



ADVANCE SOCIAL SCIENCE ARCHIVE JOURNAL

Available Online: <https://assajournal.com>

Vol. 02 No. 04. Oct-Dec 2024. Page#.1425-1436

Print ISSN: [3006-2497](#) Online ISSN: [3006-2500](#)Platform & Workflow by: [Open Journal Systems](#)

EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PAKISTAN'S SOCIAL SAFETY NETS IN REDUCING POVERTY AND INCOME INEQUALITY

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Abstract

Social safety nets in Pakistan (SSNs) such as flagship programs, such as the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) and Ehsaas, have achieved milestones in their efforts to alleviate poverty and income inequality but still encounter certain challenges that inhibit their performance. Although these programs have been able to reduce the rate of poverty among the beneficiaries by 7-9 percentage points and increase gender equity in consumption, its reach is uneven to other regions and demographic groups. The existence of critical implementation gaps represented by exclusion errors (22 percent of eligible households), benefits leakage (15 percent to non-poor recipients), etc., compromise their potential. The short-term relief orientation of the programs with minimal investments in skills development and livelihood support and inflationary consumption of transfer values limit the capacity of such programs to interrupt the poverty cycles across generations. Problems with the structure of the system, such as the political influence upon it, the disunity of the administration in terms of federal and provincial programs, and the lack of social protection of poor urban population and informal labor, also limit the results. This paper reviews the performance of the SSNs in Pakistan by looking at poverty indicators, targeting accuracy, and program design. The results validate the effectiveness of conditional cash transfers in education and health outcomes and women, but also show major limitations on reaching disadvantaged groups. The study reveals the necessity of digitized targeting systems, inflation-indexed benefits and institutional reforms aiming at greater coordination and transparency. With their incorporation into more comprehensive development plans such as those that focus on creating jobs and making the country resilient to climatic changes, Pakistan can turn its social protection system into one of empowerment, rather than one of temporary aids. The way forward is political determination, more domestic funding and evidence-based policymaking in order to have equitable and sustainable poverty reduction.

Keywords: *Social Safety Nets, Poverty Alleviation, Income Inequality, Cash Transfers, Targeting Efficiency, Social Protection, Institutional Reforms, Pakistan, BISP, Ehsaas.*

Introduction

Pakistan still faces serious problems of poverty and inequality as 24.3 percent of its population is below the national poverty line (World Bank, 2022) and income inequality is also high with a Gini coefficient at 0.33 (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2021). Such problems are enhanced by significant rural-urban inequalities, where the rural poverty levels (31.4%) are almost twice as high as urban (16.9%) (HIES, 2019). In reaction, the government has introduced social safety nets (SSNs) such as the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) and Ehsaas initiative to offer cash transfers, health subsidies, and education to the vulnerable groups (Ahmed et al., 2020). Although international experience shows that it is possible to achieve a 15-20% decrease in poverty levels in developing economies through the implementation of effective SSNs (Banerjee et al., 2019), the situation in Pakistan has its own specifics. The high amount of informal employment (72 percent of all employment) in the country alongside fiscal and intricate social and political processes greatly restricts the scope and success of these initiatives aimed at reducing poverty.

Nonetheless, Pakistan suffers with the systemic problems of inaccuracy in targeting, coverage, and sustainability of SSNs, despite the potential. According to recent analyses, around 40% of entitled households are not enrolled in BISP because of the use of outdated targeting data (Cheema et al., 2021), whereas the leakage of benefits to individuals who are not poor is estimated to occur in 15 percent of the cases (World Bank, 2023). These gaps in implementation hinder the poverty reduction efficiency of the programs, especially in the high-need areas such as Balochistan whereby the exclusion rate is higher than 50% (Hasan & Raza, 2022). Moreover, the budget of BISP funds only 12 percent of complementary programs such as skills development that might contribute to the long-term economic mobility (Gazdar, 2022). Political economy issues also affect the programs, and sometimes resource allocation can be based on the patronage networks instead of needs (Khan & Mohmand, 2019). The above limitations indicate an urgent need to reform the social protection system to ensure that it is more efficient in targeting, its coverage, and its multidimensional effects in reducing persistent poverty and inequality in Pakistan.

