiopia and South Sudan and has low Government investments. This has added to create food security vulnerabilities in the area.

Coping strategies employed by households include relying on less preferred and less expensive food, borrowing food from relatives and friends, limiting portions at meals, restricting consumption by adults to allow small children to eat, and reducing the number of meals eaten in a day. These coping strategies employed by households have always been short-term. In most cases, households with no alternative sources of food ended up in hunger. Despite the existence of several social safety net programmes in Turkana County, only 14.4% of the respondents had enrolled in social safety net programmes. The main social safety initiatives included The Orphans and Vulnerable Children Cash Transfer Programme (CT-OVC), the Older Persons Cash Transfer Programme (OPCT), and People living with Severe Disabilities Cash Transfer Programme (PWSD). Those enrolled in these programmes felt that the amount of money disbursed was not sufficient to cater for all the household needs.

The study area experienced frequent failure of market systems due to frequent disasters and underdevelopment of infrastructure. The local markets were not fully functional and remained fragile and vulnerable to climate and economic shocks. The cash transfers often created a spike in prices due to demand outstripping supply. Other challenges included lack of fairness and transparency in the targeting process, physical accessibility challenges, frequent delays in disbursements as well as inclusion and exclusion errors. Regarding the link between social safety net programmes and food security, there was a weak positive correlation between social safety nets and performance of food security projects in Turkana County. Social safety nets explained only 17.6% of the variation of performance of food security projects. On average beneficiaries received Kshs. 4,900 (approximately \$50) after every two months. Coupled

with a high rate of inflation, the amount seems unsustainable for building resilient livelihoods. Studies have shown that the transfer helped households to purchase consumable goods but did not increase the ownership of productive assets (Merttens et al. 2013).

With a weak positive correlation between the amount of cash disbursed and performance of food security, there is a need to redesign the approach for the cash disbursed such that it serves as an incentive for households to get involved in other livelihoods to boost food security and not merely for smoothening food consumption. This would motivate households to engage in viable small-scale businesses to promote self-reliance hence building their resilience to frequent shocks such as droughts, floods and other common hazards.

This should be augmented by skills training on micro-enterprise and basic financial and business skills. Prevalent of the weak distorted market in the study area hence over-reliance on humanitarian food aid. The study proposed investments in infrastructure such as roads, electricity, water and modern market facilities to act as a catalyst for food market development through growth and expansion of trade.

Regular market assessments to determine the number of transfers is key to ensure commodity price stability as well as improve the livelihoods of the local people. Timeliness of the transfers needs to be strengthened and beneficiary targeting must be open, transparent and inclusive as much as possible. To promote ownership and effective grievance management system the study recommends bottom-up community based participatory planning approaches. This will help in the understanding of community and household unique challenges throughout the project cycle.

Policy Recommendations

Short-Term

- Development and implementation of a standard monitoring framework on the impact of social safety nets in addressing poverty and building community resilience, this will ensure proper readjustment of the programmes to achieve the desired goal of the initiative.
- Development and implementation of a structured information sharing among state

and non-state agencies implementing the social safety net programmes, this will aid in avoiding duplication hence the robustness of the programmes in reaching more vulnerable groups and addressing the grievances from the communities.

Medium to Long-Term

- Integration of the social safety nets with other long-term development initiatives such as infrastructure and human resource development, this will help in addressing market inadequacies especially in what used to be referred to as marginalized counties in the northern frontier of Kenya.
- Regular market assessments should be enhanced for determination of the amount of transfers to ensure commodity price stability as well as improve the livelihoods of the local people.
- Timeliness of the transfers needs to be strengthened and beneficiary targeting to be open, transparent and inclusive as much as possible.

References

- Grosh, M., Ninno, C., and Ouerghi, A. (2008), 'For Protection and Promotion. The Design and Implementation of Effective Safety Nets. Available at <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTMOR>
- National Gender and Equality Commission, (2014). Participation of Vulnerable Populations in Their Own Programmes: The Cash Transfers in Kenya.
- Barrientos, A. and Hulme, D. (2009). "Social Protection for the Poor and Poorest in Developing Countries: Reflections on a Quiet Revolution." Oxford Development Studies 37 (4): 439–456.
- Ministry of State for Planning and National Development (2012). Kenya Social Protection Sector Review.
- OPM (Oxford Policy Management). 2011. "HSNP Targeting Effectiveness Evaluation

Author

Prof Dorothy Ndunge Kyalo

(dorothy.ndunge@uonbi.ac.ke)

Dr Angeline Mulwa

(asabina@uonbi.ac.ke)

School of Open and Distance Learning, ODeL

Campus, University of Nairobi,

P.O. Box 30197-00100, Nairobi, Ken

