

Scaling Graduation through Government: Case Study Synthesis Paper

Lessons from Government-led Graduation Programmes in Ethiopia, Senegal, Kenya, and Paraguay

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Executive Summary

Extensive research indicates that the Graduation approach is an effective way to move households out of extreme poverty and into sustainable livelihoods, producing lasting benefits.¹ Governments have increasingly recognised the value of the approach as a complement to their existing poverty alleviation programmes. However, limited practical knowledge exists on the process of effectively designing and delivering these sequenced, multi-component programmes via government systems at scale.

BRAC undertook case studies of four government Graduation programmes in countries that have collectively reached over 500,000 participants in order to explore this issue. The four case studies, from Kenya, Senegal, Ethiopia, and Paraguay, represent a range of different types of programmes and contexts. The analysis used an analytical framework called the Strategic Triangle of Effective Policy Design, which outlines three elements for a government policy or programme to succeed at scale: political supportability (necessary buy-in), technical correctness (programme design/effectiveness) and administrative feasibility (implementability). This synthesis and each case study examines the design and implementation of the programmes through this lens.

Key Findings

Overall, the synthesis found that government-led Graduation programmes can and have been successful, but they require intentional investment in all three dimensions of effective policy implementation: political support, technical design, and administrative capacity.

Political Support: Broad-Based Commitment Enables Scale and Sustainability

Three of four programmes (Ethiopia, Senegal, Paraguay) demonstrated broad-based political support. The Kenya programme had more nascent political support in its early phases but later transitioned toward institutionalisation. **Programmes that aligned clearly**

¹ See Graduation Evidence Map: <https://bracleultrapovertyenvironment.org/evidence-map>

with national poverty reduction strategies and built relationships across government levels showed greater resilience. Notably, programmes in Senegal and Paraguay survived administration changes, attributed to strong engagement with government partners at multiple levels and continued alignment with national policy agendas.

Key insight: In Senegal, early impact evaluation results showed the highest benefit-cost ratio for the full Graduation package. This supported the government’s decision to scale up the full package (instead of other versions of it), and the government’s policy of territorial equality ensured that the programme was expanded to all regions in the country.

Technical Design: Programmes Meet Evidence-Based Standards

All four programmes largely cover the Graduation Essentials, what rigorous evidence shows are critical components for achieving lasting impact.² They include productive asset transfers sufficient to provide a “big push”, basic needs support (in most cases provided by national cash transfer programmes), and coaching components, all of which are delivered in a sequenced, timebound, and explicitly adaptive manner.

Technical challenges tended to occur more strongly in pilot phases and/or during first cohorts. While some of them were related to receiving basic needs support in a timely manner, in all the case studies, **the most challenging component to deliver as designed was coaching.** Coaching-related challenges included limited training for individual coaches which led to inconsistent or non-existent coaching, participant engagement with coaching dropping when productive asset grants were distributed, high mentor per mentee ratio, and training materials not being tailored to specific contexts. Due to capacity and budget constraints, the role of individual coaching is—in most cases—limited or non-existent, Paraguay being the exception.

Key insight: Pilot phases were critical for revising programme designs as well as identifying and addressing technical implementation gaps before scaling. Programmes adapted training materials, payment systems, and coaching approaches based on operational learning.

Administrative Capacity: The Primary Implementation Bottleneck

Administrative feasibility posed the greatest challenges across all programmes. Even when building on existing social safety net systems, Graduation programmes require significantly more cross-agency coordination, specialised human resources, and case management capacity than standard cash transfer programmes.

Common administrative challenges included:

- Interoperability gaps in payment systems (contributing to errors and delays)
- Targeting difficulties
- Limited coordination across multiple agencies and government levels
- Capacity constraints, especially in newly established ministries and local-level coaching

² BRAC, 2024. Graduation Essentials.

<https://www.bracinternational.org/news/research-library/graduation-essentials/>

Key insight: Programmes that invested upfront in capacity building and system strengthening during pilot phases were better positioned for successful scaling. Ethiopia, for example, established minimum capacity requirements that cities must meet before programme rollout.

The Crucial Role of Learning and Adaptation

Many institutional capacity issues emerged during pilot phases and were addressed during expansion design. Pilot phases should be treated as essential learning opportunities for course correction before scaling up. Beyond technical workshops and committees, all case study programmes invested in varied learning strategies:

- Process evaluations provided crucial insights for expansion
- Senegal participated in the broader Sahel Adaptive Social Protection Program, producing extensive learning products across six countries
- Paraguay partnered with an experienced graduation NGO (Fundación Capital) for design, implementation support, and evaluation.

Bottom line: Even technically sound designs require intentional learning periods and adaptive management to succeed at scale.

About this Synthesis

This analysis examined four government-led Graduation programmes across Ethiopia, Senegal, Kenya, and Paraguay to understand what enables successful government implementation and scaling.

The review began in 2023 when BRAC conducted a global baseline of existing government-led Graduation programmes,³ identifying 24 programmes that met the design standards of the Graduation Essentials.⁴ A series of case studies were subsequently undertaken on select programmes to inform existing and future government-led Graduation programming.

