Optimizing Policies for the Distribution of Social Assistance (BANSOS) and Direct Cash Transfers (BLT) to Ensure Targeting Accuracy and Improve Economic Welfare

Fiqi Restu Subekti[1], Noni Kensiwi[2]

[1]Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
[2]Institut Agama Islam Nahdlatul Ulama, Kebumen, Indonesia

Corespodence: fiqirestu912@gmail.com[1]

ABSTRACT

Social Assistance (BANSOS) and Direct Cash Transfers (BLT) constitute important instruments for poverty alleviation in Indonesia. However, their distribution often encounters targeting errors caused by inaccurate beneficiary data, nontransparent distribution processes, and potential program politicization. These targeting errors generate budgetary inefficiencies and undermine public confidence in the effectiveness of assistance. Consequently, policy reform of Bansos and BLT distribution assumes critical importance. This article aims to identify the primary obstacles in the distribution of Bansos and BLT and to formulate practical strategic policy solutions that enhance targeting accuracy and program effectiveness. The literature review further explores reform measures that can improve benefit distribution and promote more equitable improvements in community economic welfare. The research employs a literature-study approach to analyze policies, official reports, and relevant literature concerning Bansos and BLT distribution. The review covers regulatory frameworks, beneficiary data, and recommendations from academic and policy practitioners. The study recommends several key strategies, including updating beneficiary data using the National Identification Number (NIK); increasing transparency of distribution procedures; establishing independent oversight to prevent program politicization; strengthening digital infrastructure in frontier, outermost, and disadvantaged (3T) regions; implementing a responsive public complaints mechanism; and adopting multidimensional poverty indicators. Implementing the proposed strategic solutions should enhance the effectiveness of Bansos and BLT programs and thereby foster a more equitable and sustainable improvement in the economic welfare of target populations.

Keyword: Policy, Social Assistance (BANSOS), Direct Cash Transfers (BLT), Accurate Targeting, Economic Welfare.

INTRODUCTION

Meeting the basic needs of vulnerable social groups through Social Assistance (Bansos) and Direct Cash Assistance (BLT) programs plays a crucial role in efforts to improve national economic welfare. Policymakers expect these social programs to reduce

poverty rates and strengthen household purchasing power amid economic uncertainty. Simangunsong & Sihotang (2023) demonstrate that the timely provision of BLT can support poor families in meeting their essential needs. Recent increases in the prices of everyday necessities further heighten the urgency to implement Bansos and BLT policies optimally. Unfortunately, the distribution of Bansos and BLT frequently encounters implementation problems, which risks undermining the programs' original objectives (Fatiri & Mahendra, 2023).

When assistance fails to reach its intended targets, programs may not reach those who genuinely need them and can even provoke dissatisfaction and social conflict. Therefore, reforms that improve the effectiveness of Bansos and BLT distribution are urgently required. Targeted distribution of Bansos and BLT should not remain merely charitable; it must also stimulate sustainable community empowerment. A comprehensive policy approach must integrate data systems and actively involve communities to ensure the effectiveness of Bansos and BLT distribution. With a robust policy framework, these programs can meaningfully enhance the economic welfare of their target populations.

The legal basis for implementing Bansos and BLT programs in Indonesia stems from the 1945 Constitution, which assigns the state the responsibility to promote the general welfare of all citizens. In particular, Law No. 11 of 2009 on Social Welfare and Law No. 13 of 2011 on the Handling of the Poor regulate the provision of Social Assistance as a right for vulnerable groups. Likewise, Article 5 of Law No. 25 of 2009 establishes that Bansos distribution forms part of public services and must follow established procedures. The government has also issued Government Regulation No. 63 of 2017 concerning Non-Cash Distribution of Social Assistance, which emphasizes that Bansos distribution must be efficient and well-targeted. Meanwhile, Ministerial Regulation Permendes PDTT No. 6 of 2020 designates Village Fund BLT as a principal social assistance instrument for poor residents during the pandemic, requiring that distribution be orderly, fair, targeted, timely, and administratively accurate. Collectively, these regulations demonstrate policymakers' commitment to aligning a legal framework with operational mechanisms so that Bansos and BLT distribution adheres to principles of accountability, equity, and target accuracy.

