

The Expansion of Cash Transfers in Chile and its Challenges: Ethical Family Income¹

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I. Introduction

In the last decade Chile has attracted renewed interest for its innovative social protection policies and programmes, such as the *Chile Solidario* system to overcome extreme poverty (launched in 2002), the special plan for Universal Access with Explicit Guarantees (*Plan de Acceso Universal con Garantías Explícitas*, AUGE) to ensure access to healthcare (2004), the Basic Solidarity Pension (*Pensión Básica Solidaria*, PBS)—the cornerstone of the 2008 pension reform—and the system of Chile Grows With You (*Chile Crece Contigo*, 2006) (Robles, 2011). These programmes were driven by the centre-left government Coalition of Parties for Democracy (*Concertación de Partidos por la Democracia*), which governed the country from its return to democracy in 1990 until 2010.

With Sebastián Piñera's arrival as President of Chile in March 2010, the new centre-right government of the Coalition for Change pledged to maintain, expand and give transparency to the existing social protection system in Chile, with a view to eradicate extreme poverty by 2014 and poverty by 2018. Among the most significant measures undertaken by the new government include the creation of the Ministry of Social Development (*Ministerio de Desarrollo Social*) to replace the former Ministry of Planning (*Ministerio de Planificación*), the review of the Social Protection Form (*Ficha de Protección Social*) used to select beneficiaries of the social protection programmes, and the launch of the programme Ethical Family Income (*Ingreso Ético Familiar*, IEF) that will replace *Chile Solidario* and consists of a wide range of—conditional and unconditional—cash transfers for the poorest and certain vulnerable, although not extremely poor, segments of the population.

This *Policy Research Brief* intends to describe IEF, drawing particular attention to its innovations with regard to *Chile Solidario* as well as its scope, limitations and challenges.

II. Chile Solidario

During the two decades of *Concertación* government, a broad concept of social protection was entrenched under a rights-based approach with the objective of implementing protection guarantees to the population as a whole throughout their lives (Robles, 2011). *Chile Solidario* was launched during Ricardo Lagos's presidency (2000–2006) with the objective of creating a mechanism for social inclusion and removing the reasons for social exclusion of most people living in extreme poverty, or “hardcore poverty” according to the official language used by the programme. Since then, *Chile Solidario* has served as a reference for poverty reduction programmes in Latin America and the Caribbean, along with *Bolsa Família* in Brazil and *Oportunidades* in Mexico. This is because *Chile Solidario* adopts a different qualitative approach from other conditional cash transfers (CCTs), seeking to provide an integrated structure that assures people living in extreme poverty access to existing benefits from a broad supply of social protection public services as a step towards fulfilling their economic and social rights. In addition, transfers and conditionalities in *Chile Solidario* come only in second place behind the importance attached to psychosocial support and help to families provided through one of its components, the Bridge programme (*Programa Puente*) (Cecchini and Martínez, 2011).

In *Chile Solidario*, the selection of families—eligible to participate in programme for five years—is made through a proxy means score calculated on the basis of information about the socio-economic conditions of households obtained from a nationwide survey: the CAS form (*ficha CAS*) until 2006, and the Social Protection Form (*Ficha de Protección Social*, FPS) ever since. The FPS allows measurement of the number of people at risk of poverty due to the combination of a low number of productive assets—whether physical or financial assets, such as housing and savings, or the ability to generate income—economic risk exposure (for instance, unemployment or the presence of dependants) and the lack of means to protect the family against such risks (Larrañaga and Contreras, 2010).

In 2009, 306,000 households were participating in *Chile Solidario*, equivalent to about 1.3 million people—7.6 per cent of the national population, 65.9 per cent of the poor population and more than double the number of people living in extreme poverty. In the same year, total spending on *Chile Solidario* represented 0.11 per cent of total GDP and was financed entirely by the Government of Chile.

