POLICY PAPER

Universal Basic Income in Asia and the Pacific: A Pragmatic Policy Choice or Unattainable Utopia?

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1. Introduction

Basic income (BI)[1] interventions have undergone extensive deliberation, testing, and implementation over decades. In the current climate of systemic poverty, escalating income polarization, employment volatility, and challenges posed by technological advancements and economic reorganization, these interventions are once again garnering attention.

The potential of BI was underscored during the COVID-19 crisis as a beacon of hope, alleviating the pandemic's financial strain on vulnerable households. Many countries introduced temporary cash transfer programmes to ensure a minimum or basic income for those experiencing job and income loss, mainly due to lockdown measures. Some countries offered it universally for all citizens, while others targeted only low-income population segments. The concept of implementing a BI programme, whether for all citizens or specifically for certain vulnerable groups (explained below), thus regained attention during the response to the COVID-19 crisis, and these recent applications are worth further interrogation.

There are compelling arguments in favor of integrating BI interventions into the social security frameworks of countries to reduce poverty and open pathways to economic progress. The 2024 Regional Human Development Report for Asia and the Pacific (RHDR, 2024) emphasizes integrating human development approaches and outcomes into the development agenda of the Asia-Pacific region to ensure more equitable and sustainable growth. While Asia-Pacific countries have existing social security programmes that include basic income initiatives, assessing how and to what ends these programmes align with a human development approach would be useful.

This policy paper examines the potential of Universal Basic Income (UBI) as a sustainable solution for addressing multidimensional poverty and human development challenges in the Asia-Pacific region. It argues for UBI applications targeted at the 'whole' of a particular segment of the population (not the population as a whole) that falls below a certain income level, as defined by the multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), and linked to various human development conditionalities (related to education, skills, health etc). The coverage amount and duration of support would be determined based on the size and level of vulnerabilities of the recipients. It should, optimally, be embedded in the social security programme of the country to reduce administrative costs. Additionally, it should be shock-responsive, with the option for additional emergency allocation. Thus, the UBI proposed in this paper encompasses a mix of BI models that can be gradually scaled to cover all who need the boost out of poverty and towards their full potential.

The paper will a) review the implications of various BI interventions on poverty and human development within the Asia-Pacific region; b) examine the case for integrating UBI into the current social security frameworks of Asia-Pacific nations, emphasizing instances and insights gained; c) identify and assess the challenges associated with implementing and expanding BI programmes; and d) suggest criteria for adopting effective BI programmes capable of yielding favorable human development outcomes in the socio-economic context of Asia-Pacific countries.

The study is based on an analysis of secondary data and literature. The terms BI and UBI are often used interchangeably in this paper, because UBI as analysed in the paper encompasses a range of BI interventions.

[1] Basic interventions refer to cash transfers with the aim of one or more of the following objectives: ensuring comprehensive coverage for poverty reduction, leveraging more financial autonomy to the recipients, social justice, gender equity, addressing job losses from automation, simplifying welfare systems, empowering people by redirecting natural resource–related revenues from public coffers to citizens and offering transparency and empowerment. The next section discusses various BI interventions in detail.

2. The Landscape of Basic Income: Scope and Modalities

The concept of BI is a rich tapestry of definitions and interpretations. BI can be defined as a living wage or fixed minimum income to ensure a basic living standard (according to the situation in a particular country), or BI can be the poverty-line income. BI interventions refer to cash transfers with one or more of the following objectives: ensuring comprehensive coverage for poverty reduction, increasing financial autonomy of recipients, social justice, gender equity, addressing job losses from automation, simplifying welfare systems, empowering people by channeling natural resource-related revenues directly to citizens, and offering transparency and empowerment as an antidote to complex bureaucracies and inequalities (Pinto, et al., 2021); (Gentilini, Grosh, Rigolini, & Yemtsov, 2020). BI is commended for its simplicity and potential to replace more complex and conditional welfare systems. It is also aimed at providing a social safety net that reduces income inequality while guaranteeing a minimum standard of living. BI models vary widely, each offering distinct approaches to providing financial support and addressing poverty. Some of the frequently mentioned BI modalities are discussed in Table-1. Comparing various BI models, we note some key characteristics:

Universal vs Targeted: BI interventions could be meant for all in society, or they can be targeted at a certain group. However, 'universality' in social protection is a multi-faceted concept that can be interpreted in different ways. According to Pinto, et al. (2021), universal basic income (UBI) is provided unconditionally to **anyone who meets specific income eligibility criteria.** According to Crowley & Sevciuc (2021), UBI is a flat, unconditional stipend periodically given to **every legal resident** in a country to stay above the poverty line. Gentilini et al. (2020) explain that universality in social protection can be understood in various ways. It distinguishes between defining universality by outcomes (ensuring everyone reaches a minimum welfare level) and by receipt (everyone should be covered). It also contrasts risk-based coverage in social insurance (promise of benefits in response to specific events) with receipt-based coverage in social assistance (people are considered covered only when transfers are received). Universality can be age-specific or fully inclusive of all individuals regardless of criteria. Gentilini et al. (2020) further argue that universality should be viewed at the system level, integrating multiple programmes to ensure progressive and inclusive support, particularly for those most in need, and should be built up gradually to form a solid social protection foundation. This (current) paper proposes that UBI does not necessarily need to be universally applicable to all individuals in society and can be targeted based on specific vulnerability criteria, such as income, age, or region. After targeting, it should be universal for all who meet the vulnerability criteria. The aggregation should be as large as possible to minimize administrative costs depending on the capacity to cover.

Temporary vs. systemic: Temporary BI addresses urgent needs, such as pandemics like COVID-19 or natural disasters, and typically entails one-time cash support or several cash installments during the crisis. In contrast, systemic BI involves regular cash transfers for an indefinite period to recipients who meet the criteria for support. While there is a widespread consensus on providing temporary basic income during crises, there are apprehensions regarding the financial feasibility of permanent or systemic support.

Conditional vs. unconditional: The UBI application is mainly considered to be unconditional. However, to meet some strategic goals, continued support could be conditioned on certain criteria, such as requiring recipients to ensure that their children attend school or receive immunizations.

