

Brazil's *Bolsa Familia* and the Philippines' "4Ps" CCT Programs: Considering South–South Cooperation for Social Protection¹

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Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) programs were developed in the mid to late 1990s in Mexico and Brazil in response to the economic upheavals that affected the poor and vulnerable in Latin America following the imposition of structural adjustment policies. These social protection programs provide immediate cash disbursements under beneficiary compliance with health and education requirements, particularly for children and mothers. Since then, CCT programs have been implemented throughout Latin America and are rapidly being introduced in Africa and Asia, including the Philippines. Since the mid 2000s, the World Bank and other international financial institutions have been significantly involved in the implementation and scholarship of such programs as part of newly instituted social protection objectives. This introduces a formidable factor of Northern management and Southern implementation. In this way, CCT projects tend to follow a formula and exhibit many similar aspects of design, objectives, and evaluation measures. However, Brazil's CCT program directly addressed social problems introduced by earlier neoliberal policy making and falls under a single centralized authority. The Philippine program has multiple institutional stakeholders and was introduced in 2007 under an expressly neoliberal presidency. By considering the similarities and differences in the cases of Brazil's *Bolsa Familia* and the Philippines' 4Ps, the mediation of the World Bank and other development lenders can be differently construed. There exists a potential for direct South–South, peer–peer correspondence of experience, cooperation, and autonomous development practices within terms that Boaventura de Souza Santos describes as an “epistemology of the South.” This alternate perspective on CCT progress and social protection in general has not until now been examined.

Keywords: Conditional Cash Transfer, *Bolsa Familia*, *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino* Program, social protection

SOCIAL PROTECTION AND “THE CCT WAVE”

The period of peak neoliberalism—from the late 1990s until the global credit crisis of 2008—saw the emergence across the developing world of social protection measures seeking to alleviate pressures on sectors and communities that are most adversely affected by the advances of global economic integration and recurring external shocks. Within regions and individual countries, particularly in Latin America, social protection programs of conditional cash transfers (CCT) were instituted to provide funds directly to poor families, usually through mothers, under specified conditions such as child inoculations, school enrollment, and attendance. This marked a deviation from the dominant trend of lowering public expenditure on social services, in line with World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) (Britto, 2005; Bradshaw, 2008; Barrientos & Hulme, 2008).

Initially, CCT programs were designed and implemented to respond to the widening income gap in Latin American countries (Chamberlin & Mason, 2003; Holzmann, Sherburne-Benz, & Tesliuc, 2003) and to the “demand-side constraints for social poverty reduction” (Britto, 2005, p. 2). These programs had the stated goals of reducing extreme poverty (i.e., social assistance) and arresting the intergenerational cycle of poverty (i.e., investing in human capital). At their base, CCT programs constitute an unorthodox social protection measure that aspires to change the way (poor) people think and behave (Rawlings, 2004; Fiszbein & Schady, 2009).

As a national social policy, CCT programs can be traced back to PROGRESA or *Programa de Educación, Salud y Alimentación* (Education, Health, and Nutrition Program), which began in Mexico in 1997 as a way to address market failures more equitably and efficiently than food subsidies or the so-called universal tortilla subsidies (Vermehren, 2003; Bradshaw, 2008; Fiszbein & Schady, 2009). During that time, only three

countries—Mexico, Brazil, and Bangladesh—had CCT programs as part of their national poverty alleviation strategy. Since then, large-scale CCT programs, mostly supported by the World Bank, have been implemented in almost every Latin American country and widely adopted in Asia and, to a lesser extent, Africa (see Rawlings, 2004; Rawlings & Rubio, 2005; Handa & Davis, 2006; Fiszbein & Schady, 2009). In 2002, the World Bank hosted the first Latin American and Caribbean regional workshop on CCTs in an attempt to learn from the experiences of program implementers and donors (Vermehren, 2003). In 2009, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) hosted a regional conference specifically tackling CCTs “in response to the interest that several of ADB’s developing member countries had expressed in exploring and expanding the applicability of CCTs...in their countries” (Handayani & Burkley, 2010, p. xix).

However, some scholars rightly caution against the outright adoption and promotion of CCT programs in developing countries. CCT programs, while conceptually straightforward and politically palatable, present a potential logistical nightmare (Vermehren, 2003) and wide room for “distorted readings” (Drèze & Sen, 2011, par. 30). That CCT programs are increasingly being pitched to developing countries as a “panacea” for chronic and extreme poverty (Farrington, Harvey, & Slater, 2005; Britto, 2005; de la Brière & Rawlings, 2006; Fajth & Vinay, 2010) may indicate an impending “project-ization” or “micro-tization” of social policy (Tendler, 2004, p. 119, as cited in Bradshaw, 2008, p. 189). Criticisms have also been levied at the World Bank for promoting CCT programs simply as “‘add on’ social policies to existing [neoliberal] macroeconomic policies rather than seeking to redesign them” (Elson, 2004, p. 64, as cited in Bradshaw, 2008, p. 189).