Several prior studies have examined aspects of Bansos and BLT distribution, although their analytical focuses vary. For instance, Sagita et al., (2025) found that BLT significantly supports households' basic needs, but its distribution still requires improvement to achieve optimal impact. Zein et al., (2024) emphasize that the effectiveness of BLT depends critically on accurately targeting recipients. Manoppo & Laoh (2022) reported inclusion and exclusion errors in the DTKS (Integrated Social Welfare Data) records in North Sulawesi, which resulted in several poor families being omitted from Bansos recipient lists.

Susilawati (2022) found similar problems in Aceh Province, where DTKS management remained suboptimal and few districts achieved data renewal rates above 50%. These studies highlight the importance of data accuracy and verification mechanisms within the Bansos distribution system. Nevertheless, research that explicitly proposes comprehensive policy solutions to ensure the accurate targeting of Bansos and BLT remains relatively limited. This study aims to fill that gap by formulating actionable policy recommendations to improve the effectiveness of Bansos and BLT and thereby enhance the economic welfare of targeted communities.

The primary problem addressed in this research is that Bansos and BLT distribution remains uneven and is not always well-targeted. The Audit Board of the Republic of Indonesia (BPK) identified distribution errors totaling Rp 6.9 trillion in 2021 across the PKH, BPNT, and BST programs. These errors included payments to deceased recipients, recipients who were not listed in the DTKS, problematic recipients who should have been removed, and instances of duplicate benefit receipt. The Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia also recorded numerous public complaints about recipients who did not meet eligibility criteria; for example, relatively well-off citizens continued to receive assistance while many truly needy households were overlooked.

These conditions indicate maladministration, because the 2009 Public Service Law mandates that Bansos distribution, as a form of public service, must follow proper procedures. The problem of inaccurate targeting therefore constitutes an urgent issue that demands serious attention. Consequently, this study focuses on formulating policy solutions to address these constraints. The proposed policy measures aim to promote more accurate Bansos and BLT distribution so that social assistance becomes fairer, more transparent, and more effective in improving beneficiary welfare.

Although several studies have identified technical and administrative problems in the distribution of social assistance (Bansos) and direct cash transfers (BLT), particularly regarding updates to the Integrated Social Welfare Database (DTKS) and local nepotistic practices, few comprehensive studies have designed operational governance frameworks and evaluation indicators that policymakers can use. This article fills that gap through three primary contributions. First, we propose an integrated governance framework that links data elements, beneficiary determination processes, oversight mechanisms, public complaint channels, and outcome indicators, referred to as the data process oversight complaint impact model.

Second, we present the operationalization of targeting accuracy metrics, such as inclusion and exclusion error rates, duplication, and the validity of the national identification number (NIK), that policymakers can monitor at both national and district or city levels. Third, we provide an implementation roadmap and analyze the institutional preconditions and cost implications, thereby ensuring that our recommendations remain tactical rather than merely normative. By situating the literature synthesis within an analytical framework and testable metrics, the article aims to serve as an empirical and policy oriented contribution for further research and program design.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a systematic literature study approach consisting of the following steps. First, databases and sources: we conducted searches in academic databases (Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar), repositories of government institutions (the websites of the Supreme Audit Agency (BPK), the Ombudsman, and the Ministry of Social Affairs), and relevant national and local online news archives. Second, keywords and search strategy: we used combinations of Indonesian and English keywords, including "Bansos," "BLT," "DTKS," "targeting accuracy," "inclusion error," "exclusion error," and "politicization of social assistance."

Third, inclusion and exclusion criteria: we included studies that examine the distribution of Bansos or BLT in Indonesia or that hold clear policy relevance; were published between 2015 and 2025; and present empirical data or findings from audits or policy analyses. We used opinion reports without formal empirical evidence only as case

illustrations when no official data sources were available. Fourth, credibility assessment: we cross-checked each news source against official sources when available, and we assigned greater weight to audit reports in the formulation of factual claims. Fifth, synthesis method: we organized findings through thematic coding to identify causes, mechanisms, and recommendations, then synthesized them narratively and mapped them into a causal sequence of causes, mechanisms, policy levers, and outcome indicators. This study does not conduct primary field verification; therefore, the generalizability of empirical findings remains constrained by the scope of secondary documentation.