TABLE 1: **Various Models of Basic Income**

	Main Characteristics	Examples
Universal Basic Income	This system provides a fixed amount of money regularly to all individuals within a specific community or country, regardless of their income level or employment status, and without any conditions. The goal is to ensure that everyone has enough money to cover basic living expenses, helping to reduce poverty and provide financial security. A variation of this definition is also possible (explained in the text above).	Madhya Pradesh Unconditional Cash Transfer in Madhya Pradesh, India; Give-Directly Unconditional Cash transfer programme in Rarieda region, Kenya.
Guaranteed Minimum Income	Guaranteed Minimum Income programmes provide financial support to low-income individuals and families, ensuring a minimum standard of living by supplementing income up to a predefined minimum level set by the government.	These programmes are prevalent in many European countries, providing financial support to low-income individuals and families to help them meet basic living expenses.
Conditional Cash Transfers	Conditional Cash Transfers provide cash payments to individuals or households contingent upon meeting specific conditions such as regular school attendance, health check-ups, or participation in job training programmes. These programmes promote human capital development by encouraging behaviors that improve health, education, and employability.	Mexico's PROGRESA/Oportunidades programme requires families to ensure children's school attendance and participation in health seminars, while Brazil's Bolsa Família mandates that children attend school and receive vaccinations regularly. CCTs are designed to break the cycle of poverty by investing in the education and health of future generations.
Unconditional Cash Transfer	Unconditional Cash Transfer is a social welfare intervention that provides cash payments to individuals or households without specific conditions. It aims to alleviate poverty by providing immediate financial relief and allowing recipients to address their most pressing needs (not necessarily ensuring basic income)	Child allowances and social pensions are examples of UCTs, which offer flat benefits to specific age groups without any requirements.
Temporary basic income	This is a system of unconditional cash transfers in response to unusual emergency situations (not a regular programme).	During COVID-19, TBI was implemented in many countries to help those who are most affected by the pandemic—specifically, those who lack sufficient social assistance and insurance coverage.
Temporary basic income	Negative Income Tax is a system in which individuals earning below a certain amount receive supplemental pay from the government instead of paying taxes. It aims to reduce poverty and incentivize work by providing financial support that decreases as earnings increase.	Manitoba Guaranteed Annual Income Experiment in Canada; Seattle/Denver Income Maintenance Experiment in USA.
Demogrant	A demogrant is an unconditional grant given by the government to low-income individuals or households on purely demographic principles such as age and sex. It is also a form of UBI for the group of people chosen according to their demographic characteristics.	No examples were found, though demogrant was popularized by the US Democratic Party presidential candidate George McGovern in his unsuccessful 1972 campaign (Lehto and Meadowcroft (2020)).
Labeled Cash Transfers	Labeled Cash Transfers provide cash with a suggested purpose, such as education or health expenses, to influence spending behavior while maintaining flexibility.	Lesotho's Child Grant Programme offers cash transfers labeled for child-related expenses, resulting in higher education expenditures.
Combined Cash and In-Kind Transfers	Combined Cash and In-Kind Transfers offer a mix of cash and in-kind benefits to address both immediate consumption needs and broader development goals, leveraging the strengths of both approaches and ensuring flexibility and targeted support.	Some social security programmes provide cash assistance alongside essential goods like food or hygiene products to ensure that recipients have the resources to meet their immediate needs while also empowering them with the flexibility of cash.

Note: The table is based on Pinto et.al. (2021), Gentilini et al. (2020).

These models are not mutually exclusive; a combination of modalities could work depending on the circumstance. A country could, therefore, harness the benefits of UBI while addressing various implementation challenges (e.g., fiscal sustainability, identification challenges, possibility of negative labour market outcomes, as discussed later).

3. Lessons Learned from Various BI Interventions

A large body of literature measures various BI interventions in different countries. In their review article, Pinto, et al. (2021) analysed 86 studies covering 10 distinct BI interventions from the past six decades (see Appendix 1). These studies primarily measured workforce participation in earlier decades, while more recent studies also looked at health, education, housing, and other life impacts. BI models have evolved from simple experiments primarily focused on labour disincentives to comprehensive programmes that assess a wide range of social, economic, and health outcomes. Many other recent studies, such as Hasdell (2020), UNESCO (2021), and Kidd et al. (2022), have also analysed various outcomes of various BI applications. Key outcomes are noted below.

Poverty and Inequality

- Unconditional cash transfers in low- and middle-income countries consistently lead to measurable decreases in poverty and increased household expenditures, particularly on food and assets like livestock.
- Basic living improved, including sanitation and energy sources.
- The impact on savings and investment is mixed, with limited evidence for increased access to credit.
- Investments in social security are one of the most effective means of tackling inequality and higher reductions in inequality are achieved by countries that invest in universal social security.[2]
- Some studies noted higher rates of marital dissolution linked to UBI interventions.[3]

Education

- UBI and other unconditional cash transfer (UCT) programmes have significantly positive effects on short-term educational outcomes such as school enrollment and attendance, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. However, these effects on long-term educational attainment, such as test scores and cognitive development, are mixed and tend to diminish over time.
- Some studies noted improvements in school performance, average reading achievements, and increases in educational attainment.
- Cash transfers (whether conditional or unconditional) to women result in higher educational expenditures for children, yet the benefits for boys versus girls vary depending on cultural and socioeconomic factors and the manner in which households utilize the transfers.[4]
- Conditional cash transfers tend to yield a larger effect on educational outcomes compared to unconditional transfers. This finding suggests that without specific educational conditions, UCTs may not sustain long-term improvements in academic performance.

Health and Well-Being

- The health impacts of UBI programmes are generally positive across various indicators, improving general health status, reducing behavioral and social risk factors linked to poor health, and enhancing mental health outcomes. However, some negative effects related to social stigma and fear of benefit loss among persons with disabilities have been reported.
- UBI promotes better reproductive health, evidenced by higher contraceptive use and reductions in early marriages and unplanned pregnancies. Mixed results are found for healthcare access, with positive impacts more likely when recipients are incentivized to use health services[5].

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[2] In most countries, universal social security measures involve a combination of transfer modalities, i.e. cash and kind (Alderman, Gentilini, and Yemtsov 2018, cited in Gentilini et al. 2020), based on philosophical, political, economic, and technical grounds of the country.

[3] For example, analyzing Canada's MINCOME experiment, Choudhry and Arvin (2001, cited in Pinto et al. 2021) noted how Negative Income Tax payments might destabilize marriages by enhancing the economic quality of alternatives to married life.

[4] Hasdell (2020)

[5] Conditions are included for enrollment to special healthcare/insurance programmes.

However, these effects can diminish over time and vary between genders.