People enrolled in *Chile Solidario* have access to a wide range of public transfers. These include transfers that are not exclusive to beneficiaries of *Chile Solidario*, such as the PBS (Basic Solidarity Pension), a monthly transfer of US\$167 conferred for life to people over 65 who do not receive contributory pensions, and to disabled people who belong to the poorest 60 per cent of the population; the Family Allowance (*Subsidio Único Familiar*, SUF), US\$13 a month for a three-year renewable term to children under 18, disabled people of any age and pregnant women who belong to the poorest 40 per cent of the population; or the subsidy for drinking water and sewage (SAP). However, the amounts of the transfers provided directly by the programme are very low and on a temporary basis: the *protection bonus* amounting to between US\$27 (during the first six months) and US\$13 monthly per household is conferred during the first two years in the programme on a gradually decreasing basis, and a *graduation bonus* of US\$13 per month per household is awarded for three years after graduating from the *Programa Puente* (CEPAL, 2012).

While the impact evaluations of *Chile Solidario* have been limited due to lack of availability and quality of information, the results available appear to be mixed. On the one hand, thanks to its psychosocial support and help to families, the programme has improved the beneficiaries' access to public services. On the other hand, there is no conclusive evidence of substantial improvements in their levels of income and employment (Larrañaga and Contreras, 2010).

III. Ethical Family Income: The Three Pillars and its Conditional and Unconditional Transfers

Law 20.595 that "creates Ethical Family Income that establishes bonuses and conditional transfers for households living in extreme poverty and creates an employment subsidy for women" was enacted on 11 May 2012. The name of the programme refers to the concept of 'ethical income'—proposed by Monsignor Alejandro Goic, President of the Chilean Conference of Bishops—which became the subject of public debate in the context of protests by subcontracted workers in 2007. However, its content has a different sense from the original, which made reference to a minimum income of about US\$500 for Chilean households (Centro de Políticas Públicas, 2012; Hardy, 2012).

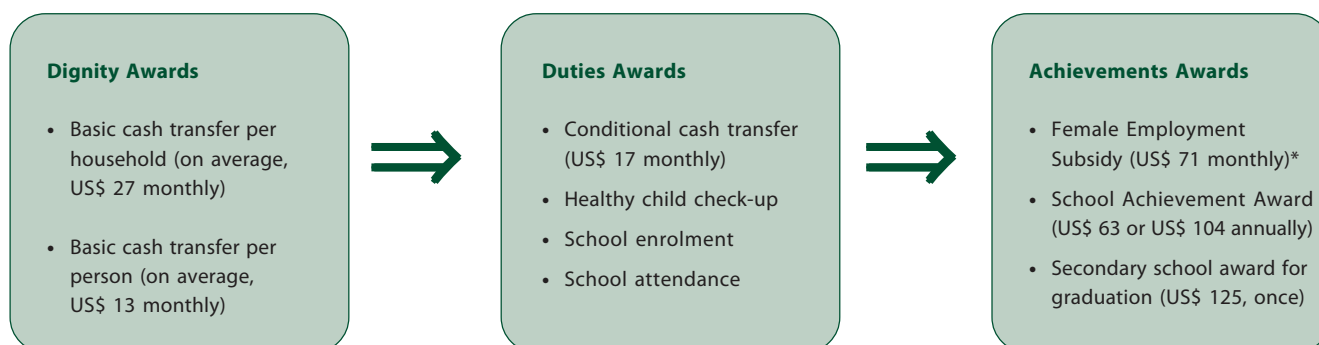
IEF expands significantly the type and amounts of the cash transfers with respect to *Chile Solidario*, organising them

under three fundamental pillars: dignity, duties and achievements (see Table 1). The first two pillars target persons belonging to households living in extreme poverty, which, according to ECLAC, represented only 3.6 per cent of the total population of Chile in 2009. Transfers under the pillars of dignity and duties have a maximum duration of 24 months, and the amount of the transfers for dignity start to decrease on a straight line basis in the last five months at the rate of 1/6 per month (Vargas, 2012). The difference between these two pillars is that the pillar of 'dignity'—a term that has been preferred to 'rights'—includes unconditional transfers, while the pillar of duties comprises conditional transfers. The conditionalities proposed by the Ministry of Social Development—to be defined in the operating regulations—are that children have access to regular health check-ups and school assistance covering at least 90 per cent of basic education and 85 per cent of secondary education.