To avoid inappropriate equivalence of evidence, we distinguish three categories of sources. The first category comprises peer reviewed academic studies that provide empirical evidence and systematic analysis. The second category includes official audit and administrative reports from BPK, the Ombudsman, and other relevant agencies that present oversight findings. The third category consists of journalistic reports that illustrate specific cases or localized patterns. We use academic studies to construct empirical claims and causal mechanisms, audit reports to substantiate evidence of maladministration and estimates of fiscal losses, and journalistic reports primarily as case illustrations that support or motivate further research. In the following sections, we provide explicit references for each claim derived from audit reports or academic studies, such as BPK findings on losses amounting to Rp 6.9 trillion. We clearly identify claims based solely on media reporting as case illustrations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Policy Solutions to Ensure Accurate Targeting in the Distribution of Social Assistance (Bansos) and Direct Cash Transfers (BLT)

Social Assistance (Bansos) and Direct Cash Transfers (BLT) serve as crucial policy instruments for improving the welfare of poor households. However, authorities frequently misapply these instruments, and the distribution often fails to reach intended beneficiaries. This failure manifests in the registration of fictitious recipients and the omission of genuinely poor households. Numerous reports document inaccurate data, local discrimination, limited transparency, and other irregularities in Bansos distribution. These problems require in-depth analysis and the formulation of policy solutions to restore distribution effectiveness. The policy directions derived from this review aim to improve the quality of Bansos distribution going forward. Policymakers should consider the analysis presented here to strengthen equitable and targeted social protection. The table below summarizes the causal factors behind distribution errors and the policy measures that the government can implement:

Table 1. The Causal Factors Behind Distribution Errors and the Policy Measures

The Causal Factors Behind Distribution Errors	The Policy Measures
Disordered Recipient Data	- The authorities update recipient data using NIK-based verification and integrate it with tax, BPJS, civil registry, electricity, and water service databases to ensure that all beneficiaries are fully validated. - They conduct routine data audits at least once or twice a year.

The Causal Factors Behind Distribution Errors	The Policy Measures
Local Nepotism	- The government publishes beneficiary lists on an official online dashboard accessible to the public. - They continue to protect personal data but display regional information, the number of recipients, and the total amount of assistance.
Limited Transparency in Distribution	- The government publishes beneficiary lists on an official online dashboard accessible to the public. - They maintain personal data protection while presenting regional information, the number of recipients, and the total assistance distributed.
Political Intervention (Social Assistance Used as Campaign Tools)	- The legal framework strictly prohibits the personalization of social assistance programs. - If political symbols or attributions appear during distribution, authorities automatically classify the act as an election violation subject to criminal sanctions.
Limited Digital Infrastructure in Remote Areas	- The government applies a blended distribution model: digital channels in prepared regions and cash or in-kind distribution in 3T areas under the supervision of KPK and BPK. - They accelerate the development of internet access and inclusive financial services.
Insufficient Complaint Mechanisms	- The government establishes a multi-channel complaint center system (application, SMS, hotline, village posts) that must respond to reports within a maximum of 14 days. - They involve NGOs and community organizations as independent monitors.
Overly Narrow Poverty Measures	- The authorities adopt multidimensional indicators, including income, access to education and health services, household dependency burden, and employment vulnerability.

Source: Author, 2025

One root cause of distribution errors lies in inaccurate beneficiary data. The Integrated Social Welfare Data (DTKS), which underpins distribution, often contains outdated entries and fictitious recipients because agencies do not update it regularly (Widyaningsih & Toyamah, 2022). For example, the Audit Board (BPK) found many names of registered recipients who were deceased or absent from the DTKS, yet continued to appear on beneficiary lists. Auditors also identified recipients with invalid National Identification Numbers (NIK) and duplicate beneficiaries who received aid more than once. Limited data updating thus creates opportunities for fraud during recipient selection.

As a result, assistance often reaches ineligible individuals while needy households remain excluded. Many community complaints report beneficiary lists that contain baseless entries. Unless authorities reform data governance fundamentally, distribution

will likely continue to suffer targeting failures. Variations in registration procedures across regions also produce data inconsistencies that hinder verification. These facts underscore the critical need to update beneficiary records to prevent leakage of assistance.

