

Cash Transfers, Local Government's Efficiency and Poverty Alleviation: the Case of Davao Region in the Philippines

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Abstract

This paper aims to investigate the relationships between cash transfer programs, efficiency of program implementation and the change in poverty incidence rates. Using secondary data collected from different municipalities in Davao Region, Philippines, we found a positive and statistically significant correlation between the percentages of families enrolled in the program with the change in poverty incidence rate, especially if no quota is imposed in registering beneficiaries in the municipality. We found no evidence of significant relationship between size of the per capita cash transfers and the changes in poverty incidence rates. The efficiency of the local government units in the implementation of the program showed a positive and significant correlation with the changes in the rate of poverty incidence. This finding suggests that the involvement and commitment of LGUs to support the implementation of a nationally-funded poverty reduction program is an enabling mechanism for cash transfer programs to succeed with the end view of achieving a significant reduction in poverty and meeting the target for the Millennium Development Goal (MDG).

Keywords: pantawid pamilyang pilipino program (4ps), philippines, poverty reduction, efficiency scores, cash transfer

INTRODUCTION

The growth of Philippine economy has been robust over the last few years but despite the economic improvement, the percentage of Filipinos living below the poverty line has narrowed only slightly. According to Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA, 2014) the national poverty incidence level in 2012 was 25.2. Comparing trends of poverty rates, the Philippines trails behind its neighbouring Asian countries like China, Indonesia and Vietnam, which also experienced similar poverty rates in the 1980s. According to Chaudhury et al. (2013), the Philippines also lags in terms of progress toward Millennium Development Goal (MDG) targets, primarily due to large inequalities in health and education outcomes between income groups and across regions. As stated in the Philippine Development Plan 2011-2016, the government is focused on diminishing poverty rates. However, the MDG of poverty rate of 14.2% is unlikely to be achieved by 2015. Confronted with these problems, the Philippine government designed and adopted a national anti-poverty program

(2010-2016) and in its fore was the launching of a conditional cash transfer program (CCT), also known as Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps).

The program is central to the government's poverty reduction and social protection strategy. Since the extent and depth of poverty is such that abrupt decline is implausible, the initial thrust of the anti-poverty program is to reduce the burden of poverty by providing outright income, food, education and health services. But the implementation of 4Ps is more than just providing cash transfers to augment the income of poor household in selected municipalities, it is also designed to build capacity and create opportunities for the poor in the course of reducing the burden of poverty as the cash transfers can only be availed subject to their compliance of conditionalities related to education and health. Such investments in the education and health of poor children are expected to break the intergenerational transmission of poverty.

There were several studies that were conducted to examine the importance of CCTs both in the context of the Philippines and also in other countries like Mexico and Brazil. Most of these studies have indicated the significant role that this program plays in poverty reduction. For example, Reyes et al. (2013) posited that 4Ps is by far the largest poverty reduction and social development program the Philippine government has ever conceived. Loureiro (2012) postulated that in Brazil, 'states that reached the level of cash transfer expenditures proposed by the guidelines of the programme more promptly had a more significant reduction in poverty rates' while for the Mexico's *Oportunidades* Program, evaluators claimed that the positive impacts of cash program of this nature can be an effective instrument not only in reducing current poverty but as well as improving the future of children through increased investment in their health and education. It would be noteworthy to know how these cash transfer programs were delivered to beneficiaries wherein the implementation process of which was potentially influenced by the capacity of program implementers.

Subsequently, while the program thrusts of the poverty reduction strategy of the government is focused on the poorest of the poor and on the poorest areas, it is also bent on supporting local government initiatives wherein the capacities of local government to reduce poverty are strengthened and a system for providing incentives to better performing local government units (LGUs) are in place. Such an incentive includes giving of additional funding for their poverty reduction program. Thus, linking cash transfer program and efficiency of the program implementation of CCT at the municipal level with the rate of poverty incidence among population is worthy of an exploratory investigation. It is imperative to find out the relationship between 4Ps and poverty alleviation and also the extent of LGUs initiative to support the national anti-poverty program. Using the case of 4Ps in Davao Region, Philippines this study seeks to provide some evidence of these relationships. The implementation of 4Ps were conducted in three phases, Set 1, Set 2 and Set 3 phases which covers the period from 2008 to 2014. More specifically, this study seeks to find out (i) whether the change in poverty incidence rate from 2006 (before 4Ps implementation) to 2009 (a year after 4Ps implementation) and change in poverty incidence rate from 2009 to 2012 (5 years from 4Ps implementation) is correlated with the implementation of 4Ps in terms of the percentage of families enrolled in 4Ps and the size of per capita cash transfer; and (ii) whether local government unit's (LGUs) efficiency score in 4Ps implementation is

correlated with the change in poverty incidence rate (among population) from 2009-2012.