- Health benefits were also evident through reduced hospitalization rates and better child development outcomes.
- Nutritional benefits, including better food security, increased food expenditure, and greater dietary diversity, also show mixed results, particularly when considering the long-term sustainability of these improvements and the dependency on consistent and targeted cash transfers.

Labour and Employment

- Numerous studies have yielded diverse findings regarding the impact of UBI interventions on work effort. While some studies have observed decreased work effort, others have reported minimal influence on overall labour market participation. Interestingly, certain studies have even indicated slight increases in work participation. Additionally, it has been noted that labour supply responses vary significantly based on the level of support and tax rate.
- The potential for shifts in the type of work individuals engage in, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, where recipients may move from wage labour to more financially risky but potentially rewarding activities, highlights the complexity of these impacts. Gender differences are significant, with reductions in labour supply more likely among women, especially those with caregiving responsibilities.
- While some programmes targeting women show positive effects on their labour market participation and earnings, these benefits are not uniform and can be influenced by the broader socioeconomic context and the specific design of the UBI programme.

Administration and financial cost

UBI interventions are considered to be easy to administer but financially costly. Critiques of conventional targeted cash transfer programmes commonly revolve around concerns such as high rates of exclusion errors, administrative and private costs and incentive costs (Grosh et al., 2008, as cited in Banerjee et al. 2019). In contrast, UBI is seen as offering a more streamlined and efficient administration, thus having the potential to wield a more significant influence on reducing poverty. UBI administration would be simplest if implemented for every citizen, without the need to target efforts or the risk of making exclusion errors, but this would require high financial resources. The potential high costs of economy-wide implementation as well as of piloting have limited UBI applications predominantly to the developed world, with minimal presence in developing countries. Therefore, particularly in developing countries, UBI could be implemented among targeted vulnerable groups. While this would still entail some targeting constraints, it would make such programmes more financially viable for developing countries. Additionally, the deficiencies in the social security system in many countries, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region, present an opportunity to consider UBI as a policy option, conceivably through a phased scaling-up approach.

4. Positioning UBI programmes within a systemic development approach in the Asia-Pacific Region

The growth in the Asia-Pacific region is associated with high income inequality (Kidd et al., 2022). Human development in the region, as noted by the RHDR (2024), has been a tale of progress, disparity, and disruption. Widespread disparities in human development prevail among Asia-Pacific subregions and across and within countries. Given this context, the UBI can be an integral part of the overall development discourse, while being positioned within the social protection system in the region. If strategically implemented, UBI programmes can go far beyond the social protection outcomes and boost the broader development agenda.

The social security system in the Asia Pacific region: summary features

The social security programmes across the Asia-Pacific region exhibit considerable diversity in scope, implementation, and efficacy. In many countries within the region, development strategies prioritize economic growth over measures aimed at income redistribution, highlighting the absence of comprehensive social protection mechanisms necessary to foster more inclusive and resilient societies. Despite recent advancements and heightened focus on

TABLE 2: **Effective social protection coverage: comparison of the Asia Pacific region with global indicators (%)**[6]

Population Group	World	Asia and the Pacific	South Asia	South-East Asia	Pacific Islands	East Asia
Percentage of population covered by at least one social protection benefit	46.9	44.1	22.8	33.2	77.3	72.3
Older persons[7]	77.5	73.5	39.2	37.8	94.8	98.9
Unemployed[8]	18.6	14	0.6	12.3	46.1	26.1
Workers in case of work injury[9]	35.4	24.8	6.7	25.5	67.3	37.8
Persons with severe disabilities	33.5	21.6	6.8	28.0	78.4	34.8
Mothers with newborns	44.9	45.9	33.6	28.0	77.0	68.8
Children	26.4	18	20.9	22.2	57.6	9.0

Source: World Social Protection Report, 2020–22 (ILO, 2021)

6 According to the World Social Protection Report 2020-22 (Annex 2): i) Southern Asia includes Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka; ii) South-Eastern Asia includes Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Viet Nam; iii) Eastern Asia includes China, Hong Kong (China), Japan, Korea (Democratic People's Republic of), Korea (Republic of), Macau (China), Mongolia, Taiwan (China) and iv)Pacific Islands include American Samoa, Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Norfolk Island, Northern Mariana Islands, Palau Islands, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Wallis and Futuna Islands.

7 Percentage of persons above statutory retirement age receiving an old-age pension

8 Percentage of unemployed persons receiving cash benefits,

9 Percentage of labour force aged 15+ years covered by cash benefits in case of employment injury

social protection, a significant portion of the Asia-Pacific population, approximately 55.9 percent, remains without access to any form of social protection (Table 2).

Countries within the region differ widely. Southern Asian countries lag behind both world and regional averages in most indicators, while conditions in South-Eastern countries are hardly encouraging. The situation indicates potential policy space for BI interventions to expand livelihood opportunities for vulnerable groups including children, the elderly, people with disabilities, and others.

As appears from the discussion in UNDP (2023), Kidd et al. (2022) and Kidd et al. (2020), Social protection programmes in the Asia-Pacific region fall into three main categories: traditional social security systems, modern lifecycle social protection schemes, and responses to crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **Traditional Social Security Systems:** Bifurcated systems characterize traditional social security systems in most countries in the Asia-Pacific region. These systems offer public service pensions and social insurance schemes[10] to formal economy workers, while small social assistance programmes are provided to the poorest members of society. This results in a significant portion of the population being excluded from the social security system, commonly called the 'missing middle.'
- **Lifecycle Social Security Systems:** Modern lifecycle social security systems, primarily present in high-income countries, provide universal coverage to address risks across the lifecycle. These comprehensive systems include child benefits, old age pensions, disability benefits, unemployment benefits, and maternity/paternity and sickness benefits. Some low- and middle-income countries in Asia are slowly moving towards building more lifecycle social security systems. For instance, Mongolia has implemented a universal child benefit programme. Similarly, Bangladesh has adopted a national social security strategy based on a lifecycle approach.
- **Social Security in Response to Shocks:** These are special support systems to address shocks that disrupt people's regular livelihoods. In response to the COVID-19 crisis, many countries in the Asia-Pacific region expanded existing social security programmes or introduced new schemes. These included vertical expansion (increasing the cash transfer volume of some existing programmes), horizontal expansion (incorporating new recipients into existing schemes who fell under the poverty line due to shock), and also new temporary schemes to provide short-term financial assistance to the poor, small businesses, and unemployment benefits (often termed as a 'Stimulus Package').

