THE DYNAMIC SINGLE HOUSEHOLD REGISTRY (DSHR)

SOPROEN

SOCIAL PROTECTION ENGINEERING

Commited to people

Paper written by: **by Francisco V. Ayala and Susana Ponce, SOPROEN**

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Discussion Paper

10600 Griffin Road A-103, Cooper City, Florida, USA +1 352 2176235 (USA) +593 2260950 (Ecuador) info@soproen.com

LIST OF ACRONYMS

DSHR	Dynamic Single Household Registry
HH	Household
L&R	Linkages and Referrals
PMT	Proxy Means Test
SHR	Single Household Registry
SP	Social Protection
SSN	Social Safety Nets

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ABSTRACT

Reliable information of a country's population is of crucial importance for successfully taking decisions on policies, programs and other aspects aiming at improving people's lives. An effective tool to achieve the aforementioned goals is the Single Household Registry (SHR) which is known for its centralized identity database that contains comprehensive Household (HH) information and enables unified administration and monitoring across a variety of Social Protection (SP) Programs. However, in practice, despite its well documented benefits, inconsistenties still exist leading to a range of weaknesses in its design, and ultimately its implementation. To utilize a SHR efficiently and effectively, this paper presents our firm's Dynamic Single Household Registry (DSHR); one that improves present SHR processes, creating a household registry that is regularly updated, has room for expansion and allows for the integration of other participant institutions or agencies' databases and vice versa.

Key Words

Dynamism, Dynamic Single Household Registry, Continuous Processes, Household Information Updates, On-going Registration, Data Sharing, Linkages and Referrals, Reclassification and Disaster Response, Reporting, Retargeting

Biographical information

This chapter has been developed by our firm's staff. We have worked on the design, implementation, coordination, and assessment of Social Safety Nets including unconditional and conditional cash transfers in 40 countries worldwide in the last 20 years. The firm has provided technical assistance in specialized activities such as Dynamic Single Household Registries.

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, it has been widely recognized that registries can be capitalized for the effective and efficient management of Social Protection (SP) programs, and are in fact key to well-functioning Social Safety Nets (SSN) (World Bank Group, 2015, p. 36-39). Also, international experience and evidence has demonstrated that a Single Registry (SR) based on Household (HH) data is more convenient and efficient than a SR established on information of individual persons. As such, the establishment of a Single Household Registry (SHR) is one of the integral steps towards strengthening SP systems, reducing inefficiencies, and improving transparency within the sector.

SHRs', often referred to as 'Unified Registries' or 'National Poverty Registries' primary purpose was initially to provide information on HHs based on data collected once during a massive data collection or registration exercise, and generally updated every three (3) to six (6) years. This information was used to select the beneficiaries of main poverty-targeted SSN and other social programs. In a nutshell, the registry provided details of the socio-economic composition of HHs in a specific moment in time which facilitated the determination of HH and per capita income levels through a Proxy Means Test (PMT), ultimately creating welfare categories for each HH. HHs were then ranked from poorest to richest and selected for different interventions based on the programs' eligibility criteria.

Additionally, this type of registry was also meant to support a systematic approach to data management. It was to function as a common entry point for potential beneficiaries of social programs through the application of a single targeting mechanism, compilation and maintenance of updated HH data in one place, which further enhances program planning and management. Nevertheless, the general practice within the SP sector was developing and maintaining independent registries for individual programs, which house similar data using different variables. This lead to inconsistencies and further alienation due to lack of communication or information exchange among these registries.

Consequently, this introduced a range of weaknesses including the following:

- SHRs did not possess information on programs accessed by beneficiaries;
- There is only one entry point (one registration process and one targeting approach) which leads to the exclusion of poor HHs from participating in the programs and/or uneven distribution of social program benefits;
- The databases are rarely updated hence the information quickly becomes outdated; and
- In countries that have programs using very different targeting approaches, this single targeting mechanism is only useful for certain schemes or interventions that target the poorest HHs.

In light of the aforementioned, and to fully tap into the potential of a SHR, our firm[i] has developed significant innovations to improve present SHR processes; creating a HH registry that is regularly updated and enhanced, coining the name **Dynamic Single Household Registry (DSHR)**. Keeping the foundation of a SHR the same, a DSHR will hold and provide richer and updated information on HHs to not only select beneficiaries but also to analyze tendencies, such as who is being benefited and by whom, benefits received from SSN, services obtained from service providers, among others, which would help to eventually improve the operational efficiency of participating programs.