Hence, the main contribution of this paper is to (i) to provide an assessment of the relationship between the potential impact of conditional cash transfer and the efficiency of local government units in the delivery of an important poverty-alleviation program; (ii) to examine the importance of capacity building of the main program implementers and its relationship to the capacity building of program beneficiaries; and (iii) to analyse the role of capacity building in poverty alleviation, especially in developing country context. This paper is organised as follows: section 2 briefly reviews related literature; section 3 discusses the methodology, section 4 outlines the results and findings and section 5 presents the conclusion and policy implication of the analysis.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Conditional Cash Transfer Programs

Conditional cash transfers reputation as a government strategy to combat poverty is attributed to the opinion that they embody a more politically conventional method to social assistance. Unconditional cash transfer programs are not popular as a social policy program since taxpayers and several opposition politicians view it as dole-outs. The typical arguments that cash transfers are government's hand-outs and are proliferating the attitude of mendicancy have been addressed by making cash transfer conditional on the beneficiaries' commitment in complying with the given conditions. Fiszbien et al (2009) stressed that conditional cash transfer, in a way, alter the notion of social assistance as mere 'hand-outs' to a 'social contract', binding beneficiaries to perform activities that will free them from the bondage of poverty.

Other than the customary goal of social welfare, social policy programs are now magnified to include another purpose, which is social investment (Lindert et al, 2006; Morley and Coady, 2003). With this development, Kakwani et al (2005) highlight that CCTs can now be viewed as both a short and long term approach to poverty alleviation. Providing cash assistance to the chronic poor and the vulnerable segments of the society allows them to cope with their immediate needs and adjust with the negative impacts of different forms of shocks, in the short-run (De Janvry, 2008). Likewise, Valencia Lomeli (2008) notes, that in the short term, CCT programs are more effective in minimising the intensity of poverty than in decreasing its overall incidence. The argument is reasonable considering that the aim of CCT program is to bridge the gap between

the poverty threshold and the family's income in order for them to manage the immediate state of scarcity.

Determinants of CCTs Success

Many factors are associated with the success of CCTs in reaching its goals. According to Handa and Davis (2006), the success of a program depends on the national objectives, institutional capacity and financing constraints of the country in question. Arnold et al (2011) also stress that the CCT experience highlights the importance of institutional capacities for planning, coordination and delivery. A CCT that is designed with features, which include a reliable process of targeting beneficiaries, incorporation of investment in the supply side of the program to complement the demand side, oversight in terms of monitoring of compliance and involvement of the central and local government in program operations indicate a government's commitment to a genuine social reform (Sewall 2008). Other key factors that help shape implementation and influence impact are the quality of administration, monitoring (coverage), choice of payment mechanisms, investment in capacity building, involvement of beneficiaries in designing and monitoring of implementation and integrating complementary interventions (Arnold et al, 2011). Essentially, the quality of administration at the local level in implementing the program is a major factor in achieving the outcome that is perceived by the program.

Studies on Efficiency Measurement of Local Government's CCTs Implementation

In terms of studies pertaining to the management of efficiently implementing the conditional cash transfer programs, empirical evidences is still limited. According to Ferreira et al (2011), this is ironical since various disputes pertaining to the design features of the cash transfer program like targeting, monitoring conditionalities, payment system, transparency and accountability has a great bearing on the quality of management concerned in the implementation of the cash transfer program. This kind of evaluation studies should not be taken for granted since the success or failure of any program implementation is attributed to the managers in an organisation. As pointed out by Cogburn and Schneider (2003), the management capacity of governments has direct impacts on the overall social and economic well-being of its constituents. This view is supported by Hacek (2011) stating that suitable quality level of municipal administration is a basic condition for the existence and development of any activity for the public sector. Another rational argument pointed by Ferreira et al (2011), is that more professional and efficient municipalities enjoying administrative and fiscal

autonomy with access to resources through social projects can generate positive impacts on citizen's quality of life.