The case studies used an analytical framework called the Strategic Triangle of Effective Policy Design, developed by Isabel Guerrero / Imago (Figure 1). This framework lays out three interconnected criteria for developing **a scalable government policy, or programme: political supportability, technical correctness, and administrative feasibility.**

³ By government-led we refer to those programmes where the government has a meaningful role as a key stakeholder, with some level of accountability for programme delivery and impact. For example, where the government is leading the programme and directly involved in its delivery, where they are involved in key decisions on design and implementation but outsourcing delivery to NGO or other non-governmental actors, or where the government has a role in the steering committee or other overseeing body, or has other type of meaningful role or engagement.

⁴ BRAC, 2024. Graduation Essentials.

<https://www.bracinternational.org/news/research-library/graduation-essentials/>

Political supportability refers to necessary buy-in among key political actors: how to create and maintain an effective, sustainable coalition of interest to ensure the sustainability of the intervention for long-term impact. Technical correctness considers the effectiveness and quality of the intervention: a full causal sequence from intervention to outcomes if implemented with fidelity. When scaled up, the intervention needs to work effectively in various challenging settings, such as in diverse regions within the country. Administrative feasibility refers to whether the intervention can be implemented through the state bureaucracy.⁵ Each of the case studies, and this synthesis, examines the implementation experience through these three critical enabling factors.



Figure 1. The Strategic Triangle of Effective Policy Design

The four case studies that this synthesis piece draws on are: **Urban Productive Safety Net and Jobs Project (UPSNDP) in Ethiopia, YKK in Senegal, Economic Inclusion Programme (EIP) as a part of the Kenya Social and Economic Inclusion Programme (KSEIP) in Kenya, and Tenondera in Paraguay.** These programmes were selected to cover a range of contexts (urban vs rural), implementing partner arrangements (strong NGO involvement vs. not), funding sources (with and without the World Bank), and designs (i.e., a variation with a wage employment model was included), with a goal of highlighting a range of implementation experiences. Three of the case studies—UPSNDP, YKK and Tenondera—represent Graduation programmes that have been successfully scaled up in the government context. As of late 2025, KSEIP has finished its pilot phase and is preparing for a follow-up phase.

The programme information was gathered from desk research and semi-structured interviews, conducted over a two-month period in May-July 2025, with select stakeholders

⁵ Guerrero et al., 2024. Scaling up Development Impact; Imago Global Grassroot, Scaling Up Impact (slide deck, module 2: System mapping and strategic tensions).

from government, NGOs, and the World Bank. The timeline did not allow for field visits and the information presented does not claim to be comprehensive.

About the Programmes

The four government-led Graduation programmes analysed for these case studies vary in their scope, scale, and how they were implemented, but also share similarities, especially in terms of what worked and where the challenges lay (see Table 1) .

Three of four case studies are located in Africa and one in Latin America. While the African programmes—especially UPSNJP in Ethiopia and YKK in Senegal—are more well known and well documented examples, Tenondera in Paraguay provides an interesting case of large-scale Graduation programme that is implemented in the government context without substantial World Bank-managed IDA-funding.⁶

Three of the case studies represent large-scale Graduation programmes. Two of the programmes—Ethiopia’s UPSNJP and Senegal’s YKK, both of which are ongoing—have reached over 100,000 participants and are some of the largest Graduation programmes in Africa. Kenya's KSEIP has finished its first phase with 15,000 households (two cohorts of 7,500 each) in its economic inclusion programme, and the follow-up project (KSEIP 2) was approved in June 2025 and is in the process of reaching 28,000 households.

⁶ Tenondera in Paraguay is mainly implemented with government funds but it got donor support from Co-Impact to support its redesign.

Table 1. Basic Information about the Four Programmes

	Senegal YKK	Ethiopia UPSNJP	Kenya EIP (part of KSEIP)	Paraguay Tenondera
Region	Africa	Africa	Africa	Latin America
Time Period	Pilot: 2018-2020 Extension, Phase 1: 2022-2024 Extension, Phase 2: 2025-2027	Initially 2020-2025, extended until 2027 (potentially until 2028) <i>Previous programme UPSNP run 2016-2020</i>	KSEIP: 2020 - 2024 KSEIP 2: 2025 -2030 (approved in June 2025)	Running since 2015 Redesign period 2019 – 2024
Coverage	Pilot: Urban & peri-urban, 4 areas Extension: Urban and rural, 14 areas (nationwide)	Over 80 cities across the country <i>Previous programme UPSNP: 11 cities</i>	KSEIP: 5 rural counties KSEIP 2: 20 counties, including two urban counties (planned)	Rural & Peri-urban, national coverage
Reach	Pilot: 15,000 hhs Extension, Phase 1: 46,000 hhs Extension, Phase 2: 80,000 hhs (2 cohorts of 40,000 each)	Entrepreneurship track: 330,000 hhs so far <i>Previous programme UPSNP: over 100,000 hhs</i>	KSEIP: 15,000 hhs (reached) KSEIP 2: 28,000 hhs (in process)	44,000 hhs between 2020 - 2024 (period in which Tenondera was supported by Fundación Capital / Co-Impact). Programme currently enrolls around 7,000 participants per year
Leading ministry	Previously the Ministry of Community Development and Social and Territorial Equity. In late 2025, the ministry's name was changed to Ministry of Family, Social Action and Solidarity	The Ministry of Urban Development and Construction, Urban Job Creation and Food Security Agency	The Ministry of Labor and Social Protection	The Ministry of Social Development
Other key agencies & organisations involved	Regional and local NGOs (incl. Trickle Up in the pilot phase), training firms, World Bank, other donors especially via SASPP platform	The Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, Jobs Creation Commission, various coordination, technical and steering committees in federal, regional, and local level, World Bank, and other donors	Global Development Incubator, Village Enterprise, BOMA, World Bank, FCDO, Oxford Policy Management, CHASP Advisory, World Food Programme, Echo Network Africa (ENA), Smart Regional Consultant (SRC), Generation for Change, and Development (GENCAD)	Fundación Capital, Co-Impact