The first policy solution aims to strengthen beneficiary data updating and integration. Authorities should base beneficiary records on valid NIK and refresh those records at regular intervals, for example every six months. Officials must integrate updates with other administrative databases civil registration (dukcapil), tax records, BPJS, and public utility data (electricity and water) to validate beneficiaries' overall circumstances. Agencies can conduct cross-checks automatically through an integrated information system. Authorities should perform routine data audits at least once or twice a year to assess accuracy and to remove fictitious entries. This approach depends on interagency integration and the use of the "Indonesia's One Data Policy" platform to synchronize data nationally. Field-level micro verification should remain in place as an additional control. By applying these measures, beneficiary lists will become more credible and better targeted.

Another factor that causes mistargeting is local nepotism. Village officials, neighborhood administrators (RT/RW), or other local authorities sometimes insert relatives and associates into beneficiary lists despite their ineligibility. The Ombudsman documented this pattern, reporting that village apparatuses tend to endorse family members as beneficiaries (Manao, 2020). Such favoritism clearly violates principles of fair public distribution. It produces duplicated benefits for certain families while politically disconnected poor households suffer exclusion. Conflicts of interest of this kind deepen social inequality and erode public trust. Because local favoritism often occurs in private, monitoring officers find it hard to detect. The pattern of nepotism typically persists in remote areas where oversight remains weak.

These conditions demand governance reforms for recipient selection to eliminate abuse of authority. Without firm preventive measures, nepotistic practices will likely recur and damage the program's accountability. To counter local nepotism, the recipient selection system must operate autonomously and follow standardized procedures. Authorities should replace local recommendation dominance with automated selection mechanisms based on national data. By grounding distribution decisions in algorithms and large-scale data, agencies can reduce opportunities for political interference from village figures. Authorities should decouple recipient selection from direct village-apparatus influence and implement systems such as SIKS-NG (Social Welfare Information System next generation) or equivalent platforms that objectively filter candidate beneficiaries according to eligibility criteria.

Additionally, governments should establish independent oversight teams that include civil society representatives, neutral non-governmental organizations, or other third parties. Local-level monitors can detect early attempts at favoritism. Authorities must make nomination protocols transparent and reportable by the public. Combining automated selection with enhanced oversight will reduce politicization and keep Bansos distribution free from local patronage. Integrating national systems with independent monitoring should significantly diminish nepotistic irregularities.

A frequently overlooked issue concerns the lack of transparency in Bansos distribution. Opaque distribution processes create space for fraud and abuse. Administrations often disburse assistance without publicly disclosing eligibility criteria

and selection mechanisms. Consequently, communities question the legitimacy of aid allocation and lose confidence in the system. Research stresses that transparency and accountability constitute fundamental safeguards to prevent Bansos from becoming a vehicle for corruption (Alfedo & Azmi, 2020). In practice, poor transparency frequently exacerbates abuses such as benefit diversion or allocations based on personal relationships. When officials do not provide accessible information, citizens cannot effectively monitor distribution. Low transparency therefore contributes to the exclusion of truly eligible poor households.

As a remedy, governments should publish distribution data openly through a national web-based dashboard that visualizes distribution flows, budget realizations, and recipient counts by administrative area. To protect privacy, the dashboard should summarize recipient data in aggregate numbers (e.g., number of beneficiaries per area) rather than disclose individual personal data. Public access to such dashboards would enable communities to verify whether distributions reached their areas equitably. Open transparency also facilitates public audits and rapid tracing of potential irregularities.

Authorities must, however, protect beneficiaries' personal data in accordance with applicable regulations. The dashboard should report coverage areas, beneficiary counts, and total assistance per district or village. Local governments that have piloted similar systems reported increased public trust and fewer complaints. Policymakers should pair data publication with public education so citizens can interpret the presented figures correctly. A systematic transparency approach will make Bansos distribution more accountable and fair.