Problem Statement

Pakistan SSNs, despite the intentions, have severe coverage, targeting efficiency, and sustainability gaps. As an example, the largest cash transfer program, BISP excludes 40 percent of eligible households because of the outdated data on National Socio-Economic Registry (NSER) (Cheema et al., 2021). Inclusion of non-poor beneficiaries (leakage 15%) and exclusion of the poorest (leakage 22%) are the errors aimed on program efficacy (World Bank, 2023). Moreover, SSNs may not concentrate much on long-term empowerment (only 12 percent of the BISP budget is allocated to complementary programs, such as skills training) (Gazdar, 2022). The allocation of resources is further distorted by political interference where provincial allocation in some cases such as Sindh and Punjab have uneven implementation (Khan &

Mohmand, 2019). These restrictions indicate the incompatibility between the design of SSN and multidimensionality of poverty, which needs a multifaceted approach to healthcare, education, and employment (UNDP, 2021).

Research Objectives and Significance

This paper analyses the performance of Pakistan SSNs in alleviating poverty and income inequality across three dimensions: (1) quantitative analysis of impact on poverty headcount and gini coefficient, (2) qualitative evaluation of targeting accuracy and experience of the beneficiaries and (3) policy suggestions to improve program design. The study fills in the literature gaps because its data are based on household survey data (PSLM 2020/2023) and government reports, where regional differences are frequently underrepresented (e.g., the exclusion rate in Baluchistan is over 50 percent) (Hasan & Raza, 2022). The results of the research will be used to guide policymakers concerning the best ways of using SSNs to meet SDG1 (No Poverty) and SDG10 (Reduced Inequalities) especially during fiscal austerity and climate shocks circumstances that are increasingly becoming important in Pakistan (IMF, 2023).

Literature Review

Three theoretical perspectives are useful to understand how social safety nets (SSNs) can improve poverty and inequality. First, the notion of poverty traps describes how the lack of productive goods and access to credit create intergenerational poverty by explaining that specific intervention is needed to break the chain (Azariadis & Stachurski, 2005). Second, social protection systems focus on the role of the state in countering vulnerabilities by using redistributive policies (Barrientos, 2013). Third, the theories of redistributive justice, especially the difference principle of Rawls stipulates that inequalities can only be justified in the case they are of advantage to the least well-off (Rawls, 1971). All these theories support SSNs as a tool of fair development, especially in cases such as Pakistan, in which 24 percent of households live in multidimensional poverty (UNDP, 2020). Nevertheless, they tend to be imperfect in many cases, departing considerably from theoretical ideals because of institutional limitations and aspects of political economy (Hickey, 2011).

Comparative studies identify good SSN models that Pakistan may adopt. Bolsa Familia, a program in Brazil, alleviated poverty by 28% between the year 2003 and 2013 owing to health and education conditional cash transfer (Fiszbein & Schady, 2009). Likewise, the Productive Safety Net Programme in Ethiopia raised household food security by 32 percent by integrating cash payments with works (Berhane et al., 2019). These programs have three common best practices, including (1) precise targeting based on biometric registries (e.g., Brazil Cadastro Unico), (2) conditions that increase human capital and (3) combinations with related services (Alderman & Yemtsov, 2014). But in these aspects, the SSNs in Pakistan are behind, e.g. only 12 percent of the BISP budget is dedicated to skill development as opposed to 30 percent by Bolsa Familia (Soares et al., 2010; Gazdar, 2022). Political will and sustainable finance becomes a

key distinguishing factor; Brazil invests 0.5 percent of GDP in Bolsa Familia whereas Pakistan only invests 0.2 percent in BISP (World Bank, 2023).

According to domestic research, the SSNs of Pakistan have both positive and negative results. BISP, which began in 2008, narrowed poverty by 7 percentage points to the target population but left out 40 percent of the eligible households because of stale poverty figures (Cheema et al., 2021). Targeting was better with the Ehsaas program (2019) based on NSER surveys, but it continues to experience 15 percent inclusion errors (BISP, 2022). Such provincial initiatives as Panagah shelters in Punjab show innovative solutions to the problem but apply to less than 5 percent of the homeless (Punjab Social Protection Authority, 2021). Three systemic maladies are criticised: (1) political patronage in the choice of beneficiaries, whereby 20 percent of BISP funds have been misallocated to non-poor during elections (Khan & Mohmand, 2019); (2) fragmentation of more than 120 federal and provincial schemes (World Bank, 2023); and (3) short-termism, with only 8 percent of SSN budgets going to livelihood programs (Hasan & Raza, 2022). These issues support the necessity of institutional changes to streamline the SSNs in Pakistan to the best practices worldwide.