Political Support

Political supportability refers to necessary buy-in among key political actors: how to create and maintain an effective, sustainable coalition of interest to ensure the sustainability of the intervention for long-term impact.⁷

Three of the four countries—Paraguay, Senegal and Ethiopia—experienced broad political support. In Kenya, the programme had the political mandate and strong champions, but it took time to establish broader institutional support. In every country, the Graduation programme closely aligns with national priorities and is guided by the broader social policy agenda.

Political support and commitment to the Graduation approach can show up in a few different ways. Table 2 summarises some of the key dimensions and how they manifest themselves across case studies.

In each case study country, the Graduation programme is aligned with the country's broader poverty reduction and/or social protection agenda. In some countries, this alignment is longstanding while in some others, like in Kenya, it is in some ways newer, signaling a commitment to a move beyond cash transfers as the standalone social safety net. At the time of writing this, the Kenyan government has drafted an Ultra-Poor Graduation Strategy that encourages coordination and teamwork across stakeholders to promote more inclusive development. Moreover, **in some cases contradictions existed between high-level national agendas and other policies** that indirectly affected the effectiveness and success of Graduation programmes. For instance, in Ethiopia the policies around land ownership and business licensing may in some cases hinder private sector development.⁸

One of the indications of broad and institutionalised political support is whether the programme survives a change of government, something that took place in Senegal and Paraguay. In both cases, the Graduation programmes had been strongly championed by the previous administration and thus, the election represented a real challenge for the programme continuation. However, in both countries, the political transition didn't lead to axing the programme. Key factors contributing to this were: i) the programmes' alignment with national priorities on poverty reduction, which allowed the programmes to be integrated into the new administration's policy agenda; ii) implementing or supporting partners' close engagement with government institutions and technical teams. For example, in Paraguay, the NGO (Fundación Capital) that supported the programme design and implementation, had longstanding relationships with government institutions, including with the middle management. **The institutionalisation of the project with a broad set of**

⁷ Guerrero et al., 2024. Scaling up Development Impact; Imago Global Grassroot, Scaling Up Impact (slide deck, module 2: System mapping and strategic tensions).

⁸ All land is managed by the government and leases can be cancelled if needed for the government's own development.

stakeholders made the political buy-in resilient and broad enough to survive changes at the highest political level.

Sometimes—like in the case of Paraguay—what is also needed is the new administration presenting a new version of the programme, though not necessarily making essential changes to it. On top of strengthening the sense of ownership of the programme, this redesign process also provided an opportunity for the technical team to become a more unified and strengthened unit.⁹

All programmes except Tenondera in Paraguay are strongly supported by the IDA-funding, managed by the World Bank. Most of this funding is credit-based, while some of the funding comes through trust-funds (i.e. doesn't need to be paid back).¹⁰ Tenondera in Paraguay is mainly funded by the government. During the redesign period of 2020-2024, the government committed about \$24.5 USD million to the programme, and Co-Impact funded Fundación Capital to support the programme. This redesign process has now ended, **making the programme currently 100% government-funded.**

Both previous practical experience and empirical evidence can help the scaling and securing political support. In Ethiopia, the previous experience of successfully implementing large-scale rural programmes (PSNP 1-5) gave the government confidence that this could also be replicated in the urban context. In Senegal, one of the contributing factors for scaling up was early positive results of impact. Backed by the rigorous evidence that the full Graduation package represented the most value-for-money—it had the highest benefit-cost-ratio—it was easier to make the case for scaling up the Graduation programme.

⁹ It is important to note that in Latin America, when a programme is continued by a new administration, it is rarely adopted unchanged. Redesign is a common political practice, not because the programme is considered unsuccessful, but because new governments seek to leave their own imprint and demonstrate leadership. This process often serves as an opportunity to reinforce the program, adapt it to evolving priorities, and secure its sustainability over time.

¹⁰ For example, the total budget for Ethiopia is \$703 million, out of which WB-managed (credit-based) IDA-funding is \$482 million. The GoE contribution is \$150 million and the remaining \$71 million comes from the trust fund.