A related efficiency study however was conducted by De Janvry et al, 2007 about local governance and efficiency study of the Bolsa Escola in Brazil. They rigorously measure program efficiency at the municipal level and use it to establish correlates between efficiency and municipal features. Another study by Carrillo and Jarrin (2007) focused on the efficient delivery of cash transfers to the poor by improving the design of a CCT in Ecuador. They build and estimate a behavioural dynamic model in order to evaluate the efficiency of current and alternative distribution (payment centres) mechanisms and their finding shows that an adequate design of the delivery of payments can substantially increase the value of cash transfer programs.

METHODOLOGY

We use descriptive statistics and correlation analysis in order to provide evidence of relationship between 4Ps, local government efficiency and poverty incidence rates. A comparison of the rates of poverty incidence from 2006 to 2012 was analysed in order to come up with the trend of poverty incidence rates prior to and after 4Ps implementation. Next, the change in poverty incidence rate from 2006 to 2009 and from 2009-2012 was computed and the results were correlated (using Pearson correlation analysis) with the percentage of 4Ps beneficiaries registered per municipality and with size of the cash transfer per capita.

A Pearson correlation analysis was obtained in order to establish the relationship in the change in poverty incidence rates from 2009-2012 with the LGUs technical efficiency scores in implementing 4Ps. This study made use of the obtained estimation results of technical efficiency scores of LGUs in a different study¹ using similar data set (Catubig et al, Unpublished) The technical efficiency scores were estimated using a two-stage data envelopment analysis (DEA), wherein in the first stage of DEA, the efficient frontier and the LGU-level efficiency scores were first estimated and in the second stage, these efficiency scores (pure technical efficiency-vrs) were regressed against identified exogenous/environmental factors that are beyond the control of the LGUs to estimate their impacts on efficiency.

¹ The title of the study is 'Operational Efficiency of Local Government Units and its Relationship to Constituent's Quality of Life: The Case of 4Ps in Davao Region, Philippines.'

This study used a secondary, pooled cross-section administrative data collected from the four provinces of Davao Region, Philippines, namely: Davao del Sur, Davao del Norte, Compostela Valley and Davao Oriental. This study made use of a pooled cross-section data as this can be useful for evaluating the impact of policy interventions and also because observations across different time periods allows for policy analysis. While there are about a total of 48 municipalities in all four provinces, there were only 24 municipalities included in the sample, because these were the municipalities covered by the phases of program implementation (Sets 1, 2 and 3 phases). The periods covered for the study vary for each set as follows: Set 1 (2008-2014); Set 2 (2009-2014) and Set 3 (2010-2014), this is because the start of program implementation for each set also varies. The intent of this study is to cover at least a five-year period of implementation as this is the duration of the program before a beneficiary exits.

Basic descriptions of the variables used in this study are reported in Table 1. The basic descriptive statistics comprised the rate of poverty incidence² of 2006, 2009 and 2012, the percentage rate of enrolled beneficiaries in 4Ps per municipality and the monthly per capita cash transfer.

Table 1: Basic description of variables used in the analysis

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Poverty Incidence Rate 2006	33.60	9.99	23.7	50.5
Poverty Incidence Rate 2009	34.85	11.08	24.8	54.4
Poverty Incidence Rate 2012	34.82	6.77	24.4	45.8
Percentage of Family Enrolled in 4Ps*	0.05	0.04	0.0003	0.28
Average Per Capita Transfer (monthly)**	1112.59	455.83	253.22	2340.98

*computed as number of registered beneficiaries/population per municipality

**computed as total cash transfer disbursed per municipality/number of beneficiaries/no. of months in payroll

The average poverty incidence rate from 2006 to 2009 has increased despite the implementation of 4Ps in the late 2008 and early 2009, but it has improved in 2012 with only a very slight decline. The average percentage of family enrolled in 4Ps per municipality is too minimal at only about 5% of the total population while the average per capita transfer is Php1112.50.

² The available poverty incidence rate is by province with a minimum rate of 23.7 and the maximum rate of 50.5

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The trend of poverty incidence rate among population by province prior to (2006) and after 4Ps implementation (2009-2012) is illustrated in Figure 1 below.