The objective of this paper is to present our firm's DSHR and its elements. As such *Section II* of this paper explores the idea of dynamism and its basis for the development of DSHR. *Section III* on the other hand, provides an overview of the firm's DSHR and summarizes the different mechanisms that contribute to its dynamism.

II. CONCEPTUALIZING ITS DYNAMISM

The design and implementation of a SHR varies significantly by country but most involve similar processes: a process for **massive data collection or registration** in which the socio-economic information of various HHs is gathered and is considered the first point of entry into the database; a **data entry** process in which the information captured is entered into the database (registry) where a PMT formula is applied resulting in welfare categories for each HH; and lastly, a process of **data sharing** (typically one-way data sharing from the registry to requestor if any at all) usually in the form of physical lists detailing HHs eligible for specific programs. Once all these processes are implemented, the information, as stated previously, is generally **updated every three (3) to six (6) years**.

The question then is what next? Given that the reality and circumstances of HHs change constantly, be it a change in HH structure due to births, deaths, marriages and/or divorces, or a change due to economic, environmental or disaster contexts, the information collected becomes outdated or obsolete with the passage of time. Although these changes are normal in every HH, if there are no systems in place to keep the SHR's information regularly updated, the users of this data will not fully reap its benefits. More so, users of the data could have difficulties such as delaying the delivery of their services due to uncaptured HH mobility for example, not to mention the fact that they could be delivering (or not delivering) benefits to HHs whose socio-economic status has changed – thus exacerbating unequal budget allocation and waste of resources.

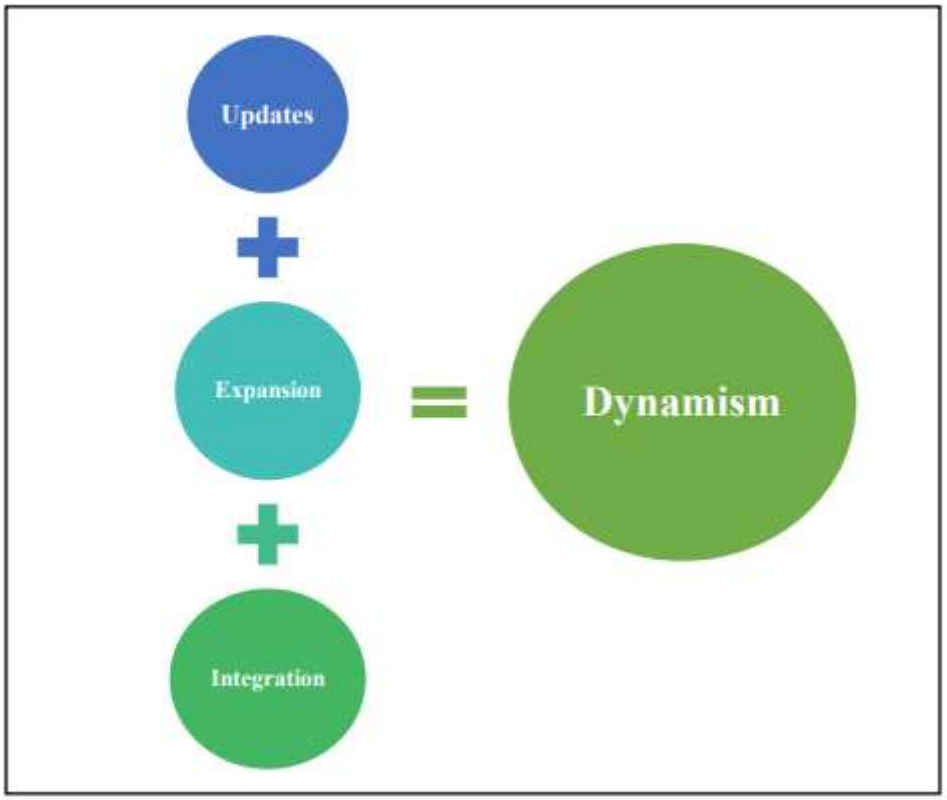
To answer this question simply, modern HH databases should be flexible enough to adapt to these changing circumstances and not wait until a new census (poverty survey) is carried out after three (3) to six (6) years. A modern HH database should be dynamic allowing for a SHR to achieve its intended mandate; **to serve as a common and updated targeting mechanism for social programs.**

Dynamic refers to something that is continuously moving or changing, whereas there is constant activity or progress. In this sense, **dynamism** refers to the registry as a database whose information is frequently changing; constantly updated, continuously expanding in coverage or size and/or creating links to other databases as further information becomes available. In fact, here dynamic is the opposite of **static** where information remains either unchanged or rarely changed at all.