The pillar of achievements includes conditional transfers targeted not only at families living in extreme poverty—such as the school achievement bonus for completing secondary education or the formalisation bonus for those who contributed to social security during their participation in the employment assistance programme (see Section IV)—but also at the most vulnerable 30 per cent of the population. According to the Ministry of Social Development, one of these transfers—the 'effort bonuses' (*bonos por esfuerzo*)—is the School Achievement Bonus that will be awarded annually based on the academic performance of students in the same class: US\$104 for the top tier of 15 per cent of pupils in their year group, and US\$63 for the second tier of 15 per cent of pupils in their year group.² Women's employment subsidy (see Section IV) is given to working women between 25 and 60 years old who are among the most vulnerable 40 per cent of the population.³

Table 1 shows the possible amounts of the IEF cash transfers provided for by the law. In the case of transfers for dignity, the averages are based on estimates from the Ministry of Social Development, as the amounts of these transfers are not the same for all households. This is not only due to differences in demographic composition (see Table 2), like in other countries' CCTs, but also depends on the income needed by each family to end up above the extreme poverty line, which in Chile corresponded to US\$62 per capita in urban areas and US\$48 in rural areas in 2009. Also, it should be

Table 1
Cash Transfers from Ethical Family Income (IEF)



Source: Ministry of Social Development, 2012. Exchange rate: CH\$ 480 = US\$ 1. * Amount estimated for women earning a minimum salary.

Table 2
Monthly Total of IEF Cash Transfers: Two Scenarios

Transfers	Family A (US\$)					Family B (US\$)			
	Woman	Man	Boy	Girl	Total	Woman	Boy	Girl	Total
Dignity: family allowance					27				27
Dignity: basic allowance	13	13	13	13	52	13	13	13	39
Duties			17	17	34		17	17	34
Female Employment Subsidy*	71				71	71			71
Total	184					171			
Total per capita	46					57			

Source: Ministry of Social Development, 2012. Exchange rate: CH\$ 480 = US\$ 1. * Amount estimated for women earning one minimum wage.

noted that participating in IEF allows beneficiaries to continue receiving other state benefits, such as the SUF or the subsidy for drinking water.

The method of calculation to estimate the income households need to move above the extreme poverty line is based on the 'household income contribution index'. According to the law, this index corresponds to 85 per cent of the difference between the extreme poverty line, which is determined by the 2009 National Social and Economic Survey (*Encuesta de Caracterización Socioeconómica Nacional*, CASEN), and the potential household income per capita, provided that such a difference is positive. The potential income per capita amounts to the grand total of the sum of the following components: the national average of monthly autonomous income per capita for households living in extreme poverty; the average monthly expenditure per capita on imputed rent for persons and households living in extreme poverty; and the per capita benefits with a fiscal cost that are regularly paid to each household member. For the purpose of potential per capita income, the extreme poverty line is readjusted on 1 February of each year, following the variation in the consumer price index over the previous year.⁴

For instance, the amount of the basic cash transfer corresponds to the difference between the household income contribution index and the maximum amount per capita of CCTs that a household could receive monthly if they comply with the applicable conditionalities. The basic transfer is granted only if this difference is positive. Also, the law provides for the Ministry of Social Development to ask Chile's Internal Revenue Service for information about incomes, properties and assets of IEF beneficiaries or potential beneficiaries, thereby excluding from the programme those who provide false information.

In 2012, IEF seeks to reach 170,000 families, equivalent to 640,000 persons, through a budget of US\$400.5 million (0.18 per cent of GDP). The resources for IEF will be administered by the Ministry of Social Development, but—as in the case

of *Chile Solidario*—the payment of cash transfers will be made by the Institute of Social Security. As in other CCTs in Latin America and the Caribbean, the population coverage and the amount of the transfers are not fiscally mandatory and will depend on the budget allocations negotiated in Congress each year (Hardy, 2012).

IV. Family Support and Generation of Autonomous Income

In addition to the extension of transfers, another difference from *Chile Solidario* is that IEF places greater emphasis on households' income-generating capacity to be able to lift themselves and stay out of poverty by their own means. For this reason, apart from the psychosocial support offered by *Chile Solidario*, the law incorporates a new form of employment support (*apoyo socio laboral*) for those above the age of 18 who are not studying, or whose studies are compatible with their entrance into the programme. Also, new employment programmes are offered for IEF beneficiaries which consist of:

- i) training sessions oriented to overcome barriers to beneficiaries' entering the labour market;
- ii) training sessions to develop their soft skills;
- iii) reinforcement and creation of technical competencies through training sessions; and
- iv) labour intermediation to match labour supply and demand (Ministry of Social Development, 2012; Vargas, 2012).