Table 2. Dimensions of Political Supportability/buy-in

	Senegal YKK	Ethiopia UPSNJP	Kenya KSEIP	Paraguay Tenondera
Alignment with national policies and priorities	<p>Strong alignment: Social protection has been a priority sector since 2012</p> <p>As of late 2025, the long-term (2015-2035) National Social Protection Strategy is under revision to ensure its alignment with the Senegal Vision 2050 strategy framework</p> <p>The government's approach on territorial/regional equality helped scaling up the programme across the country</p>	<p>Strong alignment with the broader social policy agenda</p> <p>However, in practice some of the policies on land ownership and business registration can limit the investment and survival of micro-enterprises and thus, may present challenges to the Graduation approach</p>	<p>Strong alignment: Aligns with Kenya's Vision 2030</p> <p>Social Protection Policy recently updated, outlines the importance of complementary economic inclusion interventions</p> <p>As of June 2025, the government has drafted an Ultra-Poor Graduation Strategy</p>	<p>Strong alignment with (both previous and existing) Government policy agendas</p> <p>The new version of the programme was officially adopted in 2024 through Ministerial Resolution No. 126/2024</p>
Continuity over elections/ change of government	<p>Survived the change of government in 2024, even though the safety net had been developed under the previous administration with the strong ownership by the president</p>	<p>General Elections in 2021 not noted as a key challenge for continuity of the programme</p>	<p>General Elections in 2022 not noted as a key challenge for continuity of the programme</p>	<p>Elections were seen as a serious challenge but the programme was able to transition with the change of government</p> <p>In 2023, the new administration presented a redesigned programme, which was officially adopted in 2024 through Ministerial Resolution No. 126/2024</p>
Sustainability of funding	<p>The government funds the safety net cash transfers from its domestic budget</p> <p>The funding for the Graduation component comes via credit-based IDA-funding (\$28 USD million), and WB managed trust-fund is used for evaluations and cross-country learning</p> <p>WB has supported social protection programmes in Senegal since 2014</p>	<p>The government's budget is often referred to as 'pro poor'</p> <p>Most of the UPSNJP budget (\$482 USD million out of the total of \$703 USD million) comes from credit-based IDA-funding (managed by WB) but the government is investing \$150 USD million from its domestic budget</p> <p>Remaining \$71 USD million comes from a trust-fund</p>	<p>The government funds the safety net cash transfers</p> <p>Funding for the Graduation component comes from an IDA-credit (total for all of KSEIP, including other components, \$250 USD million). \$26 USD million is budgeted for KSEIP 2.</p> <p>WB made investment in 2013 to support cash transfer programmes</p>	<p>The programme is mainly funded by the Government</p> <p>Technical assistance from Fundación Capital to the programme was funded by Co-Impact</p> <p>No WB / IDA-funding</p>
Country specific factors contributing to political will for scaling up and continuation of the programme	<p>Early results of impact supported the decision to scale up the full Graduation package as it had the highest benefit-cost ratio (compared to other packages that were tested)</p>	<p>Previous experience of implementing large scale social safety net gave confidence that this can be done in urban context too</p>	<p>Gov't drafting a Ultra-Poor Graduation Strategy, more broad-based political buy-in, plans to move to larger pilot in 20 counties and integrate lessons</p>	<p>Supporting NGO's longstanding engagement with middle management and technical teams</p>

Technical Correctness

Technical correctness refers to the effectiveness of the intervention, a full causal sequence from intervention to outcomes if implemented with fidelity. When scaled up, the intervention also needs to work effectively in various challenging settings such as in diverse regions within the country.¹¹

All four programmes largely cover the Graduation Essentials. Technical challenges tended to occur more strongly in pilot phases and/or during first cohorts. While some of them were related to receiving basic needs support in a timely manner, in all the case studies, the most challenging component to deliver as designed was coaching.



The Graduation Essentials

The Graduation Essentials, introduced by BRAC in 2024, were used to assess technical correctness.¹² While many Graduation programmes include additional components, such as saving groups, life skills or health training, the Graduation Essentials are the key elements required—according to our current understanding of the evidence and research—to have a long-lasting impact on participants' lives. Three of these components make up what is referred to as the ABC's of Graduation: a productive **A**sset (large enough to act as a 'big push'), **B**asic needs support, and **C**oaching that is intense and frequent. Moreover, the programme needs to be sequenced, time-bound, and adaptive.

¹¹ Guerrero et al, 2024. Scaling up Development Impact; Imago Global Grassroot, Scaling Up Impact (slide deck, module 2: System mapping and strategic tensions).

¹² BRAC, 2024. Graduation Essentials.

<https://www.bracinternational.org/news/research-library/graduation-essentials/>

All of the studied programmes align with the Graduation Essentials to a large degree, as seen in Table 3. Ethiopia includes two tracks under its broader UPSNJP programme.¹³ The first is an entrepreneurship track that closely aligns with the Graduation approach. The second is an apprenticeship track that, while technically not a Graduation programme, is one of the first large-scale attempts to provide wage employment to urban youth in Africa. Given there is increased interest from governments to experiment with these types of Graduation pathways in urban contexts, it is included in the analysis.

Productive Asset

The amount of productive assets varies between \$200 USD+ and \$500 USD across the four programmes. The transfers are typically provided via a one-time disbursement, except in the case of Kenya where the lump sum was delivered in two tranches. In Ethiopia's apprenticeship track, the six months on-the-job-training can be considered as an indivisible transfer that allows participants to start a new livelihood.

The value of productive assets in the four programmes are typical for government-led Graduation programmes. According to Partnership for Economic Inclusion's (PEI) Graduation Landscape analysis (2025),¹⁴ the amount of productive assets in government-led Graduation programmes varied between \$75-1527 USD, the median being \$300 USD.¹⁵

Basic needs Support

In most cases, **the basic needs support is provided by existing national cash transfer programmes.** In the case of Ethiopia's UPSNJP (entrepreneurship track), participants need to participate in the public works programme and work around 20 hours per week to receive the cash transfers, though in a decreasing manner in year three when their own micro-enterprises are meant to take off.

