

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CASH TRANSFERS IN PROMOTING FOOD SECURITY -THE CASE OF COGHLAN FOUNDATION CASH FOOD TRANSFERS IN BULAWAYO, ZIMBABWE

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ABSTRACT

The research sought to investigate if the cash transfer system which is being used by Coghlan Foundation is promoting food security in terms of access and utilization. This study took the form of a qualitative research design. The qualitative investigations sought to provide in-depth descriptions or understandings of phenomena. The population of the study was 240 Coghlan foundation food beneficiaries. The sample size was 60 beneficiaries. The study utilized stratified convenience sampling approach as there was stratification according to ages. Convenience sampling was also chosen bearing in mind the time and cost of visiting the beneficiaries to administer the data collection tools to the research elements. Results revealed that the cash transfer programme was instrumental in transforming the lives of the beneficiaries for the better. The money managed to increase their food basket and it allowed them to invest some of the proceeds not only in children's education, but in income generating projects as well. In addition, the study has shown that beneficiaries would afford to seek medical attention for household members who would have fallen sick. The study has made some recommendations to the effect that a multi-sectoral approach be adopted whereby the private as well as the government fully participates in the fight against poverty. It was also recommended that the organization considers augmenting cash transfers with in-kind transfers so that the money can be meaningfully used to invest not to consume.

Key Words: Effectiveness, Cash Transfers, Promoting, Food Security

1.0 Introduction

Food insecurity gave birth to food aid which eventually brought the advent of cash transfers as a form of food aid. Food insecurity is not just about insufficient food production, availability, and intake, it is also about the poor quality or nutritional value of the food (Miller,2004). The detrimental situation of women and children is particularly serious, as well as the situation among female teenagers, who receive less food than their male counterparts in the same households (Mupedzisa,1998).

According to FEWS NET, (2014) the mid-2012, national assessments highlighted an increase in levels of food insecurity across Southern Africa. This they reported to have affected countries like Angola, Lesotho, Malawi, and Zimbabwe, due to inadequate agricultural production during the 2011/2012 season and an associated rise in cereal price, (World Bank, 2014) states that by July 2013, more than 10 million people across the region were at risk of food insecurity, according to a report by SADC and the U.N. In 2013, USAID provided more than \$75 million in humanitarian assistance to aid more than 3 million food-insecure people in Southern Africa.

An analysis of the food security situation in Zimbabwe, Angola, Lesotho and Madagascar suggests that food security has been a challenge. FEWS NET(2014) in their current report on Zimbabwe state that resultant high food prices led to localized acute food insecurity, particularly in the southern provinces of Masvingo, Matabeleland North, and Matabeleland South, where vulnerable households depleted their food earlier than normal but had limited resources to access goods available in local markets.

The research has been triggered by the observation that due to food insecurity Food aid has been increasing especially in Africa as a strategy to address the challenge. Due to the strategies in food aid to address food insecurity cash transfers came to being. This then prompted the research in seeing the need to find out if availing cash to people will really solve the food insecurity challenge.

1.1 Problem Statement

According to the global picture on food security nations there is food insecurity across the globe with Africa being highly affected. According to FEWS NET, (2014) the mid-2012 national

assessments highlighted an increase in levels of food insecurity across Southern Africa. Strategies to address the food insecurity challenge came up including the millennium development goals signed up by head of states. The number one goal is to eradicate hunger and extreme poverty. It being the number one goal shows hunger or food insecurity is a developmental concern (Cohen, 2007). However in order to achieve the goal food aid increased. As food aid increased challenges also came up with some intended beneficiaries failing to access the food. This then did not attain what food security is all about as it includes access, utilisation, availability and stability of the supply (Bowling, 2002). There is growing evidence that food aid though still being done has declined due to various factors including high operational costs (O' Connor , 2001). Organizations are fast taking the cash transfer approach as a strategy to solve the shortfall of the physical food distributions, the problem however remains in the unanswered question that will availing cash to people really solve the food insecurity challenge? The research will seek to answer the question is the cash transfer system promoting food security in terms of access and utilization?