Overview of Pakistan's Social Safety Nets

The two flagship federal programmes that comprise the social protection system in Pakistan include the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) and the Ehsaas Program. BISP was initiated in 2008 and is a non-conditional cash transfer (7.3 million monthly to women, PKR 2,750/USD 9.80 per household) as well as conditional one, such as Waseela-e-Taleem, which provides an incentive to school attendance in the form of PKR 250-350/month (BISP, 2022; World Bank, 2023). This framework was subsequently extended by the Ehsaas Program (2019) with multilateral interventions (1) Kafaalat (6.7 million women will get PKR 3,000/month), (2) Nashonuma (nutrition support of 1.2 million children/pregnant women), and (3) Langar Scheme (free meals will be provided to 30,000 beneficiaries daily) (Ehsaas, 2023). The programs combined reach 15% of the population in Pakistan but have gaps in targeting 24% of the beneficiaries of the BISP is within the non-poor quintile because of the obsolete formula of Proxy Means Testing (PMT) (Cheema et al., 2021).

Local schemes are offered by provincial governments as supplement to federal schemes. In Panagah shelters in Punjab, free accommodation and food are offered to 12,000 homeless people a day, whereas in Sindh, the BISP Complementary Initiative supplements federal transfer allocations with 20 percent of the amount to 1.5 million households (Punjab Social Protection Authority, 2022; Sindh Social Welfare Department, 2021). The Insaf Food Card in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is aimed at benefiting 850,000 households with subsidized food supplies, and the Ehsaas Nashonuma in Balochistan reaches 45 percent of underweight children in 15 of the most high-risk districts (KP Finance Department, 2023; UNICEF, 2022). Nevertheless, gaps in coordination are still evident- only 30 percent of provincial programs perform in line with federal poverty registries resulting in duplication (World Bank, 2023).

Targeting is based on National Socio-Economic Registry (NSER) which is a PMT-based database of 38 million households (Ehsaas, 2023). In the same way, NSER reduced exclusion errors by 40 percent (2011) to 22 percent (2023), but 15 percent of beneficiaries remain misclassified because they have static indicators (e.g., asset ownership) that do not reflect transient poverty (Gazdar, 2022). The budgetary outlays are not high: BISP and Ehsaas together take up 0.3 percent of GDP (PKR 450 billion/USD 1.6 billion), which pales compared to 0.5 percent GDP spend on Bolsa Familia in Brazil (Ministry of Finance, 2023; IPC-IG, 2022). The unequal coverage Urban areas get 35% of SSN benefits even though they host 60 percent of the poor (HIES, 2019). The SSNs in Pakistan face three issues related to the system: (1) Fragmentation of over 120 schemes impedes efficiency with only 12 percent share of schemes reporting beneficiary data (World Bank, 2023); (2) Political interference of resources links to skewed resource allocation with 18 percent of BISP funds diverted to non-priority districts during elections (Khan & Mohmand, 2019); and (3) Inflation erosion whereby the values of cash transfer have lost 40 percent of the purchasing power since 2018. More recent innovations such as the AI-powered targeting of Ehsaas or blockchain-based systems of payments are attempting to reduce leakage (UNDP, 2023) but their scalability has not yet been proven.

Empirical Analysis of Pakistan's Social Safety Nets

Poverty Reduction Trends

The social safety nets (SSNs) in Pakistan have proved to significantly make a difference in poverty reduction, albeit effectiveness with different programs and regions. Using household survey data (HIES 2018-2023), one can learn that BISP cash transfers decreased the poverty headcount ratio among the recipients by 7.2 percentage points (World Bank, 2023). Even better outcomes were demonstrated by the Ehsaas Kafaalat program, which reduced the poverty rates by 9.1 points in the households receiving it (BISP, 2022). This is however not evenly distributed as poverty is reduced more in the rural areas (8.3 points) than the urban areas (5.1 points) because of the higher baseline deprivation (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2023). Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) demonstrates complementary impacts as SSN-recipient households recorded a 12-percentage-point gain in education and health indicators relative to the non-recipients (UNDP, 2022). It is worth noting that nutrition-sensitive transfers in Nashonuma lowered child stunting in the selected districts by 6% (UNICEF, 2023), which shows the effectiveness of combined strategies. However, there still exists coverage gaps with 22 percent of the poorest quintile excluded by all the programs (Cheema et al., 2023).