4Ps and *Bolsa Familia*: Potential for South–South Cooperation?

Amidst what Fiszbein and Schady (2009) called the “CCT Wave” (p. 31), the Philippine

government began its first CCT program known as the *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino* Program (literally, "Building Bridges for the Filipino Family Program" [Handayani & Burkley, 2010, p. xx]) or 4Ps. It was piloted through the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) in 2007 under the presidency of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. Like other CCT programs in Latin America, 4Ps was conceptualized to "end the inter-generational cycle of poverty among the poor households by investing in human capital" (DSWD, 2009a, p. 23). The success of CCT programs in Latin America, specifically Brazil's *Bolsa Familia* Program (BFP), which is the world's largest CCT program, was cited by the DSWD (2009b) in its rationale for the continuation of 4Ps until 2014.

With increasing globalized relations, direct South–South exchanges such as the adaptation of CCT models are notably on the rise. In today's world system, new strategic alliances like BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), *Mercosur* (an economic and political agreement among Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Venezuela), and IBSA (the India-Brazil-South Africa Trilateral Organization) have gained traction. Yet economic and knowledge exchanges between Southern nations are still far from their potential and are largely undertaken through northern formal channels, as in the case of CCT programs, via the World Bank and the ADB. It has been argued that these two institutions are actively pursuing CCT programs in the context of marrying them with existing policies of economic liberalization and social service rationalization, regardless of whether programs like the *Bolsa Familia* were initially designed to respond to the social damage caused by SAPs and other socially exclusive neoliberal economic policies (Bradshaw, 2008).

Whereas much work documenting the Brazilian and Latin American CCT experiences exists, there are very few studies about the Philippines' CCT initiative, owing primarily to the lack of data (see Manasan, 2011). However, this paper is not concerned with comparatively assessing the

design, implementation, or impact of 4Ps and BFP; rather, it analyzes the policy history and design of both CCT programs with the aim of locating a juncture for South–South cooperation. It takes the cases of the Philippines' 4Ps and Brazil's BFP and explores the possibility of a direct dialogue on CCT programs and social protection measures in general between the two countries. The aim is to encourage similar South–South dialogue that seeks to decouple from the linear conditionalities of conventional North–South methods of dealing with social protection and poverty reduction. In this manner, this paper engages with what Boaventura de Souza Santos (2009) described as the "epistemology of the South," an approach to knowledge construction that is organized around horizontal dialogue among actors under terms of autonomous decision making—a project that is rapidly growing in legitimacy, relevance, and impact.

The paper is structured as such: The next section revisits the literature on social protection, focusing on the rationale behind CCT programs; a discussion of BFP and 4Ps follows. Then, both programs are analyzed to identify parallels, if any, in terms of policy objectives and program design; junctures or channels through which a South–South dialogue can be initiated; and political and economic divides that may obstruct such a dialogue. The final section presents the conclusion and recommendations for a South–South dialogue on social protection program design and implementation, a kind of dialogue that is more peer based rather than donor dominated.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This review briefly traces the origins of CCT programs in social protection, the conceptual definitions that have greatly evolved along with changes in global politics: from the envisioning of social protection as a state obligation, to its assessment as a public expense detrimental to economic growth, to its re assessment as a fundamental human right and important aspect of development. These conceptualizations have,

to a significant extent, been part of an evolving Northern construct. The literature on specific CCT programs is then examined, noting the predominance of studies commissioned by donor agencies and the dearth of independent academic evaluations.

Social Protection Revisited

The concept of social protection, as defined by scholars, development practitioners, and policy makers, has greatly evolved over time (see Cook & Kabeer, 2009). It first gained relevance along with the rise of the welfare state in Europe, particularly in the context of providing protection for workers (Blank, 1994). Polanyi (1944, as cited in Estevez-Abe, Iversen, & Soskice, 1999, p. 1) earlier argued that “social protection rescues the market from itself by preventing market failures.”

Broadly speaking, social protection is a set of “public measures to provide income security to the population” (Holzmann et al., 2003, p.1). Historically, it took the form of social insurance and pensions. With the “decline” of the welfare state and the rise of neo liberalism, however, social protection was eventually considered too costly by most development economists (Ravallion, 2003; Farrington et al., 2005; Cook & Kabeer, 2009). The debate thus turned from what form of social protection to provide into the trade-off between equity and efficiency, or between social justice and economic growth (Blank, 1994; Holzmann & Jørgensen, 2001; Arjona, Ladaique, & Pearson, 2003; Currie & Gahvari, 2008). This argument was used to justify massive cutbacks in social spending, as part of SAPs that were dictated by the World Bank and the IMF from the 1970s (Barrientos & Hulme, 2008).