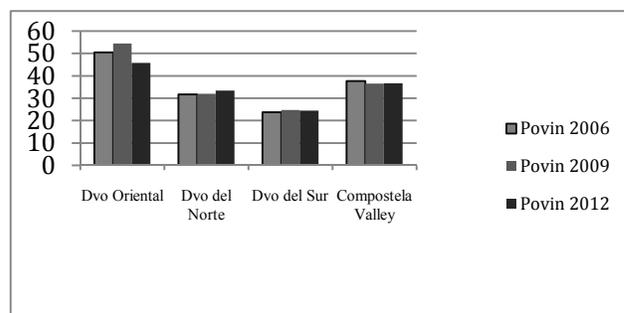


Figure 1: Poverty incidence among population by province.

The results show that municipalities in Davao Oriental has consistently high rate of poverty incidence from 2006-2012 compared to other three provinces. However, while the rate poverty in Davao Oriental increased from 2006 to 2009, it has also shown noticeable decline from 2009-2012. The province of Compostela Valley ranked next to Davao Oriental with its poverty incidence rate showing minimal improvement from 2006-2012 with a declining trend. Davao del Norte's rate of poverty incidence is not as expected since instead of a decline in poverty incidence rate, the figures showed increase rates from 2006-2012. The province of Davao del Sur has the lowest rate of poverty incidence among population of all the provinces in Davao region and the rates of trend is similar to that of Davao Oriental, however the decline from 2009 to 2012 is not as pronounced as in Davao Oriental.

The number of municipalities per province included in this study are as follows: 5 municipalities out of 11 from Davao Oriental (Caraga, Manay, Tarragona, Governor Generoso and San Isidro); 9 municipalities out of 11 from Davao del Norte (Asuncion, Carmen, Kapalong, New Corella, Panabo, Santo Tomas, Talaingod and Island Garden city of Samal); 7 municipalities out of 15 from Davao del Sur (Davao city, Don Marcelino, Jose Abad Santos, Sarangani, Kiblawan, Sta. Maria and Malita); and 2 municipalities out of 11 from Compostela Valley (Compostela and Laak). It should be noted that while Davao del Norte has the most number of municipalities covered during the first three sets of 4Ps implementation, the rate of poverty incidence in the province has not improved much unlike that of Compostela Valley with only two

municipalities (18%) covered but the incidence rate has decline, albeit, very slow.

Another way of looking at the trends in poverty incidence rate is by computing the change in poverty incidence rate from 2006 to 2009 and 2009 and 2012. Figure 2 illustrates the distinct decline in poverty incidence from 2009-2012 in Davao Oriental compared to the other provinces, although, it also manifested the highest increase in poverty incidence rate prior to the 4Ps implementation in 2008. Compostela Valley's change in poverty incidence rate decline from 2009-2012 was negligible compared to its decline from 2006 to 2009. On the other hand, Davao del Sur's change in poverty incidence rate was not consistent for two periods as the poverty incidence increased from 2006-2009 but slowly declined from 2009-2012. Davao del Norte's rate was exactly the opposite of Compostela Valley as the province's change in poverty incidence continued to increase despite 4Ps implementation and the most number of municipalities in the province covered during the first three sets of implementation.

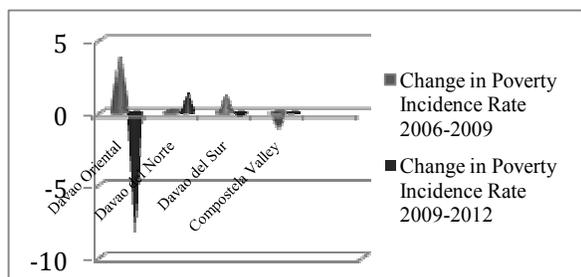


Figure 2: Change in poverty incidence rate for

Using the computed change in poverty incidence rates from 2006-2009 and 2009-2012, the results were correlated with the variables related to 4Ps implementation like percentage of families enrolled in 4Ps and the average monthly per capita cash transfer using the Pearson correlation analysis in order to find out if these variables are correlated with each other. Table 2 presents the correlation coefficient of the two variables versus the change in poverty incidence rate for two periods.

Table 2: Correlation coefficients using Pearson correlation analysis

Variables	Change in Poverty Incidence Rate 2006-2009	Change in Poverty Incidence Rate 2009-2012
Percentage of families enrolled in 4Ps	0.241 (0.00)	0.037 (>5%)
Average per capita cash transfer (monthly)	-0.1759 (0.0001)	-0.034 (>5%)

Note: () – p-value, statistically significant at 5% level.

