Kenya’s cash transfer program: protecting the health and human rights of orphans and vulnerable children


Authors:
Bryant, John H.

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In Kenya, as in other countries of sub-Saharan Africa heavily burdened by HIV/ AIDS, orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) face poverty and despair. There is an urgent need to provide a comprehensive response that supports families and communities in their efforts to care for children and safeguard their rights. The government of Kenya has established a cash transfer program that delivers financial and social support directly to the poorest households containing OVC, with special concern for those children with or affected by HIV/AIDS. The Kenyan effort builds on lessons drawn from research and program development on cash transfers in Latin America, Asia, and Africa, and the Kenyan program offers an opportunity to examine the challenges faced by Kenya, and its responses in the context of international experiences. This paper - based on observation of and interviews with key actors involved in the origins, development, evaluation, and continued strengthening of Kenya’s cash transfer program and on the analysis of technical program documents obtained from those key actors - describes the Kenyan cash transfer program in light of human rights issues as they relate to children’s health. It offers one example of how caring for society’s most vulnerable members is a collective responsibility to be shared by a country’s government, local citizens, and the international community.

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