The support and access to the different social and employment programmes are provided through the framework of the Eje programme, designed to make a diagnosis and prepare an action plan together with the family, as well as to do a follow-up and an evaluation of the beneficiaries' performance and achievements. Families that join IEF will sign a commitment document that certifies them as users, and then they join the Eje programme. This programme provides assistance both at the family and individual level and can, therefore, promote their participation in other social programmes according to their profile and the needs of each household member (Vargas, 2012).

The objectives of both psychosocial and labour support to families are to instil self-esteem, generate capabilities and promote actions, which taken together will reinforce the generation of autonomous income by vulnerable adults once they enter the labour market. The psychosocial assistance seeks to develop capabilities that promote beneficiaries' social inclusion and their self-development. In the meantime, the labour assistance is an innovation that seeks to contribute directly to employability and generation of autonomous income through greater participation in the labour market. The beneficiaries have the possibility of accessing an anticipated exit from the employment support, subject to having demonstrated good performance, to obtain an additional transfer (see Table 1) (Vargas, 2012). Both support programmes will have a maximum duration of 24 months and will work in staggered periods of 12 months, starting first with the family support, followed by the employment support.

As part of the actions to enhance the generation of autonomous income, the law includes an employment subsidy for women, particularly relevant in a country with one of the lowest rates of women's participation in the labour force (42 per cent) in Latin America. This subsidy, which resembles the structure of a youth employment subsidy in force since 2009, targets working women who are dependent or independent and with a net income of less than US\$769 per month. The transfer consists of the equivalent of 20 per cent of their wage for a maximum duration of four continuous years, as well as a transfer to their employers, corresponding to 10 per cent of their wage if they are employed for at least two years.

V. Towards IEF: the Social Allowance

Before the new law was approved, in April 2011 the government already started to grant some of the new transfers under the name of Social Allowance (*Asignación Social*). This was regulated by the 29th Presidential Decree of 7 March 2011 and covered the following components: the basic allowance, allowance for children's health check-up, enrolment allowance, academic achievements allowance and female employment allowance. In 2011, the corresponding budget for the allowances within the system of *Chile Solidario* was of US\$136.4 million, which represented an increase from the 2010 budget of 72 per cent in real terms and is equivalent to 0.15 per cent of GDP. In the same year the beneficiary population was estimated to be 130,000 households, equivalent to 490,000 persons—about 76 per cent of the population living in extreme poverty.

The targeted population for these allocations is those individuals who live in conditions of extreme poverty; are beneficiaries of *Chile Solidario* protection or graduation transfers, or benefit from psychosocial support; and have less than 4213 points on the FPS. The amounts of the cash transfers are calculated on the basis of households' socioeconomic characteristics, using different cut-off points in the FPS score as proxy (Vargas, 2011).

Table 3 shows monthly per capita *Chile Solidario* and Social Allowance transfers. As can be observed in the table, the Social Allowance transfers are well above the minimum and maximum amounts of the benefits they have access to

through *Chile Solidario* alone. The amounts of the social allowances are between 2.4 and 5.3 times higher, respectively, than the cash transfers from *Chile Solidario*, depending of the number and age of children, FPS scores and the fulfilment of conditionalities. In addition, by adding all transfers to which families have access through *Chile Solidario* since the Family Allowance was launched, it can be observed that the amounts are significant with respect to both indigence and poverty lines. The maximum amount that a family can receive per month represents in per capita terms between 144 per cent and 187 per cent of the extreme poverty line, and between 84 per cent and 122 per cent of the poverty line.

VI. Conclusions

One of the most positive aspects of IEF is the expansion of the transfers and the increase in their values with respect to *Chile Solidario*, which can have a substantial impact on the programme beneficiaries' income and living conditions (see Table 3). Of particular note is the introduction of unconditional transfers, ensuring a minimum level of income simply because beneficiaries are living in conditions of extreme poverty, without drawing a distinction between those who are 'deserving' and 'undeserving'. This goes hand in hand with the implementation of a programme focused on enhancing the employability of the most disadvantaged people as a way for them to overcome conditions of extreme poverty.