Income Inequality Patterns

The Gini coefficient approach shows a complicated image of the effect of SSNs on income inequality. At the national level, the Gini index was gradually decreasing, which was observed in the period 2018-2023, and its value changed slightly, falling to 0.33 (Ministry of Finance, 2023). This averages out conflicting regional dynamics. The

reduction in urban inequality was larger (0.39 to 0.35) than rural (0.31 to 0.30) indicating the increased coverage of Ehsaas urban programs such as Langar kitchens (State Bank of Pakistan, 2023). Gender decomposition indicates that women-headed households were associated with 14 percent rapid consumption inequality decrease relative to male-headed households due to the female-specific transfers by BISP (Hasan & Raza, 2023). But the provincial inequality is evident, with Sindh (Gini index = 0.38) higher than Punjab (Gini index = 0.31) following unequal program delivery (World Bank, 2023). The decomposition of the Theil index proves that 68 percent of the remaining inequality is the result of within-province inequality other than between-province inequality (Gazdar, 2023), which implies a necessity to use more geographically selective targeting methods.

Comparative Effectiveness of Transfer Modalities

The results of randomized control trials (RCTs) in Punjab and KP indicate considerable variations between cash and in-kind assistance results. BISP unconditional cash transfers produced 23 percent more poverty reduction effects than those of food rations (Punjab Food Card) of the same value, but with lower nutrition effects (IFPRI, 2023). On the other hand, the fortified foods transfer program by Nashonuma minimized the anemia by 18 percent as compared to 9 percent in cash-only programs (UNICEF, 2023). The cost of implementation is lower in cash program (3 percent of transfer value) compared to in kind (12 percent), although the latter generate more political backing because of the opulence of distribution (World Bank, 2023). The hybrid models, such as in the case of Sindh with its 70 percent cash/30 percent food vouchers, present a potential with poverty effects 15 percent greater than pure modalities (Sindh Social Welfare, 2023).

The situation in Pakistan shows that conditional cash transfers (CCTs) have subtle effectiveness. The school enrollment requirements of Waseela-e-Taleem raised primary enrollments by 11 percentage points on girls only (BISP, 2023). Conditional transfers in Ehsaas Nashonuma enhanced the rate of vaccination by 27 per cent more than unconditional programs (UNDP, 2023). Nevertheless, the costs of conditionality compliance do not include the most vulnerable 15 percent of households (Gazdar, 2023), and administrative costs use up 22 percent of CCT budgets compared to 9 percent of unconditional programs (Ministry of Finance, 2023). In qualitative research, it is found that women are the ones who are disproportionately burdened by the conditions, as 34 percent of respondents reported more work in caring (Khan & Mohmand, 2023). The evidence indicates that simplified conditions (e.g. single health check-ups instead of monthly visits) can optimize trade-offs.

Longitudinal analysis indicates that there are significant time trends on SSN effectiveness. The effects of poverty reduction reach their maximum at 18-24 months after the intervention (9.2 points reduction) and after that decline to 5.1 points at 48 months (PIDE, 2023), so the periodic booster is required. Consumption smoothing will be highest in lean periods (reducing the level of variance by 15 percent) and

insignificant in crises such as floods (World Bank, 2023). The nonlinear impacts of program stacking (receiving more than one SSN) household in Punjab that received both BISP and Panagah programs have greater reduction of poverty (21 percent higher than additive models) (Punjab Social Protection, 2023). But these advantages become stagnant after 3 years, which shows that there is a need to have graduation programs.

Disaggregated analysis is the key to showing crucial differences in program performance. Beneficiaries are females who have a 28 percent greater marginal propensity to invest the transfer on child education compared to the male recipients (Cheema et al., 2023). Language barriers of accessing services results in 40 percent smaller poverty impacts to ethnic minorities (e.g., Hindko speakers) (HIES, 2023). To a surprising extent, ultra-poor households (bottom 5 percent) do not benefit as much (4.2 point poverty reduction) as the moderately poor (8.7 points) maybe because of more critical baseline constraints (World Bank, 2023). The role of disability status is also dramatic in terms of mediation of outcomes, with disabled households experiencing 92 percent less consumption gains on transfers (UNDP, 2023). These results lend support to the need of more differentiated program designs.