2.0 Literature Review

A lot of strategies came up from different nations and organisations as a way of addressing the food security challenge. According to Blank (2003) many countries have finalized new agriculture development strategies based on the African Union's Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Program (CAADP), which was launched in 2003 to boost agricultural productivity on the continent through increased public investment. As of 2011, 26 African countries finalized agriculture strategies and signed CAADP compacts, 15 are already in various stages of implementation, and 10 are newly engaged or have yet to start (CAADP), 2011. Fillipo (2009) notes that these compacts focus primarily on improving agriculture inputs through increasing agriculture production and productivity.

According to Lindert (2005), here are three types of cash transfer programs that have been studied: Conditional cash transfers (CCTs), in which recipients receive cash only if they fulfill various requirements such as rates of school attendance or visits to health centers. There is a subset of CCTs in which the conditions are announced but are not formally monitored, so all participants receive a transfer regardless of compliance with the announced conditions

(Rawlings, 2005). Unconditional cash transfers (UCTs), in which selected participants receive funds without a requirement to meet additional conditions. Business grant programs, in which unconditional in-kind or cash grants are given to micro-enterprises that have no paid employees other than the owners (Patton, 2002).

World Bank, (2007) states that several developing economies have recently introduced conditional cash transfer programs, which provide money to poor families contingent on certain behavior, usually investments in human capital, such as sending children to school or bringing them to health centers. The approach is both an alternative to more traditional social assistance programs and a demand-side complement to the supply of health and education services. Unlike most development initiatives, conditional cash transfer programs have been subject to rigorous evaluations of their effectiveness using experimental or quasi-experimental methods, World Bank, (2007). Cash transfers are direct [transfer payments](#) of money to eligible people. Wolcott (2007) defines cash transfers as the provision of money to individuals or households, either as emergency relief intended to meet their basic needs for food and non-food items, or services, or to buy assets essential for the recovery of their livelihoods.

The cash transfer system is becoming the central strategy of the donor social policy and replacing food aid by organizations such as Goal International and Red Cross. Subsequent case studies and research pieces have further demonstrated the efficacy of cash and voucher programming in a variety of contexts and sectors. As such, between 2007 and 2011 there has been an increase from 2% to 23.1% of the budget share of food assistance projects to cash and a quadrupling of projects with at least a partial element of cash programming (Rank, 2004). Both the European Commission Humanitarian Food Assistance Policy (2010) and EC Humanitarian Wash Policy (2012) support consideration of all transfer modalities. Food aid in general had become expensive than cash in terms of logistics, time and cost however there is need to assess if cash transfers will indeed promote food security (Bowling, 2002).

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Capabilities approach

The capability approach is an economic theory conceived in the 1980s as an approach to [welfare economics](#) according to [Sen, Amartya](#) (1985). In this approach, [Amartya Sen](#) brings together a range of ideas that were excluded from traditional approaches to the economics of welfare (Rodgers, 2000). The core focus of the capability approach is on what individuals are able to do. Sen argued for five components in assessing capability:

1. The importance of real freedoms in the assessment of a person's advantage
2. Individual differences in the ability to transform resources into valuable activities
3. The multi-variate nature of activities giving rise to happiness
4. A balance of materialistic and non-materialistic factors in evaluating human welfare
5. Concern for the distribution of opportunities within society

Capabilities are the alternative combinations of functioning a person is feasibly able to achieve. Formulations of capability have two parts: functionings and opportunity freedom — the substantive freedom to pursue different functioning combinations according to [Alkire, Sabina](#) (2009). Ultimately, capabilities denote a person's opportunity and ability to generate valuable outcomes, taking into account relevant personal characteristics and external factors. In line with this theory beneficiaries will be able to buy their own food through cash transferred to them which is a freedom according to Sen Amartya's theory (Stebbins, 2001).