Employment (*apoyo socio laboral*) Programmes and Formalisation of Employment

Employment programmes respond to one of the key concerns related to CCTs, which is the establishment of an exit strategy through actions that strengthen families' capacity to generate autonomous income. It would be desirable for this type of intervention to be in line with active employment policies designed for the entire workforce, which will require intersectoral actions and good communication between the Ministry of Social Development and the Ministry of Labour and Social Security.

This recommendation aims at avoiding a potential overlapping of labour programmes by both ministries and segmentation of training and labour intermediation options for poor and non-poor people, with differentiated standards and targets. Also, it is possible to argue that the IEF's design process offers a window of opportunity to enhance an even greater linkage between the contributory and non-contributory components of social protection in Chile.

In this regard, it has become even more relevant to promote the formalisation of employment of IEF beneficiaries to provide them with sustained access to the contributory pillar of the social protection system that provides a higher quality and larger amounts of benefits from the health and pension system.

IEF and the New Ministry of Social Development

The IEF law does not mention in detail how this programme will be linked to the network of existing social protection policies in the country; therefore, it is not known for certain if the programme will continue to promote a link to the supply of public services as in *Chile Solidario*.

Table 3
Per Capita *Chile Solidario* and Social Allowance Transfers^{a, b}

Transfers	Monthly transfer per capita (US\$)		Minimum amount by percentage of indigence (IL) and poverty (PL) line				Maximum amount by percentage of indigence (IL) and poverty (PL) line			
	Minimum	Maximum	Urban areas		Rural areas		Urban areas		Rural areas	
			IL	PL	IL	PL	IL	PL	IL	PL
<i>Chile Solidario</i>										
Protection bonus	3.4	6.9	5	3	6	4	10	6	13	8
Graduation bonus	3.4	3.4	5	3	6	4	5	3	7	4
Single Family Allowance (SUF)	3.4	3.4	5	3	6	4	5	3	7	4
Subsidy for drinking water and sewage (SAP)	0.0	5.5	0	0	0	0	9	5	11	7
Minimum/maximum limit	6.8	15.7	10	6	13	8	25	14	32	20
Social Allowance										
Basic allowance	9.2	15.3	13	8	17	11	22	13	28	18
Allowance for children's health check-ups	6.1	10.2	9	5	11	7	15	8	19	12
Enrolment allowance	6.1	10.2	9	5	11	7	15	8	19	12
Assistance allowance	6.1	10.2	9	5	11	7	15	8	19	12
Female employment allowance	11.0	22.2	16	9	20	13	32	18	42	27
Minimum/maximum limit	15.9	83.7	23	13	30	19	122	70	158	103
Total amount										
Minimum/maximum limit	22.7	99.4	33	19	42	28	144	84	187	122

Source: Prepared by authors.

^a Only transfers for households with adults of working age and children are considered; therefore, PBS is being excluded;

^b The mean size of urban households in the poorest quintile of the population for each year was used to calculate the amount per capita.

Thus, it would be desirable to define IEF's intersectoral coordination mechanisms in the formulation of its operating rules.

However, it is important to highlight that the Ministry of Social Development relies on a new Under-Secretary for Social Services and a new Division for Social Protection and Promotion in charge of the coordination and integration of social services and benefits as well as of the administration and supervision of the effective functioning of the system of social protection (Robles, 2011).

In addition, the Ministry of Social Development has created a new Under-Secretary of Social Evaluation, in charge of enhancing the evaluation of social returns ex ante and during the implementation of the social programmes. Thus—and considering that law 20.595 requires an impact evaluation of the programme and annual monitoring reports of the social conditions of programme beneficiaries—it is foreseeable that IEF, once fully in force, will be able to count on a more rigorous methodological approach for monitoring and evaluation than *Chile Solidario* at its beginning.

Targeting

It is also worth noting that, although various IEF transfers are targeted at the poorest 40 per cent of the population, there continues to be an excessive focus on those living in extreme poverty, who are the only ones entitled to receive dignity and duty transfers.