On this note, there is a strong consensus in the literature that what is now known as the “conventional view” against social protection was only reassessed against the backdrop of regional and global economic crises in the 1990s. These events exposed the severe lack of social safety nets for the poor and extremely high levels of risk

confronting the non poor—conditions that were argued as endemic to economic liberalization and globalization (Rodrik, 1997; Holzmann et al., 2003; Chamberlin & Mason, 2003; Cook & Kabeer, 2009; Dreze & Sen, 2011; Barrientos, 2010). In the context of this “lost decade of development,” states revisited the need for social protection. In Asia, after the crisis of 1998–1999, states like Taiwan and South Korea began instituting safety-net measures that would aid the victims of the crises as well as address structural weaknesses made visible in the aftermath of the crisis. Such responses, including those that came after the 2008 global financial crisis, reinforced the call for alternative development models—those that can protect the impoverished and people at risk of being pushed into poverty (Cook & Kabeer, 2009).

Social protection has since been defined as the aggregate of “public actions taken in response to levels of vulnerability, risk, and deprivation which are deemed socially unacceptable within a given polity or society” (Conway, de Haan, & Norton, 2000, p. 2) or as “the range of public interventions that support society’s poorest and most vulnerable members and helps individuals, families, and communities manage risks better” (Chamberlin & Mason, 2003, p. 6). These and other similar definitions by scholars and organizations like the International Labour Organization, United Nations, World Bank, and ADB underscore the state’s responsibility to answer for the risks and vulnerability faced by the poor, thereby indicating a rights-based, as opposed to needs-based, approach to social protection (Holzmann et al., 2003; Cook & Kabeer, 2009; Barrientos, 2010; Handayani & Burkley, 2010). In 2007, the G8 Summit Declaration also redefined social protection as “an investment in a country’s economic future and a cost-effective way of fighting poverty” (cited in Barrientos & Hulme, 2008, p. 20), highlighting the shift in the understanding of social protection as an investment rather than an expense on the part of states, international financial institutions, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) (Handayani & Burkley, 2010).

Inevitably, these conceptualizations of social protection have been realized differently in Northern versus Southern states. Whereas social protection usually refers to welfare benefits, pensions, and unemployment guarantees in developed countries, this usually refers to poverty reduction programs, income transfers, and asset building in developing countries (Cook & Kabeer, 2009; Barrientos, 2010). Focusing on the situation in the global South, social protection has traditionally taken the forms of either social assistance or social insurance (Deveraux, 2001; Chamberlin & Mason, 2003; Barrientos, 2010; Handayani & Burkley, 2010). Social insurance or social security is usually directed toward the employed, while social assistance usually targets the disadvantaged or vulnerable groups outside the labor force (e.g., the disabled, children, the extremely poor).

Weber (2012), in a paper for the ADB, differentiated social assistance programs according to their conditionality, beneficiaries, scope or coverage, and length of time. Social assistance programs could be either conditional or unconditional, targeted or universal, household based or individual based, "tied or non tied," or of "temporary or unlimited duration" (Weber, 2012). Regional and country-specific approaches usually depend on these differences.

In this light, then, one must consider "the diversity in social protection evolution in developing countries and appreciate that policies evolve out of specific national contexts" (Barrientos & Hulme, 2008, p. 9). These have led to the discussion of "regional approaches" to social protection (see Cook & Kabeer, 2009, p. 11; Handayani & Burkley, 2010). For example, the CCT model, as originally designed in Latin America, is a social assistance program that was forged out of the understanding that social protection amid neoliberal economic development is a human right, that poverty is multidimensional and chronic, and that both short-term relief and long-term solutions to poverty must be explored and acted upon (Barrientos & Hulme, 2008).