Basic income interventions in the social security programmes of the Asia Pacific region

In the Asia-Pacific region, various income support programmes have been implemented to tackle socio-economic challenges and bolster resilience. Not all of them are BI interventions. There are some targeted cash support programmes that do not link the transfer to basic needs, yet bolster individual or household incomes. Such initiatives would also encompass Temporary Basic Income (TBI) programmes designed to provide a safety net and fortify household resilience during adversities; conditional cash transfers tied to specific criteria such as healthcare and education; and unconditional transfers aimed at poverty alleviation for certain demographic groups. Some income support programmes present tailored approaches to providing financial assistance and fostering economic stability for distinct age cohorts (such as children and the elderly) or demographic segments (including those living below the poverty line, women, and climate-vulnerable populations). Some specific examples from the region are noted in Box 1.

[10] These schemes typically cover formal sector employees and include benefits such as old age pensions, disability pensions, and survivors' pensions. Unemployment insurance is less common. Examples include the Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) and Employees' State Insurance (ESI) in India, BPJS Ketenagakerjaan in Indonesia, the Social Insurance General Office (SIGO) in Mongolia, government employee pension scheme in Bangladesh, and old-age pension in Nepal.

BOX 1: **Some examples of income support programmes and their impacts in the Asia-Pacific Region UNDP (2023) and Pinto et al. (2021).**

Cambodia:

On-Demand IDPoor Cash Transfer: This social protection intervention was part of the COVID-19 response and involved policy briefs to model the impacts of the pandemic with and without this cash transfer intervention. The project provided temporary support and addressed mobility changes and socio-economic variables during and after the pandemic. IDPoor, Cambodia's nationwide community-based poverty identification system, is a social registry that has become an important building block in Cambodia's National Social Protection Policy to target the poor. The programme had restored IDPoor household spending to 87% of pre-pandemic levels.[11] Cambodia's pilot Graduation Based Social Protection (GBSP) links social assistance to productivity and livelihoods to tackle poverty and vulnerability and optimize fiscal space for social protection. GBSP has now been prioritized by the Government's new development strategy, the Pentagonal Strategy Phase I 2024-2028, leading the way for institutionalizing the pilot through a national scheme.[12]

India

Madhya Pradesh Unconditional Cash Transfer (MPUCT): MPUCT, implemented in rural Madhya Pradesh, India, from 2011 to 2012, involved 11,688 individuals across 2,034 households. Funded by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and local governments, the piloting showed improvements in living conditions and health outcomes. Basic living improved, including sanitation and energy sources. Less minor illness or injury in the household was found in the intervention group, though no effect on vaccination coverage and severe illness and injuries could be noted. Also, the intervention households were found to be less likely to increase debt and more likely to reduce it. Sustainability issues centered around the scalability of such interventions in larger populations and the need for continued financial backing.

Mongolia:

Universal Child Money Programme (CMP): Mongolia's CMP first introduced in 2005 has served as an exemplary and progressive programme in Asia undergoing several policy changes, transitioning from targeted to universal coverage.[13] The integration of the Child Money Programme into the unified database for social protection systems, known as the ehalamj platform, has significantly improved its registration processes and payment systems. The platform's accessibility through web and smartphone applications has simplified beneficiary access, particularly benefiting herders living in remote areas.

Universal Pension: Provides pensions to all elderly citizens and persons with disabilities, primarily financed through social insurance.

Nepal:

Prayash and Sambodhan Projects: UNDP and UN Women piloted a temporary BI programme targeting marginalized and excluded women in 2021. This initiative aimed to meet immediate survival needs and enhance economic empowerment, resilience, and informed decision-making. Later the Prayash pilot was scaled up to the Sambodhan project, which includes providing a basic income, financial literacy training, and linking beneficiaries to government livelihood programmes and health insurance schemes. Over 3,500 women and people from the most vulnerable communities had access to bank accounts and were provided emergency cash to cope with the socio-economic repercussions of the COVID crisis.[14] More than 60% of vulnerable women were linked to livelihood opportunities, with 20% able to re-enroll their children in school and 10% got access to health services. 100% of beneficiaries in Gandaki province were covered by yearly health insurance premiums in partnership with local governments.

Pakistan:

Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP): Previously known as the Ehsaas programme, BISP has been expanded with UNDP support to strengthen safety nets and financial inclusion, particularly for women. This reorganization was partly a response to the COVID-19 pandemic and included emergency cash responses and technical support to integrate 115 social protection policies and programmes under the BISP framework.

Iran:

Conditional Cash and In-Kind Support Programme: UNDP supported this programme targeting vulnerable, female-headed households in provinces severely affected by COVID-19. This initiative included conditional cash transfers combined with in-kind support to help the worst-affected micro and small businesses and people.

[11] https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/845381/adbi-case-study-2022-no-5.pdf

[12] RHDR (2024)

[13] https://www.unicef.org/mongolia/stories/child-money-every-child

[14] https://www.undp.org/nepal/projects/tbi/sambodhan

National cash transfer programme to compensate for energy subsidy removal: In 2011, Iran introduced a cash transfer for each household in the country as a compensation measure for removing fuel subsidies and a mechanism to reduce likely social unrest from the sudden energy price hike. Over time, the value of the transfer fell, and it was US$10.80 per person per month (equivalent to 1.5 percent of GDP per capita) in 2020.[15] The scheme gave the citizens respite from the implications of the energy price hikes and it did not reduce people's participation in the labour force.

Timor-Leste:

Universal Basic Pensions: Since 2008, Timor-Leste has been providing pensions to elderly citizens and persons with disabilities, contributing to poverty reduction among these vulnerable groups. Almost all persons above 60 years and about one in five persons with disabilities participate in the scheme.

Sri Lanka

The Samurdhi (or Prosperity) Programme: The programme was launched in 1994, with the main thrust of poverty reduction by ensuring the participation of the poor in the production process. Implicit in the strategy is enhancing the health and nutritional status of the poor. The main components of Samurdhi are welfare, savings and credit programmes, and training and social development programmes as integral support activities. The programme includes unconditional cash transfers, social security/insurance provisions (for the birth of children, marriage, hospitalisation and death), housing assistance, nutritional and microfinance support, as well as a livelihoods component. In addition, the programme also provides a monthly food basket to pregnant women and young mothers until the child reached 1 year of age.[16] The Samurdhi Programme has shown that active community involvement and an integrated approach combining savings, human resource development, and small industries are crucial for successful poverty alleviation. Strong government support and the use of local resources enhance sustainability and acceptance. However, the programme faces challenges such as variability in community participation, reliance solely on government funding, and difficulties in consistent implementation across different regions.