Political intervention represents another significant factor. Ahead of elections, political actors often use social assistance as a campaign tool. Findings from the Ombudsman indicate that some social assistance has been distributed to supporters of particular candidates or to relatives of village officials as a form of reciprocation to secure political votes. Observers describe such practices as clientelism or pork-barrel politics, in which Social Assistance distribution rests on political loyalty rather than need. The practical consequence manifests as uneven allocation between pro-government areas and areas that support different candidates. Moreover, the use of party symbols or political paraphernalia during assistance distribution creates the impression that the aid is partisan.

The politicization of social assistance at the village level can trigger horizontal conflict if communities perceive the process as unfair. Without effective prevention, social assistance that should remain neutral becomes an instrument for cultivating political bases. The involvement of civil servants or village officials in covert campaigning during assistance distribution also threatens electoral integrity and public service delivery. Therefore, distribution mechanisms must receive protection from such practices so that social assistance no longer functions as a political instrument.

In response to the politicization of social assistance, authorities need to adopt clear regulations that prohibit conditional political use of Social Assistance. Election laws already ban the use of monetary or in-kind assistance to influence voters. For example, Law No. 10 of 2016 Article 187A prescribes a custodial sentence of 36 to 72 months for anyone who intentionally promises or provides money or goods to influence voters. Similar provisions appear in election statutes and in the regulations of the Election Supervisory Body (Bawaslu). Bawaslu further states that if social assistance is accompanied by political attributes or rewards, authorities may qualify such acts as vote

buying. Accordingly, the display of political symbols during social assistance distribution should automatically be treated as a violation of election law. Any village official or civil servant found engaging in such conduct should face criminal or administrative sanctions in accordance with electoral regulations. Consistent and transparent law enforcement can create deterrent effects and separate Social Assistance from political interests. These measures are essential to protect the integrity of social protection programs and to prevent social assistance from acquiring the stigma of a campaign tool.

A structural factor that impedes reform is the limited digital infrastructure in disadvantaged areas. Many frontier, outermost, and lagging regions (3T) still experience signal disruptions and lack reliable internet access (Pigome & Guntoro, 2025). These conditions restrict community access to online platforms, including digital Social Assistance systems. Consequently, application-based mechanisms cannot operate fully in those areas.

Authorities therefore often resort to manual distribution methods, such as cash or basic food packages, even though these methods carry higher risks of irregularities. The digital service gap also produces an information gap, whereby rural residents receive less outreach about available assistance. This problem requires special handling for non-digital regions. If policymakers neglect this issue, the digitalization of social assistance risks exacerbating interregional inequalities in access to aid. Therefore, policymakers must give priority to expanding internet access and improving digital literacy in remote areas so that Social Assistance reforms reach all parts of the country.

The next solution is to adapt distribution methods to local conditions. In regions with adequate digital infrastructure, governments should disburse assistance via digital channels, such as bank transfers or e-wallets, to achieve greater efficiency and accuracy. In contrast, in 3T areas that are not yet digitally ready, authorities should continue to distribute assistance in cash or in-kind packages through postal services and field officers. In such cases, engaging oversight institutions such as the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), the Audit Board (BPK), or independent monitoring posts in the field can help ensure stringent oversight at each distribution stage.

The government must also accelerate internet expansion and strengthen financial inclusion in remote areas so that residents can benefit from digital services in the near future. Several regions that piloted digitalized Social Assistance distribution reported improved transparency and accuracy. Where networks exist, authorities can verify aid digitally; where networks do not exist, governments should maintain conventional schemes but apply strict oversight. These measures will bridge service gaps. Accordingly, policymakers must expand the presence of formal financial channels, including banks, post offices, and regulated fintech providers, in remote areas and pair these services with social worker assistance. Enhancing digital literacy and financial inclusion in rural communities is likewise crucial so that residents can adopt digital channels over the long term. By combining digital and conventional distribution methods, social assistance programs can reach all population segments fairly without leaving disadvantaged areas behind.

Another contributing factor is the weakness of public complaint mechanisms. The Forum for Indonesia Budget Transparency (FITRA) reports that complaint systems at the regional level remain very weak, causing slow responses and protracted case resolution when distribution problems occur. As a result, many citizens abandon efforts to report ineligible recipients or misappropriation because official channels remain hard to access.