The Rationale and Rationalization behind CCT Programs

CCT programs primarily operate on three premises, which challenged ideas that have been dictating the development debate since the 1970s. Firstly, contrary to prevailing assumptions of economists and social planners, human beings as actors in the economy are not always rational; instead they may be "impatient...often lacking in self-control" and may be lacking the right information (Basu, 2003, as cited in Das, Do, & Özler, 2005, p. 58). Thus, they need some assistance from the state, ideally through social policies that bank on "co responsibilities" to guide them towards the right direction (Holzmann et al., 2003; Bradshaw, 2008). While this assessment is not novel, the adoption of CCT as a response is. Secondly, states can no longer rely on the market to "trickle down" benefits from the top to the bottom of the economic chain. In other words, the trajectory of neoliberal economic growth is far from socially inclusive or gender fair (Gomez-Hermosillo, 2005). This belief was reinforced in the wake of the 1997 Asian Crisis and further by the 2008 global financial crisis. Among the recommendations from both sides of the political spectrum included the institutionalization of formal social protection and risk mitigation measures (Holzmann et al., 2003). Thirdly, CCT programs operate with the understanding that the concept of poverty is multi dimensional and as a reality it may cut across generations (Holzmann et al., 2003; Barrientos & Hulme, 2008; Barrientos, 2010). Policy makers began to accept more and more that poverty has multiple and complex underlying causes that require more sophisticated interventions than those otherwise popular then (e.g., food and fuel subsidies, dole-outs). These three premises brought social protection in a relatively short time front and center in the poverty reduction agenda, with CCT deemed as the most cost-effective, equitable, and, surprisingly, most agreed upon strategy (Bradshaw, 2008; Lomelí, 2008), receiving even the full support of the World Bank (Hall, 2008).

Das et al. (2005), in their review of studies about CCT, have observed that CCT programs are usually justified either “on efficiency grounds to alleviate market failure or on equity grounds to redistribute resources” (p. 76). This may be indicative of the base ideological tension between social equity and economic efficiency that CCT programs grew out of. Furthermore, extended discourse about how all these programs have been designed, implemented, and monitored has predominantly revolved around providing immediate relief or social assistance and facilitating long-term social development by investing in human capital among the poorest households (Cook & Kabeer, 2009). Yet, with the exception of Fiszbein and Schady’s (2009) report for the World Bank, it is not often explained why CCT programs supposedly offer the best policy option for social protection, at a particular time and place, and among all other available interventions, including unconditional cash transfers or supply-side interventions like spending on infrastructure and social services.

However, since CCT programs are relatively conceptually simple, the main arena for contention is in the government’s preparedness to implement such a logistically complex program (Vermehren, 2003). In other words, support for or against CCT programs usually depends on the actual and perceived capability of concerned institutions. Vermehren (2003), de la Brière and Rawlings (2006), and Fiszbein and Schady (2009) all discussed the complexity of the CCT model, labelling it as an innovation in or modernization of social assistance (de la Brière & Rawlings 2006, p. 8; Fiszbein & Schady, 2009, p. 100).

In terms of evaluating CCT programs, there is a general agreement that CCTs are successful in meeting their aims of redistributing cash to increase basic consumption in the short term while simultaneously and complementarily changing behaviour and attitudes among beneficiaries for long-term human development (Rawlings & Rubio, 2005). This is done through rationalizing the “social contract” of tying cash disbursements to social development requirements as a means to gain public and political support for the programs

(Farrington et al., 2005; de Janvry, Sadoulet, Solomon, & Vakis, 2006; de la Brière & Rawlings, 2006; Fiszbein & Schady, 2009; Handayani & Burkley, 2010).

Several scholars have tabulated the accomplishments of various CCT programs in Latin America and Asia to enable regional and cross-country comparisons of success, as measured by meeting desired outcomes (e.g., Vermehren, 2003; Rawlings & Rubio, 2005; de Janvry et al., 2006; Handa & Davis, 2006; Bassett, 2008; Lomeli, 2008; Fiszbein & Schady, 2009; Pacheco Santos, Paes-Sousa, Miazagi, Silva, & Medeiros da Fonseca, 2011). Notably, all these studies reported positive accomplishments in terms of increasing school attendance or completion and access to preventive healthcare; reducing poverty intensity, rate of illness, and overall vulnerability of beneficiaries; enforcing community social relations; and reaching target populations (efficiency component). Areas where results are inconclusive are on school performance, higher incomes, and long-term poverty reduction. These perhaps surprisingly uniform findings support what Britto (2005) and de la Brière and Rawlings (2006) noted about there being an unusually “strong consensus” among scholars evaluating CCT programs.

On this note, it must be emphasized that most studies on specific CCT programs were conducted with the support and rationalization of international donor agencies, mostly the World Bank and the ADB. Thus, all contributions while considerable in number may be more limited in terms of perspective and recommendations than one can hope. Notably, there is a dearth of similar papers by independent researchers or scholars not under contract as a consultant for an agency or organization. Since these resources contain the latest and most reliable data available, they are nevertheless useful for the following discussions.

DISCUSSION

This section provides a preliminary comparison of BFP and 4Ps generally based on the “nuts

and bolts" of CCT programs, as enumerated by Fiszbein and Schady (2009, pp. 67–101).