As discussed in more detail in the administrative feasibility section, all case study programmes built on and utilised the systems and mechanisms originally developed for national social safety net programmes. One of the essential delivery mechanisms is the way the cash transfers, i.e. basic needs support, is provided to participants.

Coaching

Most of the programme designs feature group-based coaching, with Paraguay's Tenondera being the exception (using both individual and group coaching). In other

¹³ In fact, UPSNJP is a broad programme that includes several tracks or sub-programmes, all targeting different segments of people. The two included here are the closest to the Graduation approach.

¹⁴ Partnership for Economic Inclusion, 2025. Landscape of Graduation Programs: Approach and Summary of Key Findings.
<https://www.peiglobal.org/sites/default/files/2026-01/Landscape%20of%20Graduation%20Programs%20Findings.pdf>

¹⁵ As a comparison, for NGO-led graduation programmes, the value of asset transfer varied between 14 - 5000 USD, the median being 186 USD (PEI, 2025. Landscape of Graduation Programs: Approach and Summary of Key Findings).

programmes, the role of individual coaching is limited, and programmes tend to blend skills training and/or savings groups with the coaching. In Senegal, for instance, individual coaching proved challenging during the pilot phase, leading to a decision to combine group-coaching with saving groups in the expansion phase. Individual coaching remained available, but only on demand, at later stages of the programme.

In some cases, like in UPSNJP's entrepreneurship track, individual coaching was included in the design, but it did not take place in practice. According to some stakeholders, one-to-one coaching could be beneficial, especially when participants begin setting up their micro-enterprises. There is some new global evidence that group coaching can produce similar results as individual coaching.¹⁶ However, according to PEI's landscape analysis (2025), at the moment, a majority (71%) of government-led Graduation programmes include both individual and group coaching, while 6% focus on group coaching (only), and 13% on individual coaching (only).¹⁷

Other Essentials

The length of programmes varies from 9 months (UPSNJP apprenticeship scheme) to 3 years (UPSNJP entrepreneurship track). Other programmes last around 18-24 months. **All are implemented in a sequenced manner though Kenya's KSEIP/EIP faced some challenges in this regard** due to delays in payments.

In many ways, each programme factored in adaptation from the start. Programmes first conducted a pilot with a process and impact evaluation to inform the design and implementation. **Based on evidence generated—as well as operational learning—programmes tweaked and improved their design. Changes typically included improving training materials or combining modules, and strengthening the coaching component,** as discussed above.

In some cases, new elements were added. For example, in the case of Kenya, the follow-up phase (KSEIP 2) plans to focus more on addressing climate vulnerability. The training curriculum will be modified so that participants will receive education on local climate risks and coping strategies to minimise their impact. Additionally, an Enhanced Climate Resilient sub-programme will be implemented in most affected areas. In this model, participants will get enhanced support, training and information, and are linked with livestock insurance and other relevant services. The participants will also get an additional 12 months of mentoring support, given the difficulties in sustaining micro-enterprises in most affected areas.

It is worth noting **that learning and process evaluations didn't only focus on technical issues, but also on identifying capacity and/or coordination issues that needed strengthening if the programmes were to be expanded.** These challenges—and how they were addressed—are discussed more in the next section.

¹⁶ Beam et al., 2025. However it is worth noting that in the case of Bangladesh, all participants also received individual coaching, and the intense individual coaching had the highest benefit-cost ratio.

¹⁷ For comparison, 85% of NGO-led graduation programmes use both individual and group coaching, 5% group coaching (only), and 11% individual coaching (only). (PEI, 2025. Landscape of Graduation Programs Dataset)

Table 3. Alignment with Graduation Essentials

	Senegal YKK	Ethiopia UPSNJP: Livelihood / Entrepreneurship track	Ethiopia UPSNJP: Apprenticeship track	Kenya KSEIP	Paraguay Tenondera
	meeting or exceeding the essential	meeting the essential to a large degree	facing challenges	essential not met / not part of the design	
Asset	\$250 USD, one-time transfer	\$600 USD, one-time transfer (pilot \$500 USD)	On-the-job-training for six months	\$230 USD, in two transfers (both phases)	\$500 USD, one time transfer
Basic needs Support	Covered by national safety net programme (PNBSF) Previously \$42 USD per hh per quarter, but in 2023, increased to \$62 USD In 2025, several months delays in payments/non-payment	Cash-for-work programme, 20h per week (max \$55 USD per month, family of four)	Stipend \$2 USD per day, females receive childcare stipend of \$17 USD per month	Covered partly by national safety net programme (NSNP), partly by the programme directly \$15 USD per month for 12 months	Covered by conditional cash transfer programme (TKP) \$32-\$75 USD bi-monthly, depending on family composition and co-responsibilities
Coaching	Challenges during the pilot phase In the follow-up phase, group-coaching attached to saving groups, individual coaching only by demand at later stages of programme	Group-based, every fourth week (time counted as public works), in practice no individual coaching	Not present, three months as job search support (and job search & digital skills)	Business group mentorship and saving group formation, no individual coaching	Individual coaching & group training
Sequencing	Yes, starting with savings group formation	Yes, the first year starts with public works and life & financial skills training Second year business planning, assets delivered on third year	Yes, first six-months of apprenticeship, followed by three-months support of job search & digital skills training	Sequencing challenge due to payment delays	Yes, starting with basic support and basic skills trainings receive 4-5 trainings Later more trainings and the seed capital
Time-bound	18 months	Three years	Nine months (six months of on-the-job-training)	KSEIP: 18-24 months KSEIP 2, planned: standardised to 18 months, except for participants in the Enhanced Climate Resilient EIP component who get mentoring for another 12 months	Livelihood support: 18 months
Adaptive	Several iterations made based on evaluations and operations learning	Baseline/social registry data collected by enumerators, changes made between pilot and second phase, research, and surveys conducted to inform implementation	Small pilot with 300 participants, research, and surveys conducted to inform the full-scale implementation	Process and impact evaluation to inform scale up	Pilot with 500 participants to inform design Impact and process evaluation Currently, the programme faces challenges in optimising data use for rapid decision-making