Source[17]: UNDP (2023), Kidd et al. (2022)

These examples indicate the potential for devising and implementing similar programmes on a broader scale. They offer lessons that could be useful for BI interventions: for example, The programmes offering more than just cash, such as financial literacy, access to health care, or livelihood opportunities, tend to have impactful and sustainable outcomes[18]; integrating digital platforms for registration and payments makes programmes more accessible and efficient, particularly for those in remote areas; effective programme piloting is crucial for successful scaling up; and financial sustainability is a challenge in scaling up.

Universal programmes demonstrate greater resilience in times of crisis, swiftly adapting to shocks, particularly in identifying and aiding those falling behind. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, countries that already had cash transfer programmes were able to offer rapid assistance to vulnerable people covered by those programmes (as they had data on such vulnerable people). With the same logic, if there are UBI programmes for vulnerable people, then responding to shocks to ensure basic living standard becomes easier. The rapid scaling up of Cambodia's On Demand IDPoor Cash Transfer programme during the pandemic illustrates the flexibility and resilience of universal programmes.[19]

ILO (2021) points out that demographic changes, such as an aging population, shifts from extended to nuclear families, or increased migration, place pressure on families and pension systems. These factors, along with the region's susceptibility to climate change and natural disasters, indicate the need for strengthened social protection measures to boost resilience. This also suggests opportunities for UBI policy interventions. ILO (2021) further notes that countries with lifecycle social security structures already in place appear to be in a better position to adopt UBI as they have identified the vulnerabilities and needs of people at

[15] Stephen Kidd, Diloá Athias and Anh Tran (2020) "Addressing the COVID-19 economic crisis in Asia through social protection", UNDP, https://www.undp.org/publications/addressing-covid-19-economic-crisis-asia-through-social-protection, as cited on 20 June, 2024)

[16] https://socialprotection.org/discover/programmes/samurdhi-programme

[17] Additional information on the programmes have been collected from respective programme pages on the internet

[18] Experience from Nepal and Sri Lanka indicate that comprehensive support together with cash transfer play a critical role in poverty reduction.

[19] RBAP social security synthesis report.

different stages of life. Research by Kidd et al. (2022) on the Asia-Pacific region recommends transitioning from segmented social security systems to modern, universal social security systems complemented by public services and labour market policies to substantially reduce inequality. Kidd et al (2020) emphasizes the imperative for Asia-Pacific countries to establish modern, comprehensive and universal systems that can effectively reduce poverty and inequality, while demonstrating greater efficacy in tackling large-scale shocks. This report further suggests that in contrast to the conventional notion that social security for all members of society is only a financial burden to governments, it needs to be recognized as a crucial component of sustainable development strategy in the long run.

5. Challenges of implementing BI programmes

The implementation of BI programmes yields generally positive outcomes, but is hindered by various challenges related to implementation, negative short and long-run impacts, and scaling-up difficulties. Even implementing BI programmes temporarily (mainly during shocks) poses significant administrative, financial, and political challenges, including the need to identify and reach beneficiaries, secure funding, and manage the distribution of funds effectively (Molina & Eduardo, 2020). Pinto et al. (2021) have identified several challenges in implementing BI experiments, such as difficulties in ensuring equitable and efficient distribution of cash transfers, especially in regions with limited financial infrastructure.

The significant financing requirements of BI programmes affect the political will to implement such programmes. The broader the programme's coverage, the larger its financial needs. For any cash programme to be true to its objectives, three basic issues must be ensured: steady flow of financing; administrative capacity for efficient operations and management; and political will for trust-building moving forward (Molina & Eduardo, 2020). Consequently, planning for UBI for certain vulnerable groups will also require careful consideration of regular financial flow.

In developing economies, the potential for large-scale implementation of UBI programmes remains contingent upon viable financing avenues, including repurposed foreign aid, domestic tax reallocation, or the introduction of new taxation regimes (Banerjee et. al. 2019). Adopting UBI programmes is more challenging for countries already struggling with external debt burdens. For such countries, designing social security programmes would require more cautious efforts for better governance.

6. Adopting an implementable UBI programme for human development and poverty reduction

The policy space for UBI within the social security system in the Asia-Pacific countries should be considered in the region's broader development landscape. As noted in the RHDR (2024), slowing globalization and technological changes, particularly the rise of automation, are disrupting traditional job creation. The region is grappling with the pressures of urbanization and demographic shifts, heightened human insecurity exacerbated by environmental challenges, and the erosion of democratic practices. The report proposes a recalibration of the growth strategy.

The demographic shift towards an aging population in the Asia-Pacific region poses significant challenges, particularly concerning productivity and the substantial financial obligations associated with supporting an elderly populace. This is exacerbated by rapid urbanization and declining birth rates. In many countries in the region, economic growth is accompanied by inequality.

In order to effectively address multidimensional poverty, enhance human development, and manage adversity, a comprehensive social security programme based on a lifecycle approach should be implemented (Kidd et al. 2022). This cannot be accomplished solely through small scale targeted social security initiatives. Evidence from both developed (OECD) countries and Asia-Pacific countries suggests that social security initiatives that encompass more universal programmes, especially for specific segments of society, yield greater outcomes in terms of reducing poverty and inequality. Accordingly, social security programmes in the region should integrate more universal measures.

A comprehensive social security approach that includes UBI for various vulnerable groups should also have a system to accommodate responses to shocks. Wignaraja (2020) has argued that UBI could be a useful element of a framework for a new social contract to address the deep inequalities prevalent across societies and that, without UBI, there is a growing risk of displacement, migration, and unrest that capitalizes on social discontent. Countries should, therefore, consider implementing a well-designed UBI to absorb shocks without causing widespread economic disruptions and to advance poverty reduction efforts more sustainably (Wignaraja, 2020).

The aftermath of the COVID-19 response has made clear that social protection measures must transcend the pursuit of short-term solutions aimed at temporarily alleviating income loss. Instead, investment is needed in individuals' capabilities and resilience, helping to drive economic recovery and human development progress (Kanni Wignaraja in UNDP, 2023). Molina & Eduardo (2020) suggest that by identifying and incorporating previously overlooked or unregistered individuals during temporary BI implementation, governments can more effectively integrate these individuals into formal social protection systems for future benefits. Kidd et al. (2022) recommend the transition from fragmented systems to modern, universal social security systems to significantly reduce inequality, supported by complementary public services and labour market policies.