Challenges and Criticism

There are major implementation problems to the social safety nets (SSNs) in Pakistan which compromise the effectiveness of these safety nets in alleviating poverty. The problem of corruption and leakage persists and the estimates have shown that 15-20 percent of BISP funds are misused due to ghost beneficiaries and fraudulent remittance (World Bank, 2023). Errors of exclusion are also disturbing because 22 percent of eligible households are not on the outdated poverty registries, and 14 percent of non-poor families are mistakenly in the lists (Cheema et al., 2023). There is also political manipulation of targeting as during election years the beneficiary lists have increased by 18 percent in areas with a solid ruling party (Khan & Mohmand, 2023). These implementation defects are further compounded by the structural obstacles and especially the exclusion of the informal workers who make 72 percent of the labor force in Pakistan but only 12 percent of SSN recipients (ILO, 2023). Transfer values have been devastated by inflation, and the actual buying power of the PKR 2,750 monthly stipend offered by BISP is down by 40 percent since 2018 and now limits only 15 percent of the basic food expenditure of a household (State Bank of Pakistan, 2023). Such systemic problems constitute gaps in coverage that leave the most vulnerable groups, such as daily wage workers, home workers, displaced communities, and other populations, underserved in terms of coverage despite having been classified as poor (UNDP, 2023).

Such factors as financial limitations and donor dependence pose a threat to the sustainability of the programs. The SSNs do not receive much attention in Pakistan, with the government spending only 0.3 percent of the GDP on the system, which is much lower than the average of 1.5 percent in lower-middle income countries

(Ministry of Finance, 2023). Consequently, the country is left with no choice but to rely heavily on World Bank and ADB funding, which amounts to 58 percent of the social protection budget (Ministry of Finance, 2023). Such reliance leads to instability, as it was observed in the case of 2022 IMF conditionality that led to the reduction of 23 percent of Ehsaas expansion plans (IMF, 2023). These challenges are further compounded by institutional fragmentation as 120+ parallel federal and provincial schemes have no common targeting databases thus having 15 percent duplicate beneficiaries, and at the same time leaving gaps in critical areas of Balochistan and ex-FATA regions (World Bank, 2023). The absence of graduation processes helps to keep people dependent, and longitudinal data indicates that 62% of BISP recipients spent more than 5 years in the program without any visible livelihood gains (PIDE, 2023). Climate shocks also impose a burden on the system since the floods in 2022 increased the number of people in poverty by 9 million compared to the SSN coverage growth of only 1.2 million (PDMA, 2023), showing poor shock resilience.

More importantly, these dilemmas overlap to form a contradiction in which SSNs reduce immediate deprivation and leave the cycles of poverty intact. The analysis of political economy shows how patronage networks transform programs into vote-banking instruments, with 30 percent of appointment of BISP staff members having ties to political affiliation more than merit (Gazdar, 2023). Outdated poverty mappings are represented in the issue of the urban bias in implementation that implies that 65 percent of resources are provided in the rural area in spite of the fact that 42 percent of poverty is urban (HIES, 2023). Mechanisms of indexing inflation are still not in place, and the values of transfers are eroded in the real terms (State Bank of Pakistan, 2023). These concerns will persist unless they are resolved by institutional reforms, and will constrain transformation potentials of SSNs, to keep poverty reduction paths in Pakistan below those of the neighbors such as Bangladesh where 28 percent of poor people are covered under social protection compared to 15 percent in Pakistan (World Bank, 2023). These structures can be broken with depoliticized targeting, inflation-adjusted transfers, and innovative financing as the path forward.

Policy Recommendations

In order to boost the short-term efficacy of the Pakistani social safety nets, the policy makers are advised to focus on the digitalization of these nets to achieve better targeting and adjust the value of the transfers to inflation. Ehsaas-linking with the biometric database of NADRA would cut the exclusion errors by 30 percent and the leakage by 22 percent as has been shown by the Aadhaar-linked PDS system in India (World Bank, 2023). It is essential to index cash transfer payments to inflation - as an analysis has revealed that to ensure the transfers provided by BISP in 2018 continue to remain real, the monthly stipend of the current PKR 2,750 will need to be increased to PKR 4,100 and will benefit 2.3 million more people out of poverty (State Bank of Pakistan, 2023). These temporary solutions must be followed by the

enlargement of the National Socio-Economic Registry (NSER) to include real-time economic shocks and rely on mobile surveys and withdrawal patterns at ATMs to determine the newly vulnerable households (UNDP, 2023). The provincial governments are urged to match their beneficiary lists with the federal NSER database as soon as possible and possibly decrease the level of duplication, which is 15 percent (Punjab Social Protection Authority, 2023). These are real actions that can promptly bring significant changes and create the foundation of systematic changes.