This focus is not ambitious enough for a high middle-income country such as Chile—with a GDP per capita of about US\$14,000 in 2011—and whose resources would also enable coverage of the population living in poverty but not indigent. In particular, the high level of upwards and downwards mobility around the poverty and extreme poverty lines among these families must be taken into account: according to the CASEN survey, three people in ten experienced poverty at least once within the period 1996–2006 (OSUAH, 2007).

This demands greater capacity of adaptation and flexibility of targeting instruments to better reflect the dynamics of poverty and protect those who temporarily fall under either the poverty or extreme poverty line.

Temporary Limits

Also, there are concerns with relation to the maximum duration of 24 months of cash transfers—with the exception of the employment subsidy to women, which can last up to 48 months—as well as of the family and employment support and whether they could have a sustained effect in reducing poverty.

As mentioned in the General Comment No.19 of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (2008) on the right to social security, not only the amounts but also the duration of the benefits should be adequate to guarantee the rights to protection and assistance.

In addition, it must be considered that by guaranteeing the benefits, the beneficiaries—by overcoming the problems of subsistence—will be in a better position to invest both in their children's capabilities as well as in small businesses and to search for a job with decent work conditions and improve their economic inclusion (Cecchini and Madariaga, 2011; Hanlon, Barrientos and Hulme, 2010), which is precisely one of IEF's main objectives. In line with the review of the Welfare To Work programme in the USA, it could be argued that the efforts that yielded significant and lasting benefits—to compensate for the deficits in education and human capital due to structural and intergenerational poverty and exclusion—are those that offer education, training and assistance throughout various years, both before and after recipients secure employment (CEPAL-OAS-ILO, 2011).

Gender Roles

Another critical aspect is the role of women in the programme. In IEF, as in the majority of CCTs in the region (Cecchini and Madariaga, 2011), women play a key role as recipients of social assistance, particularly of cash transfers,

under the assumption that this guarantees that the aid will reach all members of the family, children in particular.

In fact, in October 2010, 97 per cent of payments under the Social Allowance were made to women, compared to 90 per cent for *Chile Solidario* in March 2010 (Ministry of Social Development, 2012). However, from a point of view of gender equality, conceiving women as instruments more than as persons in charge of their own actions is problematic, as it could contribute to reproducing traditional gender-based roles and increase women's unpaid workload.

From this point of view, it would be desirable and feasible to strengthen the IEF's future operations, promoting the engagement of other members of the family—including men—in complying with their responsibilities, beyond it being the woman who manages or receives the benefits.

For instance, it would be possible to include an explicit reference to this point in IEF's rules of operation, defining—in the case of nuclear families—shared schemes between fathers and mothers for the confirmation of the accreditation of the fulfilment of conditions. This becomes even more relevant in view of IEF's support to women's participation in the labour market, which needs to be accompanied by a better balance in the performance of domestic tasks in households where this is not happening.

School Dynamics

Finally, we must be attentive to the impacts on the school dynamics of the performance incentives from the academic excellence bonus, which is not based on national standardised tests but on a ranking of students from the same school. Considering the educational and territorial segregation that exists in Chile, it is very likely that the potential beneficiaries are competing within the same class to obtain such a bonus. Thus, it would have been desirable to include a component of solidarity within the academic performance of students through incentives for a good group performance and support to educational provision, which is highly unequal in the country. ■

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2. The law provides for the grant of effort transfers (*bonos por esfuerzo*) not only in the area of education but also for health, employment, savings and adherence to drug treatment programmes. The bonuses are not cumulative.

3. The law establishes a gradual increase in the coverage of this transfer: in 2012 and 2013, the subsidy will benefit women among the 30 per cent socio-economically most vulnerable segment of the population, and in 2014, women among the 35 per cent socio-economically most vulnerable.

4. The automatic adjustment according to the CPI variation is an important measure to prevent transfers losing their value over time. However, households living in extreme poverty spend a large proportion of their income on food purchases, of which prices in Chile—according to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization—increased by 9.8 per cent between February 2011 and February 2012, compared to a variation in the general level of prices of 4.4 per cent during the same period.

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