***Bolsa Familia* and Cash Transfer Programs in Brazil**

In Brazil, a national public policy for the institution of minimal income guarantees began in 1991 with a congressional debate forced onto the political agenda by social movements and left-wing parties based on, among others, specific constitutional guarantees on social protection. As a result, numerous local and state CCT initiatives were developed in the mid to late 1990s. In 2000, the first nationwide initiatives were implemented. These included, among others, the *Bolsa Escola*, *Programa de Benefícios Continuados*, *Bolsa Renda*, and *Vale Gas*. Four of these programs were merged in October 2003 to create the BFP based on the rationale of eliminating redundancies and gaps emanating from the decentralized and fragmentary prior structures. This increased the scope and efficiency of the overall project to enable universal coverage for Brazil's poor.

Further consolidation took place in 2005 during the presidency of Lula da Silva under the institution of *Fome Zero* (Zero Hunger) or *Bolsa Família* (Family Boost). This represented the unification of management and oversight and the centralization of public resources. M. D. S. Silva, Lima, Ferreira, M. R. F. Silva, and Lima (2008) expressed this as the evolution and innovative regearing of the ambitions of the program through major rationalizations and the simplification of access by beneficiaries to more effectively combat hunger and poverty.

The program has two aims: to provide minimum levels of support for poor people in the short term and to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty that affects the very poor through requisite conditions directed toward improving children's lives (World Bank, 2012). At the national level the Ministry of Social Development (MDS) is responsible for the program. At the municipal level a network of reference centers has been created in order to register new beneficiaries,

update the national family database (*Cadastral Único* or *CadÚnico*), and provide assistance to beneficiaries. The unification and centralization of management and resources resulted in a system of direct transfers from the central government to the beneficiaries through ATM cards. The role of the Brazilian states and local municipalities was restricted to the evaluation of the families' compliance with program conditions. This has reduced local political misuse and corruption of government programs, which is a perennial reality in Brazilian social policy.

Monthly transfers to beneficiaries, depending on the conditionalities complied with, range from R\$15 to R\$172 (U.S.\$7–105) per household. Beneficiaries can withdraw their monthly transfer at any ATM from state banks or at the lottery houses nationwide. Funds are disbursed according to the date of birth of the bank card holder, which alleviates queues caused by disbursements on a single date of withdrawal.

BFP program design. Cash disbursement is described within the BFP as "a direct monetary transference to individuals or families." This program is focused on the poorest Brazilian families wherein they receive a certain amount of money in exchange of having to comply with specific conditions like keeping their children in school with a class attendance of at least 85% of the school year. Local schools and municipalities have been equipped with computers that communicate with the national system run by the Brazilian Ministry of Education. Every three months the attendance data is collected by the MDS in order to verify conditionality compliance. Municipalities lacking a computer network or internet access can send paper reports and can apply for federal funding and training to implement a local online structure. Presently, fewer than 15% of municipalities still use paper submissions. The second major conditionality is that the family must submit to obligatory healthcare checkups every six months (or monthly in the case of pregnant women). The verification system works in a similar way to that of the

educational database. Municipalities transfer the information to the Brazilian Ministry of Health, and every six months, the data are collected by the MDS.

The last major conditionality is to keep the BFP database, the CadÚnico, up to date. Each family is called once a year to verify their participation and to submit detailed information about their living status. A serious challenge to the BFP policy goals was that until the introduction of the CadÚnico there was no accurate information about poor families in Brazil. Currently, this database is the most complete and powerful tool toward understanding the lives of poor families nationwide. It is the managerial bedrock of the BFP, without which the scope and complexity of the program could not operate.

If a child fails to meet the minimum compliance requirement, the family will receive a warning at the time of the monthly funds withdrawal. A second infringement would incur the suspension of the cash transfer. Persistent noncompliance results in the removal of the family from the register of beneficiaries.

4Ps: The Philippines' First Attempt at CCT

The 4Ps conditional cash transfer program began in the Philippines in 2007 during the presidency of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. The pilot scheme was directed at 4,589 households in six pilot areas: two in Agusan del Sur, two in Misamis Occidental—both are rural municipalities in the Mindanao region—and two cities in the National Capital Region (Fernandez & Olfindo, 2011, pp. 1, 3; DSWD, 2009a, p. 5). Coverage was expanded in 2008 in response to the spikes in the prices of food and fuel caused by the global financial crisis. By the end of President Arroyo's term, the administration claimed to have reached as many as one million beneficiary households, effectively making it the biggest social protection program ever in the Philippines (Fernandez & Olfindo, 2011). With the election of President Benigno Aquino III, 4Ps was further scaled up: Household coverage was increased by 1.3 million, and the

budget increased two-fold (Senate Economic Planning Office [SEPO], 2011). This fourth phase is set to run from 2011 to 2014 and aims to extend its support to three million households by the end of 2012 (SEPO, 2011). In 2011, the program budget reached around PhP30 billion (U.S.\$713 million) (Manasan, 2011, p. 1). Funding now involves the World Bank and AusAID.