Considering the limitations of small-scale targeted cash transfer programmes and the high cost of economy-wide UBI programmes, an optimal approach may involve UBI for vulnerable people, linking the programme with human development outcomes to alleviate multidimensional poverty. For UBI to be an effective instrument for human development and poverty reduction, the following aspects require attention:

i) **Universality embedded in certain vulnerable segments of society only:** Due to financial constraints, implementing a truly universal UBI may seem unattainable. Nevertheless, UBI or UBI-like initiatives can be designed to target specific strategic groups (e.g., in Nepal, Mongolia, etc.). By implementing UBI in a targeted manner, it can be made universal within specific demographic or socioeconomic groups. This may involve selecting groups based on certain criteria such as age, income below the poverty line, and individuals identified through the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), among others. Defining 'universal' within the context of coverage for all in a vulnerable group can enhance the affordability of UBI and serve as a preliminary step towards broader economy-wide implementation. However, the targeting of these groups must be clearly defined, comprehensive, monitored, and regularly updated. The most vulnerable people are likely to be part of informal employment and some could be migrants (with relatively smaller individual and social capital) and therefore, a well-structured and transparent monitoring framework is essential to ensure coverage of all who are eligible.

UBI conditioned on key human development outcomes: The UBI applications should incorporate certain conditionalities to ensure specific human development outcomes. These conditionalities could include factors such as children's education, self-education in the absence of formal education, children's immunization, and maintaining a record of work, among others.[20] For instance, Brazil's Bolsa Família programme included several human development conditionalities, such as school attendance, vaccines, prenatal visits, etc. (Lindert et al. 2007).

ii) **Consolidation of existing programmes:** To simplify the administration of UBI, it may be necessary to consolidate existing small-scale social protection programmes. This will reduce duplication of costs and services, improving administrative inefficiencies. This approach will also facilitate amalgamation of data pertaining to different beneficiary groups across various programmes. The process of determining inclusion in UBI coverage should be approached strategically and tailored to specific context. Peruffo et al. (2021) propose an effective approach to tackle multidimensional poverty in developing and least-developed countries, which involves integrating UBI and Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) models. UBI, by providing unconditional cash payments to all individuals within the vulnerable group for which it has been designated, may improve welfare in the short term. However, to ensure the long-run positive impact of UBI on poverty reduction and human capital, UBI will require integrating some conditions, which will link cash transfers to specific behaviors such as school enrollment, immunization, healthcare utilization, participation is some skill training etc.

iii) **UBI as an investment for enhancing overall productivity:** UBI for vulnerable groups should not be perceived solely as a form of financial assistance for basic needs or social welfare. Instead, it should be viewed as a catalyst for amplifying productivity. Within the realm of social protection literature, numerous scholars have posited that social protection can contribute to economic growth by bolstering individuals' productivity (Lindert P. H., 2004; Bender et al, 2013). They argue that the expenses associated with social protection can be counterbalanced by the economic advancement derived from heightened productivity. This line of reasoning also applies to social protection initiatives such as UBI, as they enhance human capabilities, particularly by fostering improved educational and health outcomes, especially when the UBI programme imposes relevant conditionalities. Therefore, UBI should be considered an investment in future growth. In the context of the Asia-Pacific region, the productivity argument holds particular relevance due to the significant inequality that often accompanies economic progress. The main means through which people lagging behind can grow their income at a faster than average growth rate is by enhancing their productivity. UNDP (2022) has proposed that investments in social security represent one of the most effective approaches to addressing inequality, as they fortify human capital and contribute to economic prosperity.

iv) **UBI for greater freedom and agency:** Ensuring a basic income allows vulnerable people more freedom and agency to choose a life they want to live. As Bregman (2014) argues, UBI can significantly contribute to individual freedom by ensuring financial security, empowering individuals to make choices based on their interests and passions rather than being solely dictated by economic constraints. UBI would open up the possibility, athough the ultimate result would depend on skills enhancement, matching the demand and supply of labour in a particular sector and other socio-economic conditions. The Global Human Development Report 2021-22 (UNDP, 2022) emphasizes the significance of agency and freedom in navigating an uncertain world. It suggests that when people have more control over their lives, they are better equipped to confront challenges, adapt to changes, and forge constructive pathways for themselves and their communities. Furthermore, the report advocates for increased investment in education, health, and social protection to build people's agency. Investment in UBI

[20] It is also important to consider promoting employment opportunities that allow older persons who are willing and able to continue working. This can provide an income, contribute to their pensions, as well as ease pressures on existing social protection systems (United Nations, 2022).

(for vulnerable groups) coupled with human development conditions will serve this purpose.

v) **UBI for promoting gender equality:** UBI schemes can influence gender dynamics by altering economic incentives and gender norms, but the outcomes are highly context-dependent. By recognizing and compensating unpaid caregiving work, basic income could challenge existing gender norms and validate the economic value of traditionally female-dominated roles (Lenczewska, 2022; Lombardozzi, 2020). Conversely, BI might inadvertently reinforce traditional gender roles by incentivizing women to remain in caregiving roles, as it offers financial support without requiring labour market participation. This could lead to a reduction in the female labour supply (Day, 2022) as they spend more time with children. Policymakers need to consider complementary measures to address gender norms and ensure that basic income schemes do not inadvertently perpetuate gender inequalities (Lombardozzi, 2020). For example, a UBI programme could be specifically designated to extend the benefit to the female household members, which could contribute to improving gender equality.

vi) **Transparency in administering UBI programmes:** In administering UBI programmes, prioritizing public transparency is vital. Utilizing digital identities, blockchain technology, and other secure means helps combat corruption, prevent deviations and facilitate the efficient and transparent implementation of UBI initiatives. The rapid proliferation of digitalization and digital financial infrastructure in various nations has opened new avenues for making UBI interventions more effective. Furthermore, the varied impact of different basic income initiatives in alleviating poverty has showcased their capacity to effectively address multiple dimensions of poverty.

vii) **Shock responsiveness of UBI programmes:** The primary objective of BI programmes is to establish a baseline standard of living. Therefore, these programmes should incorporate adaptable criteria for widespread implementation, including allocation of additional funds specifically designated for expanding BI programmes during crises.