Against this background, the **basis for a dynamic SHR** takes into consideration **three (3) core functions: Updates, Expansion and Integration**. *Updates* refer to modifying existing information (the registry's core data) periodically or by occurrence but does not imply that the database increases in coverage or size nor that it is integrated with other databases from external agencies. *Expansion* however, does imply an increase in coverage or size as it refers to adding newly formed HHs or HHs who missed-out during the massive data collection exercise. *Integration* on the other hand refers to the fact that HH data within the registry can be complemented with further information from other participant institutions or agencies' databases and vice versa. As such, for a **SHR to be dynamic it must encompass all three (3) functions**.

The following figure presents the core functions of a DSHR.

Figure 1: Conceptualizing a Dynamic Single Household Registry



III. DYNAMIC SINGLE HOUSEHOLD REGISTRIES IN A NUTSHELL

Literature regarding a SHR in the context of SP programs is lacking, and where existent, no guide is provided on how to effectively and efficiently develop a SHR. Through years of sound international experience and lessons learned in the field, our firm has incorporated additional elements that makes a conventional SHR go from static to dynamic. These additional elements are referred to as **continuous processes** incorporated in the operationalization and maintenance phases of the overall DSHR framework and includes the following:

- On-going registration;
- Data Sharing;
- HH Information Updates;
- Linkages and Referrals (L&R);
- Reclassification and Disaster Response;
- Reporting; and
- Retargeting.

In this way, HH registries are kept up-to-date and regularly enhanced so that it can be **used to determine eligibility** for the different programs that rely on the registry; its information **reflects HHs' current needs and benefits**; its **inputs can be used for analysis and policy decisions**; its **information can be shared** with different social assistance programs in the country allowing for intra-sectorial program management and cross-referencing of HH data; and it **improves the effectiveness of SSN programs and their coverage**.

Along these lines, the overall objectives of a DSHR are to:

- Implement a unified targeting system across SSN;
- Refer HHs with certain characteristics to relevant SSN (additional information is recorded back into the registry) and receive in return information on benefits and services provided to those HHs;
- Have information for evidence based policy making ensuring maximum coverage with scarce resources for SSN; and
- Availability of HH data in one centralized system.

The following sub-sections provide a brief explanation of the different elements/continuous processes.

A. ON-GOING REGISTRATION

On-going Registration allows HHs that have not been registered at the time of Massive Registration to provide their data. This type of registration is continuous and open, allowing HHs to apply at any time according to their needs ensuring fairness and equal opportunities for all. More so, on-going registration therefore implies adding information to the registry not replacing it.

The need for on-going registration specifically resides in the following reasons:

- The HH was not aware of Massive Registration;
- The HH was created after Massive Registration;
- The HH was not at home at the time of the visit or Call for Registration;
- The HH did not allow the Enumerator to collect data (ignorance) during Registration;
- The HH is a new resident in the Registration area; or
- The HH was excluded before but now believes to be eligible.

B. DATA SHARING

Data sharing facilitates HH data in the DSHR to be updated both through intra-program data exchange as well as through partnerships with institutions also engaged in collecting HH data. In this way, agencies' can request that the DSHR provide HH information to service providers and SSN to select and enroll HHs or individual members. The DSHR in turn can also request that service providers and SSN agree to provide information about HHs or individuals - benefits or services received and/or full or partially updated HH information.

However, for this data sharing process to be beneficial to all and keep the database regularly updated, certain protocols need to be established. Firstly, the identification of participating programs, service providers and/or agencies is conducted. Secondly, conditions for data sharing with each party is defined including the protocols for the way data will be transferred using excel files or other means, variables and frequency, the responsible persons to execute the required activities, among others. Typically, HH socio-economic data is shared upon request and following pre-established terms and conditions which also include access levels, security clearance, duration and scope. Lastly, once the above is determined, agreements are prepared, revised and signed with each agency, participating program and/or service provider signifying their willingness to participate.

With the gamut of data maintained in the DSHR, research institutions, donors and policy makers can benefit significantly from its use for future planning and strategic policy decision-making. More so, this data presents opportunity for meaningful analysis providing valuable insight into a given situation or intervention. For example, the ability to identify different patterns or relationships such as whether extreme poor HHs are receiving more benefits from the State compared to other HHs categorized as less poor or it is also possible to analyze if the poorest are better off in some geographic areas than others. These and other types of analysis can be conducted and used as inputs for policy decisions.