Three contextual factors form the rationale behind this program. One was an effort to reform and adapt the practice and methods of the social protection institutions of the Philippines, such as the DSWD (Fernandez & Olfindo, 2011). Second, the Philippines was at a significant risk of not meeting its Millennium Development commitments by 2015 (Pablo, 2009; Son & Florentino, 2008). Third, the success of Latin American countries like Mexico and Brazil in indigenously creating successful and influential CCT programs created an impetus to create similar institutional programs in the Philippines (Pablo, 2009, pp. 3, 10).

4Ps program design. The objectives of the 4Ps follow from the rationales outlined above. Program objectives are expected to be achieved by setting specific conditions in three areas of life that are considered interrelated in the poverty cycle: nutrition, health, and education (Pablo, 2009, p. 2; DSWD, 2009a, p. 2). As in other CCT programs, cash grants are transferred usually to mothers. Beneficiary targeting is done on three levels: Eligible candidate households must first meet the program's criteria of being poor and in a poor area. The areas are selected using standard National Statistics Office data and further refined using the small area estimate method (Son & Florentino, 2008, p. 7). Following house-to-house interviews through the National Household Targeting System (NHTS), potential beneficiaries' poverty status are evaluated through a proxy means tests (PMT) of the kind used in Latin America.

The initial list of beneficiary families is complemented by public vetting of the names of those found eligible in order for community voices to be included in the process. The vetting and

grievance process is also conducted online by the use of social media (Fernandez & Olfindo, 2011). The targeting method includes the retention of data in a central database that is regularly updated (Fernandez & Olfindo, 2011).

The amounts receivable by beneficiaries are of two separate kinds. A standard grant of PhP500 (U.S.\$12) is given to a family every month for health and general utility, provided certain health conditions are complied with. An education allowance of PhP300 (U.S.\$7) for each child, for a maximum of three children not older than 14 years old, can also be awarded under separate conditions. Beneficiaries are registered into the system for a maximum of five years only. The total amount a household might thus receive is PhP1,400 (around U.S.\$34) per month, roughly 23% of the average income for a family in the poorest deciles (Manasan, 2011, pp. 2–3; Pablo, 2009, p. 3).

Beneficiary compliance is verified through a computer system called CVS, which is installed in schools and health centers in areas covered by the program. Data is transmitted via the Internet to the DSWD central office by teachers, health center workers, and municipal social welfare and development officers (MSWDO). A total of five government agencies are working with the DSWD in the 4Ps implementation, namely the Department of Health, Department of Education, Department of the Interior and Local Government, local government units, and the National Anti-Poverty Commission. (DSWD, 2009a; Pablo, 2009; Fernandez & Olfindo, 2011).

4Ps and BFP: Adaptation or Imitation?

Unlike in Asia and the Philippines, CCT programs in Brazil and Latin America were not entirely considered to be “new” forms of interventions. Rather, they

represent a continuation of broader economic reforms in Latin America... which have sought to develop instruments of social policy that would be compatible with the logic of the market and to undertake intervention that would

avoid “distortions in relative prices.” (Levy & Rodriquez, 2005, as cited in Lomelí, 2008, p. 479)

By contrast, CCT as a concept and as a social protection measure was relatively foreign to the Philippines, much less to Southeast Asia, even after the Asian economic crisis (Handayani & Burkley, 2010). This distinction is an important and often neglected one when it comes to discussions about CCT programs in Latin America and other regions: CCT programs, as is less commonly known than it should be, were “invented” in Latin America, “‘bought’ by donors and ‘sold’ as innovative solutions elsewhere” (Britto, 2005, p. 25). While learning from other countries’ experiences and “best practices” is and should be encouraged in development policy formulation, this practice does not always produce desired results. This is an especially significant point for policies and programs like CCT, the level of success of which has been shown to depend heavily on the context in which it is being implemented.

Based on a comparison of the basic elements of 4Ps and BFP, significant parallels between the two programs can be identified such that 4Ps appears to represent more of an imitation than an adaptation of BFP: Overall, the policy rationale and objectives are similar, as are the program designs and even the conditionalities imposed. The differences that exist are slight and at best demonstrate an attempt to localize the BFP in the Philippines based on the country’s specific geographical and institutional limitations. However, the question to be acknowledged, if not immediately answered, is whether CCT programs, as another “imported” or imposed model of development, is inherently limited at helping beneficiaries to improve their material status in life. In the long term, the vision within the domain of South–South dialogue and communication is for people continents apart to discover their commonalities and the value of independent peer–peer modes of exchange.