Administrative Feasibility

Administrative feasibility refers to whether the intervention can be implemented through the state bureaucracy. It considers organisational capacity and incentives to implement, such as budget and cost constraints, existing regulations, government capabilities, and capacity limitations—assets, skills, personnel—at different levels.¹⁸

Administrative feasibility has presented the most persistent challenges for these programmes. This section examines key difficulties and solutions related to i) coordination, ii) supporting delivery mechanisms, iii) internal processes, and iv) capacity at federal and local levels. As with the technical components, several challenges were most pronounced during the pilot phases and first cohorts, and were intentionally addressed during the expansion phase. However, in many cases, strengthening administrative capacities and systems remains a key hurdle to effective programming at scale.

Coordination

Given the size, coverage, and number of different components and partners involved in each case study, it is not surprising that **coordination and management remains an ongoing challenge in the programmes**. Table 4 summarises key dimensions of administrative feasibility considered across case studies.

Ethiopia's UPSNJP exemplifies this complexity as a type of umbrella programme targeting different groups of people in separate programmes in almost 90 cities or areas across the country. The programme includes several ministries, agencies, and committees at the federal, regional, and local level. While organisations are leading different components, in practice no activity can be implemented in isolation without collaboration with other organisations. Therefore, one of the strategies UPSNJP employs is having steering, technical, and coordination committees at each level and location to facilitate collaboration and adherence to the technical design.

In Senegal, complemented by the process evaluation findings, it was recognised during the expansion design phase that the newly established ministry in charge of oversight and management needed strengthening at both federal and local offices. Moreover, it was assessed that the complex, and at times unclear, division of responsibilities between the main ministry and its agency in charge of programme implementation increased the institutional risk. One of the ways to build capacity over time and strengthen coordination, was to create a Technical and Fiduciary Coordination Unit within the ministry with the mandate of leading the programme coordination.

¹⁸ Guerrero et al., 2024. Scaling up Development Impact; Imago Global Grassroot, Scaling Up Impact (slide deck, module 2: System mapping and strategic tensions).

Yet even the smallest programme, Kenya's KSEIP/EIP, also faced several coordination challenges in its administration and NGO-government collaboration, especially related to targeting, enrolment, and payments. As Kenya prepares to expand the programme in KSEIP 2, the government said it is making deliberate moves to address some of the challenges, particularly to enhance interoperability between systems that fall under different departments: the Enhanced Social Registry, the Consolidated Cash transfer Management Information System (CCMIS), the Consolidated Cash Transfer Programme Management Information System, and the National Registration Bureau. However, it is worth noting that in spite of these challenges, impact evaluations found that the Kenya pilot was successful in reducing poverty across all sites and improving food security in two of the four sites.¹⁹

Box 1. The Role of NGOs in the Programmes

The role of NGOs varied considerably across the four programmes. In Ethiopia, NGOs don't play a role in the entrepreneurship and apprenticeship tracks (though they have an important role in other tracks under the broader UPSNJP umbrella programme). The private sector, on the other hand, provides life skills training under the entrepreneurship track, and firms offer placements for those participating in the apprenticeship track.

In Kenya, a consortium, led by the Global Development Incubator (GDI) provided **hands-on technical assistance** for the first phase. **Two NGOs**, BOMA and Village Enterprise, **implemented frontline activities** in two different counties, with slightly different approaches and targeting strategies. GDI was responsible for the government's learning-by-doing. The implementation of KSEIP 2 has not yet started, but **the second phase is meant to be more government-led** with external support focused on technical assistance solely.

In the pilot phase of YKK in Senegal, there were two types of NGOs involved. First, four local NGOs (referred to as social operators) were contracted by the leading ministry to implement the project, each responsible for the defined geographical area. These **local NGOs were in charge of implementing frontline services** including coaching, savings groups, sensitisation, and trainings. Secondly, **two regional NGOs were responsible for different types of training and support services.** CESAM, a Benin-based training firm, was in charge of developing education tools for life-skills and micro-entrepreneurship trainings, as well as training the master trainers and national consultants. Another international NGO, Trickle Up, was in charge of supporting the coaching and saving groups, more specifically developing training materials for these components as well as training local NGOs who in turn would train community level staff, a sort of para-social volunteers in charge of savings groups and individual coaching.

During the design phase for the expansion, it was decided that **while local NGOs will continue their frontline services, some of their responsibilities will be gradually transferred to local governments.** This was tested in three regions where the ministry's decentralised staff were put in charge of the supervision of programme implementation. However, several limitations were

¹⁹ Blom et al, 2025. Impact Evaluation of the Economic Inclusion Programme (EIP) Pilot.

identified, and a dedicated manager still had to be hired to provide supervision. As of late 2025, the transformation of responsibilities from NGOs to local governments was put on hold.