C. HOUSEHOLD INFORMATION UPDATES

Systems that generate information are only as good as the data entered. Moreover, any change can affect the welfare of the HH making them poor or non-poor. As such, the DSHR continuously updates existing HH data through first defining what variables require to be modified out of all the variables in the database and second, identifying what agency could provide such information accurately. This includes differentiating which variables are **permanent** and which are **transitory**. *Permanent* refers to variables that change but last for a long time and thus will not go back to its previous state while *transitory*[ii] refers to variables that change often but are for a limited time and thus temporal by nature such as any effect on livelihood. In a nutshell, determining what variables will have the most significant effect on the HH's PMT score are the prime candidates to update in the database.

Taking everything into account, there are two (2) methods through which existing HH information can be updated.

1. Full Updates

Full updates imply the **replacement of HH socio-economic information** whether some variables end up being the same or change altogether. In actuality, full updates are carried out through the application of a full poverty survey once again followed by entering the information obtained in the MIS. As such, this update may imply a change in classification for those HHs updating information and/or the assigning of a classification for new or missed-out HHs. Ultimately, the objective for full updates is to **update the PMT score**. This is carried out by:

- Making full updates compulsory every time HHs apply for flagship programs;
- Conducting a full update when there is an individual disaster in the form of an appeal. This refers to when the HH believes they have been misclassified by the registry, in that they have been categorized as Rich

when in fact they are Poor due to the occurrence of a personal disaster;
- Conducting a full update when a new HH submits a request to be part of the registry;
- Conducting full updates or census when there is an economic or natural disaster in a given area of the country; and
- Conducting full updates with some high frequency (i.e. every two years) in areas where there is a great deal of poor HHs or there are frequent changes in the economic activity of the respective areas.

2. Partial Updates

Partial Updates on the other hand, imply a **periodic collection of selected variables** mainly demographic, to update HH information. This may include any changes to HH data such as relocation, births, deaths or the correction of data entry error(s) that occurred previously. By its very nature, these updates are applied through the following mechanisms:

- **Initiated by the HH**; and/ or
- In the event there is a possibility that **an agency can provide information regularly** (such as the civil registry office), then the protocols are agreed upon between this agency and the registry's management unit.

D. LINKAGES AND REFERRALS

A L&R component, added to a DSHR, facilitates registered HHs to access service providers according to their most prevalent needs. This component, after having identified needs and available services, aims to serve as a system by which HH members can also be referred and linked to different available services and programs. It further provides HHs with the possibility to become aware of services they could be entitled to receive, and assist them in approaching the respective provider.

The classic model for the L&R component proposed for the DSHR is composed of entities (such as HHs, channels, SPs and software support) with specific duties, interlinks and of course placement within the overall framework of the registry. This successively will allow the registry to interact directly with HHs and individuals to determine their conditions and identify their needs, ultimately conducted in a systematic manner using L&R protocols. The DSHR will in turn update constantly the new benefits and services at which HHs are accessing. That is why, the preferred HHs to be part of the L&R system tend to be the poorest.

All in all, L&R serves as a key component to further assist HHs, taking advantage of the potential and increasing the impact of the DSHR.

E. RECLASSIFICATION AND DISASTER RESPONSE

The frequency of natural hazards has risen markedly in recent decades. However, in Asia and the Pacific, disasters are four (4) times more likely to affect the people in the region than in Africa, Europe, or North America (Asian Development Bank International Evaluation Department, 2013, p. 1-5). Poor HHs have more difficulty coping in these situations and use negative mechanisms to address immediate consumption needs and as such take a longer time to recover or leave poverty traps. These contexts of poverty and vulnerability require interventions to be implemented swiftly to reach the population in greatest need opportunely.

In response to a disaster (natural, manmade or personal), a DSHR can be used as the main tool to identify and update the information of the most affected HHs (specifically those categorized poorer and/or more vulnerable) and contribute to their speedy recovery. To react immediately and efficiently, the DSHR's data can be utilized as a baseline for emergency recovery aid through the following mechanisms:

1. Additional Round of Data Collection

After a disaster occurs, the data of affected HHs is collected to complement their information in the DSHR. This updated information serves to refer the HHs to a given program for assistance. In turn, the respective program submits information to the DSHR about benefits granted to the respective HH through data sharing.