However, before any vision of South–South dialogue and cooperation can be derived, issues

regarding CCT implementation on the ground must still be resolved. As they are currently designed, CCT programs neglect or altogether avoid addressing the structural causes of poverty like the lack of access to quality basic social services, macroeconomic instability, and domestic policies that encourage inequitable distribution of resources, limit development opportunities, and evade fostering long-term solutions to poverty. Unless these supply-side constraints are considered, as Britto (2005, p. 26) warned, “CCTs risk remaining only a fashionable set of programs with laudable objectives.” What may be needed instead, as Drèze and Sen (2011) argued, is a more comprehensive approach toward inclusive growth, one that veers away from the “illusions that... ‘conditional cash transfers’... can replace public services by inducing recipients to buy health and education services from private providers” (p. 10). This may be far from what CCT programs were designed to do in the first place.

Potential for South–South Cooperation

For this paper, it is argued that, in light of the varied but parallel contexts in which BFP and 4Ps were planned and are being implemented, South–South Cooperation presents a potential platform on which both Brazil and the Philippines may come together to directly exchange knowledge and experiences about CCT programs. The goal of this dialogue is to mutually help ensure that the social protection aims of CCT programs are met, while at the same time challenging assumptions proffered by donor institutions that CCT programs can be implemented without necessarily addressing the structural causes of poverty.

The rise of South–South dialogues and cooperation is a direct result of an increasingly postcolonial political scenario. Since the economic and military expansion of Europe in the 16th century and Western imperialism of the 20th century, the world has been structurally divided between North and South (center–periphery; developed–underdeveloped) and continues to be seen in this manner by even mainstream development theory (Pieterse, 1998; 2010).

As brokers of the contemporary world economic system, the Northern economies retain the role of the prime mediators of Southern relations and not only as intermediaries between southern relations. Bruno Latour’s (2005) understanding is that

Mediators transform, translate, distort, and modify the meaning or the elements they are supposed to carry. No matter how complicated an intermediary is it may, for all practical purposes, count for just one—or even for nothing at all because it can be easily forgotten. (p. 39)

One example is the historical relations of Brazil and India. Although the commercial ties between Brazil and India have provided intense exchange between the two countries since the spice trade from the seventh century, this trade has been always mediated by colonial powers, first Portugal and then United Kingdom. This condition of mediated relations remained as late as 1991. Only in 2003, with the formation of IBSA, could direct peer–peer talks be conducted (Viera, 2009). This type of breaking with the remains of the colonial world structure of Western-mediated and hegemonized relations has been pointed out as a path to achieve development and real change for the South (Amin, 1989; Dussel, 2001; Mignolo, 2003; Chatterjee, 2008). Real relations, however, have remained mostly unchanged for the last 100 years. Transformation spikes, or the possibility for real change, only become visible during and immediately after crisis conditions that engulf the central capitalist nations: The two world wars, the 1930 economic crisis, and the recent economic crises of and since 2008 provide examples of such conditions (Saul, 2006).

Growing South–South relations and cooperation may therefore be seen as an opportunity to establish alternative flows of information that can contribute to a more horizontal dialogue towards development and go beyond the ordinary increase of economic ties, thus establishing itself as a process of knowledge and experience exchange.

As Boaventura de Souza Santos affirmed, the rise of a new “epistemology from the South” (Santos, 2009) is a contribution to the world debate bringing to the global system new forms of knowledge and diversified experiences that can be conducted by direct exchange. These kinds of direct dialogue have the possibility of being a peer-based conversation that can prove itself more open to diversity and local adaptations and create distance from the prevailing vertical North–South dialogue imposed by institutions like the World Bank and IMF and the neoliberal agenda of SAPs. Such policies patently failed in developing Southern nations or in reducing poverty and inequality; the opposite condition, in fact, occurred (Saul, 2006).

Although these possibilities of new and more horizontal forms of dialogue and exchange have been increasing in recent years, it does not mean that they will continue on this path: Practical results of this dialogue on poverty reduction are still to be seen. Nevertheless, the increasing direct flow of goods and information between and among Southern nations encourages the possibility of more diverse paths of development.

The importance of this understanding for the CCT initiatives of the global South is as follows: The BFP and 4Ps exhibit direct and clear relations, commonalities, and bases for ongoing dialogue and cooperation but not—and this is worth emphasizing—once and while the World Bank and other donors retain a dominant mediating role in the exchange and information process. To reiterate, the flood of recent World Bank–sponsored studies of CCT programs is both an exercise in domination of the narrative and of consolidating an apparently permanent and ineluctable role of mediator in Latour’s aforementioned terms. What this means is that, under World Bank mediation, the flow of information on and about CCTs is adapted, altered, and reassigned to suit prescriptions and designs that deny and elide the origins of the program in absolute terms, all the while eliding the traces of such mediation.