The lack of an integrated official complaint channel makes grievances appear unresolved. This situation breeds public frustration because identical complaints recur without meaningful action. Common complaints, such as zero balances, card confiscation, or benefit deductions, often go unaddressed. This condition not only disrupts current assistance distribution but also erodes public trust in the program. Low public participation due to these deficiencies complicates reform efforts. In the absence of effective feedback channels, distribution errors tend to repeat because the system lacks corrective inputs. This phenomenon underscores the need to build responsive complaint mechanisms as part of policy improvements.

Solutions for complaint handling must incorporate multiple communication channels. The government should establish a multi-channel complaint center, including a dedicated application, SMS services, a hotline, and village-level help desks, to receive Social Assistance complaints. Authorities must respond to each complaint within 14 working days at most to prevent unresolved delays. These channels should involve civil society organizations as independent monitors so that potential abuses are detected promptly. FITRA recommends strengthening complaint mechanisms because current information flows and responses remain very weak. Authorities should make information about complaint responses publicly accessible so that citizens can observe the process. In addition, establishing special handling units at the subdistrict or village level can ensure that complaints do not go ignored. Through an organized and transparent complaint system, communities become active partners in supervising Social Assistance distribution. Consequently, claims of mistargeting can receive rapid attention and perpetrators of malpractice can be more readily prosecuted.

Table 2. Analytical Framework: From Causes to Outcomes

Main Causes	Mechanisms (producing inclusion and exclusion errors)	Policy Levers	Expected Outcomes	Illustrative Indicators
Outdated data or invalid national identification numbers	Constrained verification processes generate fictitious beneficiaries or duplicate records	National identification number integration combined with routine audits and micro level verification	Reduced duplication and improved beneficiary validity	Duplication rate and percentage of valid national identification numbers
Local nepotism	Discretionary selection leads to relationship based allocation	Data driven selection combined with independent oversight	Reduction in erroneous inclusion	Erroneous inclusion ratio
Process opacity	Limited auditability allows manipulation to remain undetected	Publicly accessible aggregated dashboards combined with	Improved public accountability	Number of resolved complaints

Main Causes	Mechanisms (producing inclusion and exclusion errors)	Policy Levers	Expected Outcomes	Illustrative Indicators
		transparent standard operating procedures		
Weak digital infrastructure	Manual distribution processes remain vulnerable to misuse	Blended distribution models combined with broadband investment	More equitable access to digital cash transfers	Percentage of areas covered by digital distribution

Source: Author, 2025

A more fundamental cause is the overly narrow measurement of poverty. To date, most beneficiary eligibility criteria rely primarily on the poverty line calculated from minimum expenditure for basic needs (Piliang, 2023). This method focuses on minimum consumption of non-food essentials, rendering the poverty measure too limited. As a result, an individual who meets basic food consumption (for example rice and cooking oil) may be considered non-poor despite suffering malnutrition or living in deplorable conditions. The approach also overlooks education, health, and basic living standards. When the poverty metric remains narrow, many vulnerable people fail to qualify as potential beneficiaries. Consequently, households with incomes slightly above the poverty line may miss out on assistance. This situation requires reform of poverty indicators to align them more closely with social realities on the ground.

To address the narrow metric, the government should adopt a more multidimensional poverty indicator. Policymakers have begun using the Multidimensional Poverty Index (Indeks Kemiskinan Multidimensi, IKM), which measures poverty across multiple dimensions, including income, access to education, sanitation, and housing conditions. This criterion evaluates not only expenditure but also the household's socio-economic status. For example, household size, status of elderly single households, disability status, and informal employment can inform eligibility for assistance.

A multidimensional approach allows authorities to target individuals who face structural marginalization and vulnerability. In addition to the IKM, SUSENAS survey data and PODES local potential data can validate target selection. By using multidimensional indicators, social assistance can cover residents who experience educational or health hardships even when their incomes appear above the poverty line statistically. Such an approach makes benefit allocation more responsive to actual beneficiary conditions. Policymakers expect that this effort will reduce disparities and render social protection programs more inclusive and equitable. To link the findings from the literature to policy recommendations, we develop an analytical framework that explains the causal relationships as follows: causes lead to mechanisms, which describe how the causes generate errors, followed by the relevant policy levers, the expected outcomes, and the corresponding measurement indicators.