2. Reclassification

Reclassification is the process through which registered HHs' poverty or welfare levels[iii] within the DSHR are altered without reassessment through field verification. Typically, this ensues as a result of a significant change in HHs' welfare status due to unexpected circumstances or shock. The reclassification process is carried out solely by request - whether **individual** due to a personal disaster such as a house fire, death of main/sole income earner, etc. or based on an **institutional decision** taken regionally or nationally as a result of a manmade or natural disaster.

In the case of an *individual request*, HHs are entitled to request that their situation be re-assessed. The DSHR authorities review the request and approve a temporal reclassification resulting in the HH being placed in another HH category. The unit follows up with their internal protocols to carry out the process, ultimately making the applicant eligible for flagship programs via reclassification. This temporal reclassification is later confirmed or adjusted when a HH assessment through home visit is made, reassessing and updating their information fully. HHs as well as the programs in which they are receiving benefits from, are then notified of the final outcome of their re- assessment.

Institutional decisions for reclassification however, are generally proposed by external entities such as donors or the government itself and used to massively assist HHs affected by a natural or manmade disaster. This consists of HHs being placed in another category or creating new HH categories altogether through changes made in the ranges of cut-off points within the disaster area.

Typically, at the beginning of the recovery period following a natural disaster, governments request that a reclassification be conducted to all HHs in the affected areas. Once a decision has been made, affected HHs in a certain area are temporarily reclassified to be able to receive benefits immediately from social protection agencies oriented only to the poor and vulnerable, but in this occasion to all reclassified HHs. Later, when the Government decides it is appropriate, HHs receiving benefits for a stipulated amount of time, has their information verified through a data collection exercise.

3. Information for Participating Programs or Agencies

During or immediately after the disaster, the DSHR can rapidly supply poverty data on affected HHs to the social programs responding to the disaster, allowing them to more quickly and effectively reach the most vulnerable. In this way, participating programs or agencies can request from the DSHR and vice versa the transfer of information.

Taking everything into account, having updated information readily available from a single source is key.

F. REPORTING

Reporting and analyzing data provided by the SHR for broader policy decision-making, reforms and other strategic planning makes sense when DSHRs are in place. In fact, reporting is fundamental to supporting stakeholders' decisions.

Different tools can be used in order to illustrate valuable information. As such, density maps, graphs, diagrams and tables can be used to show various relevant aspects to policy decision-making and planning, among others including the following:

- Coverage of safety net interventions;
- Geographical concentration of poor HHs;
- Types of cases brought forward per frequency;
- HH classification; and
- Type of information most requested through the data sharing mechanism.

G. RETARGETING

Socioeconomic conditions of a population change with the passing of time. More so, given the multidimensional nature of poverty it is important that a SHR allow for these changes. One such, process is retargeting. Retargeting refers to the process through which HH data is recollected to update the classification of all HHs in the registry. Retargeting is conducted typically every three (3) to seven (7) years through the application of an updated PMT formula (taking into consideration all socioeconomic changes). In some cases, this may require the development of an entirely new design such as a change in the data collection methodology including desk approach, door-to-door approach among others. Nonetheless, once the formula has been updated, the execution of a full-fledged census is carried out in order to re-score HHs and obtain a new classification within the DSHR, if necessary.

IV. OVERALL DATABASE UPDATES THROUGH THE DYNAMIC SINGLE HOUSEHOLD REGISTRY

From the options shown above, it is clear that HHs who tend to be poor and vulnerable will have a greater chance of having their information updated unlike middle class or rich HHs. It is not to say that higher levels or categories will not be updated but has been found to have a lower probability. These higher level HHs' information is updated when a new census of all HHs is carried out.

Be that as it may, the DSHR is oriented to update information of those HHs who have a high likelihood to benefit from one (1) or more SP programs. As such, these programs will be willing to use this information of the DSHR. In the event that this is possible, then full updates via census can be delayed a bit longer, perhaps going more than six (6) years since the information of the poor and more vulnerable HHs is constantly updated.

It may also be possible that an economic crisis occurs and it has been found that HHs who are not benefiting are excluded. In this case, retargeting is a must.

All in all, resources from the government may be saved by having a DSHR in place.

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Notes:

[i] We design the operational processes, develop management information systems, and provide technical assistance in the implementation of the DSHR.

[ii] These variables usually occur when a disaster happens.

[iii] The common classification is Ultra poor, Poor, Near poor and Non-poor whereby sub-categories of the latter may be added

10600 Griffin Road A-103, Cooper City, Florida, USA +1 352 2176235 (USA) +593 2260950 (Ecuador) info@soproen.com

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