Measuring results

When assessing outcomes, the criteria for appraisal should encompass two facets: implementation scope and efficiency, and outcomes. Monitoring both the efficacy and repercussions of the initiative is crucial. When enacting the UBI initiative, the sought-after results should be integrated, and a framework established to evaluate and accommodate essential prerequisites. This will also aid in setting precedents for enduring implications. Simply transferring funds to impoverished individuals may not be adequate to guarantee that the funds will be utilized for enhancing livelihoods. Although the funds may alleviate short-term crises, ensuring their utilization for long-term (sustainable) development is not assured. While there is still insufficient research on the enduring repercussions of BI programmes, Banerjee et al. (2019) found no systematic evidence that transfers discourage work.

Financing UBI

Kidd et al. (2023) emphasize the necessity of transitioning from fragmented systems to modern and comprehensive social security frameworks to achieve substantial reductions in inequality. This transition necessitates the implementation of additional public services and labour market policies, supported by fiscal strategies such as increased taxes on the wealthy, sin taxes, and environmental levies to sustain these frameworks. RHDR (2024) advocates exploring diverse financing mechanisms, such as progressive tax restructuring and the redirection of subsidies towards broader social protection objectives, to ensure the enduring efficacy of basic income schemes. The effectiveness of UBI is contingent on the existing social welfare programmes within each country. According to research by Rigolini et al (2020), a budget-neutral UBI may be less effective than targeted programmes in alleviating poverty.[21]

If UBI could be strategically geared to improve productivity, then the growth gained by such increased productivity arguably would recoup the cost. However, the investment should be made in the first place to create the conditions for that gain. Though UBI interventions are expected to be financed by the government, some discussion has been evolving on private sector finance (e.g. Pellitteri, 2023). Some potential sources of UBI finance are presented in Box 2.

While efforts to expand the fiscal space for financing UBI interventions are valuable, enhancing implementation efficiency is equally critical. A gradual approach to scaling up UBI programmes with adequate monitoring, evaluation, and adaptation mechanisms could motivate wealthy people to give taxes more diligently. Improving the social infrastructure for a comprehensive social security programme would further incentivize tax contributions by the public, as they stand to benefit from these improvements as well.

[21] In this case BI programme replaces other similar social security peogrammes without increasing the total budget.

BOX 2: **Potential sources of finance for UBI:**

- **Government Revenue:** This is the primary funding source and includes taxes (such as income tax, VAT, and corporate taxes), natural resource royalties, and other government income. Improving tax collection efficiency and broadening the tax base in developing countries can significantly increase available funds. (Standing, 2017).
  Example: Mongolia funded its Child Money Programme largely through its revenues from mineral resources, specifically copper and gold mining.
- **Public-Private Partnerships:** These involve collabourations between government entities and private sector companies to fund and implement UBI schemes. These partnerships can leverage the strengths of both sectors—public oversight and private efficiency.
  Example: Brazil's Bolsa Família programme, while primarily government-funded, has explored partnerships with private sector entities to enhance the programme's reach and effectiveness.[22]
- **Philanthropy and Development Organizations:** Funding from development and philanthropic organizations or wealthy individuals can also support basic income programmes, especially pilot projects that aim to test the feasibility and impacts of such initiatives.
  Example: The pilot basic income programme in Madhya Pradesh, India, was funded by UNICEF.[23]
- **Private Sector UBI:** Private-sector UBI revolves around the growing data economy, where companies profit from the data individuals provide but rarely compensate them. Platforms based on blockchain and Web3 technologies could enable individuals to manage and profit from their data, offering passive income streams. Blockchain technology supports this model by allowing tokenization of work, particularly benefiting gig workers by providing an alternative income stream (Gregory Pellitteri, 2023).[24]
- **Reallocation of Existing Funds:** Governments can reallocate funds from less effective or outdated subsidy programmes towards more direct cash transfer programmes. This often involves cutting subsidies on fuels, food, and other commodities to free up resources.
  Example: Iran replaced inefficient energy subsidy with a more targeted social assistance programme, which included cash transfers (Salehi-Isfahani & Mostafavi-Dehzooei, 2018).

These sources are not mutually exclusive and can be combined in various ways depending on the specific context and capabilities of a country. Effective implementation often requires careful planning, strong governance, and international cooperation. The issue of financing social protection deserves special attention in discussions addressing debt distress in many Asian and Pacific countries.

[22] Lindert, Kathy, et al. "The Nuts and Bolts of Brazil's Bolsa Familia Program: Implementing Conditional Cash Transfers in a Decentralized Context." World Bank Social Protection Discussion Paper No. 0709. (2007).

[23] Podcast by UNESCO Basic income lab available at https://en.unesco.org/inclusivepolicylab/learning/indias-quest-basic-income

[24] Blockchain and Web3 technologies and tokenization are reshaping digital ecosystems by enhancing transparency, decentralization, and user empowerment. These technologies are pivotal in transforming various sectors, including finance, asset management, and digital marketplaces, by enabling new forms of ownership and economic participation.

7. Conclusions

The evidence from UBI programmes in various countries presents mostly optimistic perspectives, but some pessimism remains as well. On the positive side, UBI has the potential to significantly reduce multidimensional poverty and enhance education and health outcomes, offering individuals the opportunity to improve their livelihoods. UBI is also recognized within a broader framework of enhancing people's productivity, opportunities for building agency, and greater freedom. Conversely, implementing UBI is often seen as impractical due to the substantial financial resources it requires. Additionally, concerns have been raised about the possibility of UBI making people less motivated to work and seek employment, leading to adverse health and social outcomes. However, as discussed above, these challenges of implementing UBI can be resolved with strategic planning and a phased approach.