2.	Parameters for Assessing Improvements in Community Economic Welfare from the Distribution of Social Assistance (Bansos) and Direct Cash Transfers (BLT)

The distribution of Social Assistance (Bansos) and Direct Cash Transfers (BLT) in Indonesia often receives positive evaluations based solely on budget disbursement rates. For example, the Minister of Social Affairs once announced that three social assistance programs had been "100% disbursed" (Button, 2020). Government performance reports tend to emphasize these budget realization figures as principal achievements. However, policy success should not rest only on the amount of funds disbursed. More essential is the tangible improvement in beneficiaries' economic conditions. To date, the question "Have recipients of Bansos and BLT actually exited poverty?" has received insufficient attention. Many observers criticize this narrow paradigm because focusing exclusively on budget absorption can obscure the programs' true social benefits.

The Ministry of Finance and other government agencies have emphasized that evaluations must shift from mere budget absorption toward more meaningful achievements (Tukiran et al., 2025). In the context of Bansos and BLT, this shift means measuring success not only by the volume of funds distributed but also by the socio-economic outcomes produced. Relevant outcome indicators include the number of beneficiaries who have moved above the poverty line or who have demonstrably improved their economic circumstances. These parameters require outcome indicators such as changes in household income, access to basic services, or educational participation rather than exclusive reliance on financial output indicators.

Impact evaluation demands empirical data and comprehensive program reviews. Only such analyses can reveal whether assistance genuinely enhances beneficiary welfare. Consequently, program managers must implement systematic monitoring and evaluation mechanisms from the planning stage through final reporting. If evaluation remains oriented solely toward financial outputs, Bansos policies risk losing legitimacy when they cannot demonstrate measurable benefits for communities. Impact-based evaluation thus becomes crucial to improve program effectiveness and to ensure accurate targeting going forward.

Program impact evaluations should be planned from the outset and incorporate pre- and post-intervention measurements. Fundamentally, these evaluations should move beyond counting physical or financial inputs to assess outcome changes that affect beneficiaries. Evaluations must account for the contextual characteristics of recipient communities to ensure that collected data remain accurate and relevant. Employing measurable indicators such as poverty rates, household income, nutritional status, and educational access provides clearer evidence of program effectiveness. Recent studies indicate that social assistance can yield positive impacts, but implementation still requires improvement to secure sustainable benefits. Therefore, continuous evaluation mechanisms are essential and should engage local governments and communities at each measurement stage. With structured evaluation practices, authorities can adapt programs quickly in response to emerging problems or targeting errors. Evaluation results should then serve as the basis for refining subsequent policy schemes.

CONCLUSION

Improving the targeting of social assistance and direct cash transfer programs requires a combination of technical policies and governance measures, including national identification number based data updating and integration, data driven selection

mechanisms that minimize local discretion, measurable transparency through aggregate dashboards, responsive complaint systems, and strong privacy protections. This article presents a governance framework that links the causes of mistargeting to relevant policy levers, along with operational metrics to monitor targeting accuracy. Phased implementation and coordinated enforcement mechanisms are necessary to reduce politicization without slowing benefit delivery. Ultimately, to ensure that improvements in targeting genuinely enhance welfare outcomes, policymakers need robust evaluation strategies and a sustained agenda of field based research. These recommendations aim to shift social assistance and cash transfer policies from a narrow focus on budget absorption toward measurable and sustainable social outcomes.

This study relies on secondary documentation, including academic studies, audit reports, and media coverage. Consequently, the findings remain vulnerable to reporting bias, heterogeneity in local implementation practices, and the absence of primary field verification. In addition, variation in poverty definitions across sources complicates cross study comparison. We therefore recommend five directions for future research. First, comparative district and city level studies should measure implementation heterogeneity. Second, periodic audits of the DTKS updating cycle should assess the effectiveness of data revisions. Third, quasi experimental evaluations should examine the impacts of digital verification systems and complaint centers. Fourth, qualitative studies should investigate the constraints posed by politicization at the village level. Fifth, future work should explore multidimensional poverty indicators that remain sensitive to local contexts.

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