Finally, **in Paraguay, the NGO (Fundación Capital) acted as a strategic and learning partner.** The goal was to integrate the Graduation approach into the social protection system. They supported the Ministry of Social Development by facilitating technical assistance within and outside the Ministry, supporting the redesign of the programme, and developing the coaching component and materials. They also conducted training for officials and field teams, designed a monitoring platform, provided guidance on adapting operational and documentary processes, conducted qualitative evaluations, and funded impact evaluation.

Given the different roles NGOs played in the four programmes, drawing sweeping conclusions might not be sensible. The role an NGO can play in government-led Graduation programmes is very context specific. However, one thing that stands out, especially from Kenya and Paraguay examples, is that **having extensive Graduation experience is necessary for NGOs, but not sufficient, if the programme is implemented through the government structures. What is also needed is a deep understanding of government systems**, something that was more strongly present in Paraguay (combined with existing close connections).

Supporting Delivery Mechanisms

Though not without their challenges, three programmes—UPSNJP, YKK, and Tenondera—**successfully built upon existing national delivery mechanisms developed for the national social safety net programmes.** Kenya's KSEIP also did to a certain degree, but at the time of the case study, perhaps less successfully than in the other countries that have had more time to improve their processes and systems on the way to expansion.

A key challenge was having manual (not fully digital) payment systems cash transfer.

For example, in Senegal the asset lump sum is paid via mobile bank while quarterly cash transfers are still paid (in person) at post offices. In Ethiopia, UPSNJP is in the middle of the process of transferring into a digital payment system (as a part of transition to a more comprehensive MIS), and as of June 2025, 51 out of 88 cities are using automatic payments instead of the previous, more rudimentary system involving several steps and agencies. In Kenya, participants had to receive payments at physical banks, but because of inoperability between systems and challenges finalising enrolment lists, many faced several administrative hurdles and delays in opening accounts and receiving their payments.

Kenya also faced challenges due to the creation of a parallel targeting system. The two implementing NGOs used their own separate targeting approaches, in lieu of the government's, because they had proven effective for the NGOs in the past. However, they were unaware that the government targeting system featured key steps, already built in, that covered government requirements confirming participants were Kenyan citizens. The use of the NGO systems thus added an extra, arduous step and severe delays.

Internal Processes

In Paraguay, after the redesign process by the new administration, the new operational plan had to be aligned with MECIP (the Standard Model of Internal Control for Public Institutions in Paraguay). This necessitated the creation and revision of internal regulations, procedures, and field-level documentation. This operationalisation had to **consider different needs and strike a balance between technical rigor and administrative accountability**, ensuring that processes support transparency and help professionalise internal workflows—even when such changes are initially met with resistance.

Capacity at Federal and Local Level

Limited or inconsistent federal level capacity tended to be evident in cases where newly established ministries or agencies oversaw implementation of key programme components. For example, in Senegal, Ministry of Community Development, Social and Territorial Equity (MDCEST) coordinates and oversees the broader safety net project, and within the MDCEST, the General Delegation for Social Protection and National Solidarity (DGPSN) is in charge of the technical implementation of YKK. However, as a recently established ministry, MDCEST had limited capacity and programme implementation experience. These limitations were fortunately identified during the scale-up design phase, leading to capacity strengthening for both the federal and local MDCEST offices in the scale-up design.²⁰

Similarly in Ethiopia, while leading ministries had some experience in implementing large-scale programmes, newly set up agencies such as the Job Creation Committee (JCC) required strengthening.

In many cases, **institutional capacity issues became obvious during the pilot phase** and were addressed in the expansion design phase. For example, in the case of Ethiopia, several potential risks related to institutional capacity, and especially on procurement, were identified. To address these issues, a set of minimum capacity standards were established for programme roll out to new cities. These standards mainly focused on human resources—such as having a project coordinator as well as specialists in areas of livelihoods, safeguarding, and M&E—as well as functioning MIS and procurement systems. An independent third-party verified that the set requirements were in place before World Bank funds were released.

Coaching capacity and/or quality challenges at the local level emerged in most programmes, especially in the pilot and early phases. In Senegal's pilot, the community-level coaches providing individual mentoring had little work experience and received limited training for their new role, leading to inconsistent one-to-one coaching for participants.²¹ In Kenya, the NGOs successfully implemented group coaching in the first phase, but faced hurdles when planning for the next phase. Early design discussions suggested the government reproduce the staffing levels of NGOs. However, to do this, the government would have needed to create 15 new posts for mentors in each sub-county, or 100-150 new posts total, which would have required a major increase in the recurrent budget of the sub-counties. All in all, the Kenyan government had limited budget and

²⁰ In late 2025, the name of the MDCEST was changed to the Ministry of Family, Social Action and Solidarity.

²¹ More qualified NGO staff provided group coaching.

staffing capacity to take on the mentorship model and achieve the goal of learning-by-doing in the first phase, as envisioned. In the second phase, the model is government-led with technical assistance to support the mentorship model.

In Paraguay, the budgetary constraints also affected the availability and quality of human resources, especially at the field level and related to coaching and training. While some steps have been taken to improve recruitment processes—such as clarifying roles, required skills, and professional profiles—the system remained nascent and often influenced by internal dynamics. One way to address the inconsistent capacities was with the support of the NGO, which worked directly with government technical teams and co-developed training manuals and templates.

