

Conditional Cash Transfers for Routine Immunizations: Encouraging life-saving immunizations and reducing poverty

Key Highlights

- Interventions including community mobilization, sensitization, conditional cash transfer and defaulter tracking to increase immunization coverage in Katsina, Zamfara, and Jigawa States.
- As at 18th September 2020, there have been 948,040 disbursements to 246,731 enrolled infants at 98 clinics across these three States worth N740,084,000 (excluding other program costs).
- \$10 million (3.6 billion Naira) commitment for the first phase that started early 2017; tens of millions USD for scale-up after 2020 dependent on impact evaluation.
- Impact evaluated by an independent Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT) study approved by the National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC).
- Formal MoUs with the Federal government (through the Federal Ministry of Health, Ministry of Budget and National Planning, and National Social Safety-Nets Coordinating Office) and State governments (Katsina, Zamfara and Jigawa).

Who is New Incentives and what are its goals?

New Incentives, a US-based non-profit, saves lives by increasing demand for routine immunization in Nigeria. We run a study on conditional cash transfers, one of the most well-researched and successful methods in development aid, to dramatically increase immunization coverage. The organization's geographic focus is on North West Nigeria where a majority of the states have less than 6% of infants fully vaccinated (NICS/MICS 2017).



All Babies Are Equal Initiative (ABAE), the Nigerian arm of New Incentives, has operated in Nigeria since 2014 as a registered non-profit under Nigerian law and non-governmental organization under the Ministry of Budget and National Planning (MBNP/NGO-IC/S. 926/I) and the Federal Ministry of Health (MH.7305/S.148/39). The cash transfer intervention is conducted in line with Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) signed with Katsina, Zamfara and Jigawa States. The federal government signed a two-year MoUs with New Incentives-All Babies Are Equal Initiative through the Ministry of Budget and National Planning on 10th May 2019, the Ministry of Health on 10th June 2019 and the National Social Safety-Nets Coordinating Office on 29th August 2019.

How does the intervention work?

New Incentives provides small transfers to encourage routine immunization visits at 98 select public health clinics in Katsina, Zamfara and Jigawa State. The intervention offers ₦500 (~\$1.40) for each of the first four mandatory immunization visits and ₦2,000 (~\$5.50) for the 9-month immunization visit when the Measles vaccine is given (due to the long lag after the previous immunization visit and the high mortality rate of Measles). A total of ₦4,000 (~\$11) is received by a mother who completes the RI cycle (5 visits). The intervention **drives long-term behavior change** by encouraging caretakers to access immunization services five times during their infant's first year after birth. Knowledge about immunizations is fostered and many suspicions surrounding vaccinations are addressed. **Sensitization and community awareness about the health benefits of immunizations** are at the centre of the intervention. There is constant interaction with village leaders, community mobilizers, traditional birth attendants, town criers and other stakeholders at the

grass-roots level. The intervention also supports outreach, defaulter tracking and supply-side reviews, hence comprehensively strengthens the immunization system at the community level.

For many infants, the intervention encourages visiting the clinic for the first time and initiates caretaker and infant engagement with various health services from the treatment of acute malnutrition to Malaria chemoprophylaxis. The intervention provides caretakers with compensation to access immunization services (transport money) and funds to offset the lost income from not going to the market or carrying out other informal work on immunization day. In short, the small cash transfers create **demand for immunization services**, encourage **long-term behavior change** by focusing on multiple immunization visits, and **increase knowledge of the health benefits of immunizations**.

What about the impact on immunization coverage?

The intervention results in massive increases in immunization coverage which protects tens of thousands of children against deadly diseases. The intervention **started in early 2017** and is **on track to disbursing 1 million cash transfers to almost 300,000 beneficiaries**. Initial results are highly promising. Demand for immunization services at treatment clinics has **increased by 2.5-3.5x** based on administrative clinic data.

The intervention is being evaluated by a cluster randomized controlled trial, the gold standard of evidence, that is measuring the impact on immunization coverage. Endline data collection was completed in February 2020 and results are being awaited. The independent impact evaluation is being carried out by the research firm IDinsight in collaboration with the Nigerian research firm, Hanovia LTD.

What about the intervention's sustainability?

The initial phase runs until mid-2020. The donors of New Incentives have made a pre-commitment to support the scale-up of the intervention to hundreds of public clinics and **100,000s of infants** in North West Nigeria in 2020 and beyond if the results of the impact evaluation are positive. Our main donor has **moved over \$115 million to cash transfer organizations** in the past and allocates **\$100 million per year** to development programs. The Nigerian Presidency has committed hundreds of millions of USD to cash transfer programs (see response to the next question).

While the end of the intervention is years away, what would happen if it stops? It is evident that the intervention could protect hundreds of thousands of lives during its duration. A large portion of the higher immunization coverage will remain intact after the intervention ends due to the intervention's impact on exposing caretakers to the health system. Immunization rates would be expected to drop if the intervention ends but they are expected to remain at a considerably higher level than before the intervention. This expectation is practical given the low baseline rates (less than 6% of infants are fully vaccinated according to NICS/MICS 2017).

Are cash transfers for immunizations in line with national policy?

Nigeria's **National Cash Transfer Program** offers States the option to pick health conditions that include incentives for routine immunizations. Dr. Temitope Sinkaiye of the National Cash Transfer Program told the Daily Trust newspaper on 7 Sept 2017: "So, they must go to hospital, take all the immunisation, and as they are doing this, they get the top-up." The National Cash Transfer Program has over 300,000 beneficiaries in over 16 Nigerian States as of mid-2018 and is supported by a \$500 million World Bank loan. The New Incentives study in Katsina, Zamfara and Jigawa States operates independently but in close collaboration with the National Cash Transfer Program under the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development.

Who are the donors behind New Incentives?

New Incentives' current intervention is primarily funded by the US foundation, Good Ventures based on recommendations from the charity evaluator, GiveWell. New Incentives and GiveWell collaborate closely and



have a strong partnership. New Incentives' supporters have also included the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Lampert Family Foundation, Y Combinator, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, and Founders Pledge.