The results of the correlation analysis suggest that the change in the rate of poverty incidence prior to the implementation of 4Ps in 2006 with that of the rate of poverty incidence five years after the implementation illustrate positive correlation between percentage of families enrolled in 4Ps but negative correlation between the average per capita cash transfer. The implication of the relationship between the percentage of families enrolled in 4Ps and the change in poverty incidence signifies the higher coverage of poor families during the initial roll out and subsequently lower coverage of poor families during the succeeding roll out due to quota per municipality. However, it was noted that the correlation coefficients of the variables were statistically significant from 2006-2009 but the correlation coefficients were insignificant from 2009-2012 at 5% level. A further illustration can clarify the correlation between percentage of families and per capita transfer with that of change in poverty incidence rate as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Average percentage of families enrolled in 4Ps and average per capita transfer per municipality

City/Municipality	Average Percentage of Families Enrolled in 4Ps	Average Per Capita Cash Transfer (in Pesos/month)
Davao Oriental	5.8	1132.80
Caraga	6.9	1077.06
Manay	6.8	1035.30
Tarragona	13.3	1086.98
Governor Generoso	0.8	1231.85
San Isidro	1.3	1232.79
Davao del Norte	1.6	1164.35
Asuncion	0.8	1115.45
Braulio E Dujali	1.5	1122.53
Carmen	0.6	1148.38
Island Garden city of Samal	0.6	1233.48
Kapalong	0.5	1219.26
New Corella	0.9	1150.43
Panabo	0.2	1194.76
Santo Tomas	0.4	1256.21
Talaingod	9.0	1038.64
Davao del Sur	7.9	1065.12
Davao city	1.5	1086.70
Malita	9.9	1069.19
Sta. Maria	10.0	1088.71
Don Marcelino	13.3	1056.32
Jose Abad Santos	10.4	1021.10
Sarangani	11.5	978.30
Kiblawan	5.7	1147.22
Magsaysay	0.8	1073.42
Compostela Valley	4.8	1133.09
Compostela	1.2	1088.51
Laak	8.5	1177.66

The average percentage of families enrolled in 4Ps appears to be very low in coverage in terms of the entire population per municipality. The province of Davao del

Sur has the highest percentage of families enrolled with an average of 7.9% of the entire population, followed by Davao Oriental, Compostela Valley and Davao del Norte. This could explain why despite the positive correlation between the percentages of families enrolled in 4Ps and the rate of poverty incidence, the coefficient is statistically insignificant during the fourth to fifth year of implementation as there could be changes in the number of registered beneficiaries from the first two years due to factor like compliance with conditionalities. Moreover, the very low coverage of Davao del Norte could also elucidate why the poverty incidence rate of the province has not improved since. This finding corroborates the study made by Hagen-Zanker and Himmelstine (2014) stating that one factor that mediates impact of cash transfer is due to low coverage, which could show lower impacts on poverty reduction. Likewise in the same study, it also pointed out that a significantly low amount of cash transfer compared to the standard international poverty line is another reason why the impact of cash transfer on poverty reduction is not obvious. This is true in the case of Davao Region since the highest average per capita transfer is Php1164.35 for the province of Davao del Norte followed by Compostela Valley, Davao Oriental and Davao del Sur. The computed highest average per capita transfer for this study which is Php1164.35, is 13.75% lower compared to the common international poverty line which is about Php1350.00.³ This therefore clarifies the extent of the negative correlation between the rate of poverty incidence with the average per capita transfer of 4Ps. This also implies that the size of cash transfer does have an effect on the poverty incidence. In this case, it is assumed that cash transfer received by the beneficiaries may alleviate poverty, but the additional resource does not necessarily make a family, non-poor if the amount of cash they received is still below a threshold of acceptable income.

As mentioned above, we hypothesise that there is a relationship between the efficiency of local government units (LGUs) implementing the 4Ps and the change in the rate of poverty incidence from 2006-2009 and 2009-2012. The possible relationship between efficiency and change in poverty incidence was examined using simple correlation analysis. The change in poverty incidence was re-coded in order to reflect improvement in poverty status such that a negative value indicates a reduction in poverty incidence and a positive value indicates an increase in poverty incidence. Therefore, a positive correlation coefficient indicates that as the efficiency of LGUs increases, the rate of poverty incidence decreases

³ Conversion rate of US\$1=Php45.00. Common international poverty line is US\$1/day=Php45/day x 30 days = Php1350/month

and vice-versa. The correlation coefficient is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Correlation coefficients between LGUs efficiency scores and change in poverty incidence

Variable	Change in Poverty Incidence (2006-2009)	Change in Poverty Incidence (2009-2012)
LGUs technical efficiency score (Variable Returns to Scale)	-0.112 (0.014)	0.365 (0.000)

Note: () – p-value, statistically significant at 5% level.