Table 4. Dimensions of Administrative Feasibility

	Senegal YKK	Ethiopia UPSNJP	Kenya KSEIP	Paraguay Tenondera
Coordination	<p>Ongoing challenge but seems to function relatively well, including the government-NGO coordination</p> <p>Pilot to transfer responsibilities from NGOs to local government put on hold in 2025</p>	<p>Ongoing challenge, complicated coordination structures across several ministries, agencies and committees at federal, regional, and city level</p> <p>Different agencies lead different components, but in practice no activity can be implemented without some collaboration across organisations</p>	<p>NGO-government coordination in the key challenge</p>	<p>Key challenge: internal coordination between technical and operational teams, and between the basic support programme (Tekopora) and Tenondera</p>
Supporting delivery mechanisms (social registers, MIS, payment systems etc)	<p>Utilising the existing mechanisms, including social registry for targeting, payment system, grievance system</p> <p>Pilot phase identifies issues with many of these, strengthened in the extension phase</p> <p>Different payment systems for cash transfers (cash, paid by post offices) and productive asset grants (digital, via mobile phones)</p>	<p>Utilising the existing mechanisms developed for the national safety net programme</p> <p>Ongoing improvement of MIS, and transition from a more rudimentary payment system to online system</p>	<p>Several challenges including: parallel targeting systems, interoperable MIS systems, multi-step—and partly manual—payment transfer system</p>	<p>Part of data collection transferred to a tailored monitoring system (QuanIT), but much of it is still done in excel sheets</p> <p>To be aligned with the Standard Model of Internal Control for Public Institutions in Paraguay required significant revision and development of internal regulations and procedures</p>

<p>Capacity at federal level</p>	<p>MDCEST needed strengthening given its limited experience and capacity as a newly established ministry to carry out its coordination and overseeing role</p>	<p>Leading ministries had some experience in implementing large-scale programmes but newly set agencies such as Job Creation Committee (JCC) needed strengthening</p>	<p>Government had limited budget and staffing capacity to take on the mentorship model and achieve the goal of learning-by-doing</p>	<p>Inconsistent capacities across departments, challenges especially related to coaching and training capabilities</p> <p>Addressed through NGO support and co-development of manuals and templates</p>
<p>Capacity at local level</p>	<p>Challenges with coaching capacity (limited training and experience)</p>	<p>Limited capacity in many cities identified in the design phase. Procurement, HR, and M&E particularly mentioned. WB funds not released before certain criteria met at each city</p>	<p>Limited coaching capacity, it was estimated that in each sub-country 15 new mentor posts would have been needed</p>	<p>Limited coaching and training implementing capacity at the field level (focus of the NGO support)</p> <p>Also other human resources challenges at the field level, some improvements with improved recruitment processes</p>

Conclusions and Key Insights

This analysis of four cases of government-led Graduation programmes in Ethiopia, Senegal, Kenya, and Paraguay reveals that while governments can successfully implement these complex, multi-component interventions at scale, success requires deliberate investment across all three dimensions of the Strategic Triangle: political support, technical design, and administrative feasibility. Across the four programmes, a few cross-cutting insights and lessons learnt emerged:

Pilot phases are essential learning laboratories, not just testing grounds. All four programmes demonstrated that even technically sound designs require intentional adaptation periods. The most successful programmes treated pilots and first phases as opportunities for systematic course correction rather than simple proof-of-concept exercises. Critical adjustments—from coaching delivery models to payment systems—emerged through operational learning and were incorporated into expansion designs.

Administrative capacity, not technical design, represents the primary bottleneck. While all programmes faced some technical concerns, administrative challenges proved most persistent and difficult to resolve. Even when building on existing social safety net infrastructure, Graduation programmes demand significantly greater cross-agency coordination, specialised human resources, and case management capacity than standard cash transfer—or other similar—programmes.

Operational processes, roles, and responsibilities need to be formalised and documented to make the (new) workload and configurations visible but also to ensure continuation. These new roles and arrangements—including potential changes to day-to-day operations—require ongoing socialising and re-socialising to make sure a large group of actors are all heading in the same direction. While technical design matters, successful implementation depends on field and technical teams being fully trained, committed, and capable of taking ownership of their roles.

Process evaluations provide crucial insights for expansion. While impact evaluations often get more attention—and are used to justify the expansion—in case study programmes, it was the learning and process evaluations that identified capacity and coordination issues that needed to be addressed in the scaling up process. This—how government-led Graduation programmes can operate on a large scale—deserves more research attention.

NGOs can support the integration of Graduation into government systems—but need to rethink how programmes are designed and delivered to operate efficiently within the government systems. In these few cases, the context and specific NGO's knowledge of the government systems influenced their ability to support the government effectively. In Kenya, the NGOs were experts in Graduation implementation, but had relatively limited capacity/knowledge of how to effectively integrate Graduation into government systems. In

Paraguay, on the other hand, the NGO had very close relationships and deep knowledge of the government systems, which helped the process.

Political support must be broad-based and institutionalised to survive transitions. The programmes in Senegal and Paraguay that weathered changes in government demonstrated the importance of embedding the Graduation approach within national poverty reduction strategies and building relationships across multiple levels of government (including middle management), rather than relying on individual champions.

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