Social Protection and Childhood Violence: Expert Roundtable

Know Violence in Childhood
UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti

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The Palestinian National Cash Transfer Programme’s potential to tackle children’s multiple vulnerabilities synergistically

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Overview of the Palestinian National Cash Transfer Programme
Overview of the Palestinian National Cash Transfer Programme (PNCTP)

- PNCTP is the SoP’s flagship social protection programme, managed and delivered by the Ministry of Social Development.
- Selection of beneficiaries: consumption-based proxy means test formula that estimates the welfare of each applicant household.
- Amount of transfer: between 750 and 1,800 new Israeli shekels (NIS) (US$195-468) per quarter to bridge 50% of the household poverty gap.
- Other entitlements: state-provided assistance, including health insurance, food support (in the form of dry food rations in Gaza and in isolated areas of the West Bank, and vouchers in urban areas of the West Bank), school fee waivers, and cash grants to help with one-off emergency needs.
Overview of the PNCTP

• As of September 2013, 105,678 households were receiving the cash transfer (57,449 in Gaza and 48,229 in the West Bank)
• It is estimated that the total number of children living in beneficiary households was 287,794
• Most beneficiary households are classed as extremely poor
• While the PNCTP was not designed as a child-focused programme, given the large family sizes common in the SoP – particularly among poorer households – household expenses and consumption goods are often prioritised.
• These include meeting children’s needs, principally for food, but also clothing and schooling.
Coordination with child protection mechanisms

• Other government and non-government programmes provide social protection support for children, addressing vulnerabilities that cut across the four dimensions of children’s rights (health insurance, school fee waivers, food rations, etc).

• Limited child protection infrastructure including in the case of violence

• Limited communication and coordination across agencies, and weak referral mechanism which could ensure that vulnerable children’s needs are more effectively identified and addressed
  • E.g.: No coordination between social workers implementing the PNCTP and child protection services; yet the social workers could make referrals of suspected cases of abuse identified during the home visits they undertake. The existing child protection network established by MoSA in 2006 would be a good forum for raising child protection issues
Study design and key findings regarding the PNCTP and violence
Study approach and methodology

- Study commissioned by UNICEF Palestine, in partnership with MoSD
- ODI team made up of international and national experts
- Used a child rights framework, exploring PNCTP’s impacts on survival, development, protection and participation
- Study’s conceptual framework based on a ‘transformative’ social protection approach
- Study used mixed methods to assess the effects of the PNCTP on children and their families.
- Cross-sectional quantitative data were collected from an intervention and a comparison group alongside qualitative data from a purposive sample of individuals and groups (including adolescents and adults) using participatory methods, in both Gaza and the West Bank
Overall study findings

- The PNCTP contributes to children’s right to survival by supporting basic needs, including improving household’s capacity to purchase more nutritious food and provides access to health services.
- Findings revealed that the programme is not sufficiently child-sensitive to fully address children’s poverty from a multidimensional perspective: its effects on children’s rights to development, protection and participation are less evident.
Overall study findings

- The CT made a mixed contribution to children’s access to education: despite the exemption of school fees for very poor households, poor inter-ministerial coordination resulted in households paying fees. The opportunity cost of school is also high for many children.

- Caregivers had to choose how to allocate limited household resources between providing for their children and servicing debts incurred to cover basic expenses.
Child protection findings

• Quantitative and qualitative findings showed that violence is widely practised – by children and adolescents themselves, their parents, teachers, and service providers.

• Quantitative data suggest that the PNCTP does not have a significant effect in reducing violence at the household, community or school levels.

• However, qualitative interviews did indicate that the cash transfer has had some impact in terms of reducing intra-household violence, partly reflecting lower stress levels due to a slight easing of financial pressures on the household head.

• Violence in schools was widely reported and generally accepted as the norm, especially in relation to how teachers discipline children from poor households.

• School violence was in fact one of the main reasons reported by adolescents for not attending or dropping out of school, which goes against one of the aims of the PNCTP – to support children’s continuation in school.
Children’s voices

- Rawan has a severe leg injury that resulted from an act of violence by her father. He hit her hard on the leg with a wooden stick because he did not want her to speak to people he disliked. The hospital applied a cast, but her knee was so badly damaged that she has a permanent disability. After Rawan’s injury, her mother explained:

> ‘I went to MoSA office in Jericho and reported his violent acts against us, especially against my daughter, Rawan, and filed a legal case in the court against him. The only thing they did was to make him sign a commitment not to harm any of us, but he continued to be violent.’ Thus, as a result of her complaint, MoSA made Ghalia’s husband commit not to hit Rawan again, or risk losing the transfer. Although he is still violent, he is less so now than before he started receiving MoSA assistance.
Study recommendations and government response
Relevant policy recommendations from the study

The PNCTP could have greater impact on children’s lives and wellbeing if it were more closely linked to other complementary programmes that address the multidimensional nature of poverty and vulnerability and its specific impacts on children. The following measures were recommended:

- **Streamline social workers’ caseload and role**: Social workers should engage with all members of beneficiary families, not just parents, so that they can identify children’s needs and make appropriate referrals.

- **Invest in capacity-building for social workers**: MoSD should provide training for social workers in children’s rights to survival, development, protection and participation, as part of a broader cultural shift away from a policing the PNCTP.

- **Strengthen capacity of other government staff interacting with children, and strengthen referral systems**: Given that the PNCTP aims to reduce household poverty and vulnerability, meeting the needs of children – who face specific challenges and are fundamental to breaking the cycle of poverty – should take a multidimensional approach.
Policy recommendations

• **Develop a broader and better tailored package of comprehensive child-sensitive social protection services:** Although a package of services already exists as part of the PNCTP, additional complementary services should be considered to maximise the programme’s impact on the intersecting social and economic vulnerabilities facing children, including in particular child protection services.

• **Expand coverage and improve quality of psychosocial services:** Necessary to respond to the important number of individuals in beneficiary households – including children and adolescents – experiencing mental and emotional health issues that hinder their ability to pursue a pathway out of poverty with the help of the PNCTP.

• **Work with parents from vulnerable and extremely poor households to improve parenting skills and behaviour towards children:** MoSA, through social workers or community facilitators, could do more at the family and community levels to raise parents’ awareness on issues related to positive parenting, gender equality, non-violent discipline, and the challenges facing adolescents.
Policy influencing and current responses by the MoSD

- MoSD has recently launched the pilot ‘e-government’ in Tulkarem Governorate in the WB. It uses an online system and introduces technology in social protection services/social work. It represents a shift from cash only to case management approach to social protection.

- Online system linked with administrative records from other ministries including MoH and includes a module on needs assessment for households including incidence of domestic violence.

- Pilot is an outcome of several years of advocacy and capacity development support efforts undertaken by various partners, including the EU, World Bank, DFID, WFP and UNICEF.

- MoSD’s senior officials were exposed to a number of international best practices, such as Kenya’s Cash Transfers for OVC Project and Chile’s Solidario Programme.

- UNICEF played an important part in this process. The study gave UNICEF an entry point for engaging MoSD about a large social protection programme that benefits more than 15% of all children in both the West Bank and Gaza.

- After study, UNICEF engaged a national consultant to facilitate discussion on the recommendations and conduct a prioritization exercise to develop an action plan on the CTP.
THANK YOU!