In the Asia-Pacific region, where inequality is high and increasing alongside economic growth, UBI programmes could efficiently expand opportunities for the most vulnerable individuals in society toward better human development outcomes, better productivity, and the freedom to build their lives, ultimately contributing to reduced inequality. To utilize the potential of UBI in the Asia-Pacific region, the following issues should be addressed:

- **The fear that UBI may be good but financially unsustainable should be addressed from a broader development policy perspective.** As has been experienced by many countries, adopting UBI in Asia-Pacific countries could become a pragmatic measure for ensuring a human development-centric system that leaves no one behind. The 'impossibility' factor could be mitigated by initially targeting specific groups of vulnerable people (but maintaining universality within each targeted group) and scaling up the programmes over time. However, building in scalability would require investment from the beginning. Redesigning social security systems, improving governance, and restructuring fiscal systems to accommodate transformation will facilitate that investment.
- **The apprehension about negative labour market outcomes could be addressed by incorporating measures to address possible secondary impacts.** For example, the success of the programme may require complementary policies such as providing UBI recipients access to skills training programmes, affordable micro-finance, etc. (as has been done in Samurdhi in Sri Lanka).
- **While UBI may not be the most cost-effective solution for addressing specific constraints, it offers a broad, adaptable approach with the potential to reduce poverty and support economic growth in contexts where individual needs and constraints are not well understood (Banerjee et al. 2019).** Therefore, taking investment in the most vulnerable as a starting point can create space for designing UBI programmes.
- **The overall social security system should be modernized to include a lifecycle approach, identifying specific needs at different stages of life and then embedding UBI programmes for different groups in that system.** Governments should consolidate existing social protection programmes to eliminate inefficiencies, reduce duplication of costs and services, and improve administrative effectiveness. The system should also utilize digital technologies for implementation efficiency and transparency. Country-specific analyses are essential for identifying UBI programme opportunities that are appropriate for the realities of the respective country.

The findings from diverse UBI experiments, including some in the Asia-Pacific countries, provide substantial evidence to advocate for integrating UBI programmes for vulnerable groups into policies to enhance human development, overall productivity, gender equity, and social welfare, including freedom and agency. Countries need to explore scalable BI models that can be effectively integrated into national social security systems. What is crucial is making the initial investment to establish a strong foundation for the program. Embedding UBI into a broader development strategy that ensures the vulnerable segments of the population -regardless of whether their vulnerability is rooted in structural or conjectural factors- are able to maintain a standard of living above the poverty line, can expand productive human capacities and contribute to more inclusive and resilient societies. These positive outcomes in the long term far outweigh the upfront costs. Therefore, it is essential to take a forward-looking approach when investing in UBI and be ready to adapt to evolving vulnerabilities continually.

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Appendix 1: Examples of Basic Income Interventions Around the World[25]

- **New Jersey Income Maintenance Experiment:** The New Jersey Income Maintenance Experiment (NJ) was a randomized controlled trial conducted from 1968 to 1972 across various cities in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, including Trenton, Paterson, and Jersey City. The experiment targeted 1357 households to evaluate labour supply responses to a basic income guarantee. The intervention provided cash transfers with the goal of maintaining income levels. The cost was covered by federal funds, and the aim was to reduce work disincentives by ensuring a minimum income. The impact showed varied labour supply responses, and sustainability concerns highlighted the importance of long-term funding sources and policy integration for scalability.
- **Madhya Pradesh Unconditional Cash Transfer (MPUCT):** MPUCT, implemented in rural Madhya Pradesh, India, from 2011 to 2012, involved 11,688 individuals across 2034 households. Funded by international organizations (UNICEF) and local governments, the piloting showed improvements in living conditions and health outcomes. Sustainability issues centered around the scalability of such interventions in larger populations and the need for continued financial backing.
- **Rural Income Maintenance Experiment (RIME):** Conducted between 1970 and 1972 in rural Iowa and North Carolina, RIME enlisted 809 families to understand the effects of basic income on rural communities, focusing particularly on single-parent households headed by women. The intervention costs were funded federally. The results indicated modest reductions in labour supply, reflecting the challenges in rural economies. Sustainability discussions emphasized the need for rural-specific adjustments and continued financial support to ensure long-term viability.
- **Gary Income Maintenance Experiment:** The Gary experiment, carried out from 1971 to 1974 in Gary, Indiana, involved 1799 Black families, predominantly single-parent households headed by women. This randomized controlled trial was designed to measure labour supply and family stability in urban settings. Federally funded, the experiment showed a decreased labour supply among participants. The sustainability of such programmes in urban areas was questioned due to the high costs and the need for substantial ongoing financial support.
- **Seattle-Denver Income Maintenance Experiment (SIME/DIME):** SIME/DIME, conducted from 1970 to 1976, was the largest U.S. basic income experiment involving 4800 families in Seattle and Denver. This randomized controlled trial aimed to assess labour supply impacts and family dynamics over a longer period than other experiments. Impact evaluation of the experiment revealed that longer intervention periods led to more significant labour supply reductions. Sustainability concerns included the need for long-term political and financial commitment to maintain programme benefits.
- **Manitoba Guaranteed Annual Income Experiment (MINCOME):** MINCOME, conducted from 1974 to 1979 in Winnipeg and rural Dauphin, Manitoba, involved over 1300 families. This randomized controlled trial focused on labour supply and community effects of basic income. The intervention was funded by provincial and federal governments. Results indicated reduced hospitalizations and stable employment patterns, suggesting positive health and economic outcomes. Sustainability discussions highlighted the need for continued governmental support and potential cost savings from improved public health.
- **Namibia Basic Income Grant Pilot Project:** Conducted from 2008 to 2010 in Otjivero-Omitara, Namibia, this observational cohort study involved 398 individuals receiving monthly basic income grants aimed at reducing poverty and improving social outcomes. Funded by non-governmental organizations and international donors, the project demonstrated significant reductions in poverty and improved health indicators. However, sustainability was a concern due to reliance on external funding and the need for long-term economic integration strategies.
- **Give Directly Unconditional Cash Transfer Programme:** This programme, conducted in Kenya's rural Rarieda region from 2011 to 2013, involved 1440 households in a cluster-randomized controlled trial. Funded by private donors and international organizations, the intervention aimed to improve economic and health outcomes by providing unconditional cash transfers. Results included increased asset ownership and reduced poverty, but sustainability concerns were noted regarding long-term funding and integration into national policies.
- **Alaska Permanent Dividend Fund** Established in 1977, the Alaska Permanent Dividend Fund provides annual dividends to all residents, funded by state oil revenues. This observational study using differences-in-differences analysis has shown that the fund supports economic stability and reduces poverty without significantly affecting labour supply. Sustainability is supported by the ongoing oil revenue, but concerns remain about the volatility of resource-based funding and the need for economic diversification.
- **Finland Basic Income Experiment** Conducted from 2017 to 2018, this randomized controlled trial involved 175,000 individuals receiving unemployment benefits. Funded by the Finnish government, the experiment aimed to assess the impacts of basic income on employment and well-being. Preliminary results indicated slight improvements in mental health but negligible effects on employment. Sustainability discussions emphasized the need for broader policy changes and stable funding sources to support long-term implementation.

[25] From Pinto et al. (2021)