The BFP and future exchanges. The current Brazilian government of Dilma Rousseff has increased the resources directed to the BFP program and committed to maintain and expand it. The election process that she won in 2010 centered on the debate about social policies and programs. But given the popularity of the BFP, even the opposition contender, José Serra, committed himself to maintaining it. Nevertheless, future challenges exist. According to Soares and Satyro (2010), at least two dilemmas to be resolved include the following.

First, rigorous state monitoring and evaluation of conditionalities must be maintained, but in what ways and for how long? Successful results in long-term poverty reduction and health care, for example, should reduce future costs and the administration of social protection. Nevertheless, poverty alleviation is thus structurally a potential preserve of only those who comply with the conditionalities. And the state remains as the arbiter of what this means and the owner of the associated data.

Second, should the program remain within a ring-fenced budget or should it become an unconditional social right to all who are in extreme poverty? If the latter, how then should a future BFP be linked up with other social rights like retirement benefits, unemployment assistance, and pensions? If it continues under a closed budget, as a focused and conditional project, other questions arise: Should there be a maximum term limit for the beneficiaries? How can structures be developed that can help former beneficiaries from relapsing into conditions of poverty?

The future of the policy depends on many factors, including external economic conditions, internal political and social debates, and the actual achievements of the BFP itself. But the main challenge remains how to find an efficient path for reducing and eliminating poverty from Brazilian life and by extension that of late adopters of the BFP model like the Philippines. The policy has been successful thus far as part of a wider process of raising poor Brazilian families from poverty and low incomes to what has been

described by Neri (2008) as the new Brazilian middle class. Whether new middle classes in other global South contexts arise in similar ways has yet to be seen. Assuming such an outcome, one prospect for South–South exchange and development is for emerging middle classes elsewhere to have grounds, understandings, experiences, and communication in common with their Brazilian forerunners. For the Philippines, it remains to be seen how and to what extent the administration of Benigno “Noynoy” Aquino will be able to improve the different aspects of the 4Ps to genuinely end the intergenerational cycle of poverty, especially amidst the ongoing economic boom that the country is reportedly experiencing.

CONCLUSION

CCT projects such as BFP and 4Ps aim to afford social protection in a different way to antecedent models in Northern rich-world economies. They seek to provide a short-term floor under the very poor through immediate cash transfers and to lift or puncture the long-term ceiling on poor people’s developmental possibilities through improving health services and education outcomes. The architecture of these programs, their implementation, monitoring and evaluation systems, and prescribed conditionalities are broadly similar. CCTs are popular programs and have absorbed the bulk of social protection funding in countries implementing them, including Brazil and the Philippines. In general, however, where CCTs diverge is in respect of how beneficiaries regard the conditions the programs entail, the way local political usurpation of projects is managed or neutralized, and the degree of focus, for example, on ordinary attendance at school versus improving school grades. These can best be considered as micro or technical aspects.

Comparing BFP and 4Ps, certain political and cultural differences that are more impervious to change emerge. In Brazil, for example, the BFP was centralized under one ministry to limit leakage, corruption, and duplication. In the Philippines, on the other hand, multiple

institutions are recognized stakeholders in the system and cannot easily be sidelined or removed from influence. These and other differences provide grounds for further study. However, from the perspective of this paper, the significant difference is on the macro scale: Brazil’s CCT programs were introduced to deal with the social cost of neoliberal SAPs that adversely affected the poor and decimated the middle classes. The agenda was fought for by left-wing interest groups precisely in opposition to market-based interventions. Since the advance of CCT projects in the 1990s, they have been vigorously promoted by donor agencies such as the World Bank and the ADB from the mid 2000s until the present. The CCT model experimented in the Philippines is by no means an indigenous undertaking; it is effectively an import. Whether the 4Ps proves to be a long-term fiscal drain on the Philippines is not assured, and whether flaws, monitoring, and evaluation are efficient, effective, and transparent as to the advanced degree they are in Brazil is also yet to be determined.

However, what can be envisioned is the extent to which BFP and 4Ps can constitute an article or a foundation stone in the creation of South–South dialogue and cooperation between Brazil and the Philippines. Boaventura dos Santos’s (2009) vision of an autonomous epistemology of the South is helpful in philosophically outlining this potential. However, with the predominance of the World Bank in the role of guarantor and mediator, a role that Latour (2005) critiqued, the tendency for horizontal relations among developing world ambitions to be interrupted is stronger than it might seem.

ENDNOTES

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