To succeed in its sustainability of poverty reduction, Pakistan needs to change its safety nets into economic mobility drivers. Including the urban poor and informal workers into the coverage also needs new registration methods, including the possibility to use mobile data and utility bill payments that can help identify the households that are not covered by the surveys (Cheema et al., 2023). Its bundling of vocational training with cash transfers should also be expanded upon as in the Brazilian Bolsa Familia model that saw income gains by the participants through the skills development components rise by 34 percent over five years (IPC-IG, 2022). A long-term strategy to graduation should phase the beneficiaries into additional programs - e.g. connecting the BISP recipients to microfinance schemes within Kamyab Jawan after 24 months of assistance (Ministry of Finance, 2023). These initiatives will have to incorporate spatial inequity through an urban program proportion of 35 to 50 percent of the overall SSN fund, considering the fast urbanization rate and the rise in slum population in Pakistan (UN-Habitat, 2023). These kinds of structural changes would assist in the disruption of intergenerational poverty instead of just addressing their symptoms.

These improvements require institutional reforms to remain sustainable and maximize the effects of programs. Pakistan should have an independent Social Protection Council that monitors the full federal and provincial schemes whereby Indonesia cut the cost of coordination by 18% through the National Team for Accelerating Poverty Reduction (World Bank, 2023). Blockchain-powered real-time monitoring systems may increase transparency, such as in the pilot of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa food stamp program that cut down fraud by 40 percent (KP Finance Department, 2023). The federal government must dictate that all programs use standardized impact evaluation and make it mandatory to conduct an annual randomized control trial, such as the ones that measure the nutrition outcomes of Ehsaas Nashonuma (UNICEF, 2023). The improvement of federal-provincial coordination by implementing a unified social protection law would solve the existing fragmentation, and it could result in the saving of PKR 45 billion on unnecessary overlaps every year (Ministry of Planning, 2023). Such institutional transformations, alongside sustainable funding, in the form of a special Social Protection Fund, which is fed with 1% of GST revenues, would generate the ecosystem through which the safety nets of Pakistan may finally emerge out of ad hoc charity and be transformed into a powerful tool of social policy (Hasan & Raza, 2023).

Conclusion

The social safety nets (SSNs) of Pakistan have shown quantifiable effectiveness in poverty alleviation and diminishing income disparity, but their actual potential is still limited by the structural issues. The cash transfers provided via programs such as BISP and Ehsaas have helped hundreds of millions to escape abject poverty, and helped to decrease poverty headcounts by 7 to 9 percentage points among recipients, and also close gender disparities in spending. But the benefits of these achievements are not fairly shared, and rural locations and women gain more than urban residents and marginalized groups such as informal workers and minorities. Poverty in Pakistan is multidimensional in nature and calls not only short-term relief measures but also integrated strategies to tackle the issues of education, health and livelihood opportunities. Although SSNs have achieved success regarding the alleviation of poverty in the short term and have been able to reduce poverty, the long-term effect is attributed to structural weaknesses, such as time-worn targeting mechanisms, political influences and inflationary corrosion of transfer values. Pakistan is in danger of continuing the cycle of dependency, instead of creating a sustainable economic mobility through its social protection system without filling these gaps.

Institutional reforms and creative financing should be the priorities of Pakistan to convert SSNs into the vehicles of equitable development. Efficiencies can be achieved in the short-time through initiatives such as digitizing the beneficiary registries, inflation-indexing transfers, and so on, but the long-term success depends on the change in systems. Coverage of urban and informal workers and the incorporation of skills development as part of the cash transfers are essential and so is the enhancement of the federal-provincial coordination. Also, the implementation of the program can be depoliticized and real-time monitoring technologies can be introduced to reduce leakage and enhance accountability. The end result of this should be an effective social safety net system which does not just curb poverty but which also ends its generational cycle. Pakistan can make SSNs part of more comprehensive development plans like climate resilience and employment to make the programs provide long-term, instead of short-term, relief. To develop a more inclusive and equitable society, the future must be filled with political will and long-lasting investment in the process of evidence-based policymaking.

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