The correlation coefficient between the LGUs technical efficiency score with the change in poverty incidence rate from 2006-2009 showed negative but significant relationship. Considering that 4Ps was implemented for some municipalities in the last quarter of 2008 and for the others during the mid of 2009, this explains why there is no significant correlation between the two variables. Most LGUs in the study have either minimal or no involvement at all during the initial implementation of 4Ps. Similarly, the change in poverty incidence can hardly be felt during the first year of 4Ps implementation. However, the result of the correlation analysis for the period 2009-2012 showed positive and significant relationship between LGUs technical efficiency score and the change of poverty incidence. In the five years of 4Ps implementation, the support and commitment of LGUs in helping carry out the national program of poverty reduction is already observable. Hence, the LGUs efficiency in implementing 4Ps at the local level can help ease the incidence of poverty of their constituents.

Moreover, the findings above was complemented by a further correlation analysis between the LGUs efficiency scores and the yearly poverty incidence rate which provided a significant negative correlation coefficients (-0.385, -0.392 and -0.270) for years 2006, 2009 and 2012, respectively.

CONCLUSION

This study draws salient information regarding the relationship between cash transfers, LGUs implementation efficiency scores and poverty alleviation in the case of Davao Region, Philippines. First, the result of the correlation analysis revealed positive and significant relationship between the change in poverty incidence and the percentage of families enrolled in the cash transfer program during the initial year of 4Ps’ roll out but during the succeeding years of the implementation, the relationship became statistically insignificant. The low coverage of poor families in a municipality is one factor to consider in this case.

Furthermore, according to Fernandez and Olfindo (2011) during the first and second phases of 4Ps expansion, the program aimed to enrol almost all (90%) eligible poor families in the selected municipalities unlike in the third phase, wherein the selected municipality were given a quota for the number of households that could be enrolled in the program. Such an arrangement resulted to low take up rates in the later years of implementation and it was also compounded by other factors like implementation pressures (tight deadlines) and low institutional capacity at the municipal level.

Second, the correlation between changes in poverty incidence with that of average per capita transfer revealed negative and statistically insignificant relationship. This finding suggests that the size of the cash transfer matters in cash transfer programs. Thus, even if the cash transfer received may alleviate poverty but if the size of the cash transfer is still below a threshold of acceptable income, poverty incidence would still not improve. On a similar note but in a different context, if the size of the cash transfer is also considered by beneficiaries as a substitute rather than an augmentation to their income, this becomes a drawback as this reduces the incentives for beneficiaries to find work and would simply depend from the program.

Third, correlating LGUs implementation efficiency scores with that of changes in poverty incidence showed negative but significant relationship during the early years of implementation but the relationship improved in the succeeding years resulting to positive and statistically significant relationship. This finding suggest that the involvement and commitment of LGUs to support the implementation of a nationally-funded poverty reduction program is an enabling dynamics in order for the cash transfer program to succeed with the end view of achieving a significant reduction in poverty and meeting the target for the MDG.

Fourth, the findings of this study can also provide policy direction for the national and local government implementing the 4Ps. Since the result of this study revealed positive and significant relationship between LGUs efficiency scores and that of poverty alleviation, the national government should also truly implement the thrust of their poverty reduction program of providing incentives to better performing local government units (LGUs). In this way, the national government not only augment the capacity of LGUs but it is also a way of motivating LGUs improve their performance efficiency in implementing the 4Ps. As pointed out in Policy brief no. 3 (2011), the success of cash transfer schemes has

always been associated with continued and enlarged investment in public services.

Finally, given data availability, a rigorous quantitative analysis should provide a more complete picture of the actual impact of the CCTs on poverty incidence of the target municipalities. This will also allow us to examine the influence of factors, in addition to the characteristics of local government units that may or may not influence the efficacy and effectiveness of the delivery of this program, especially in targeting key social indicators, such as education, health, poverty, consumption, etc.

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