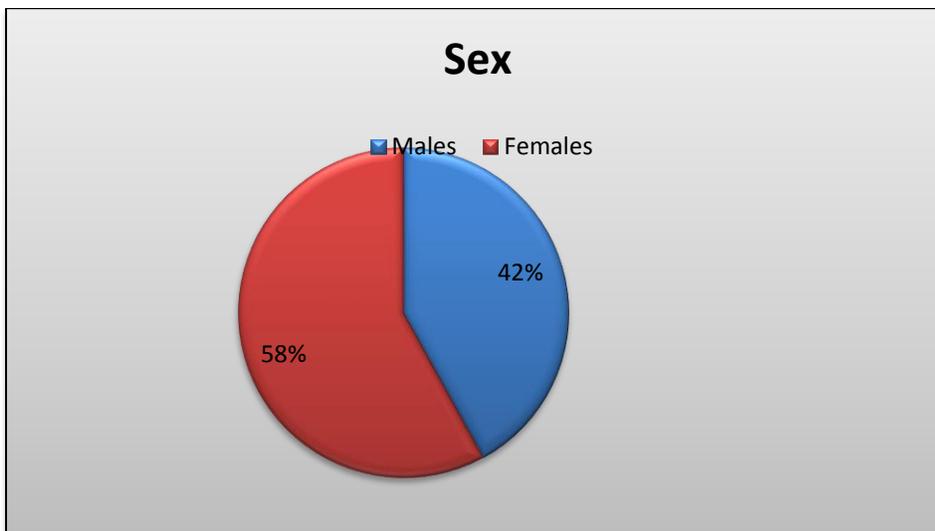
3.0 Methodology

This study took the form of a qualitative research design. Qualitative investigations sought to provide in-depth descriptions or understandings of phenomena. The population for the study will be the 240 Coghlan foundation food beneficiaries. The sample size was 60 beneficiaries. The study utilized stratified convenience sampling approach as there was stratification according to ages. Convenience sampling was chosen bearing in mind the time and cost of visiting the beneficiaries to administer the data collection tools to the research elements. The research mainly made use of in-depth face-to-face interviews with the subjects using semi-structured

interview guide which was complemented by getting information from key informants who are the guardians of the beneficiaries. Focus group discussions (FGDs) were also conducted with the beneficiaries and also with their guardians for the purposes of triangulation. The sample for this study were drawn from schools in the peri-urban Khami and Mbizo districts the schools are Red bank primary and Secondary, Robert Sinyoka primary, St Peters primary, Sizalendaba secondary, Hope Fountain primary, Kensington primary, Sobukazi secondary and Riverside primary. These participants were granted the autonomy to give informed consent and to participate voluntarily in the study without any repercussions in the event of withdrawal.

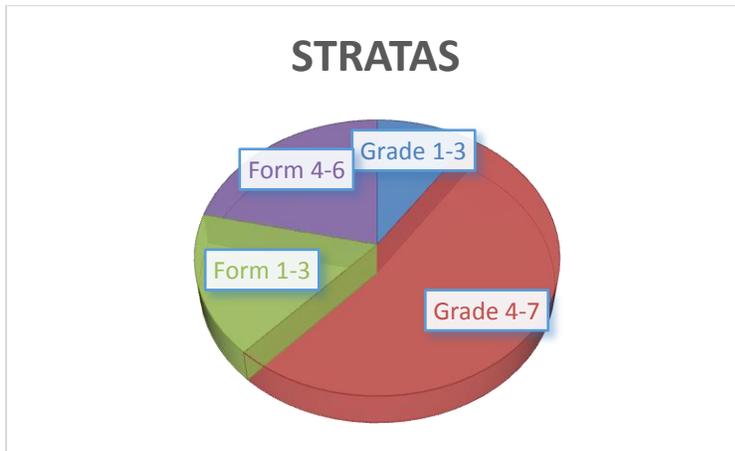
4.0 Findings

PROFILE OF THE SAMPLE



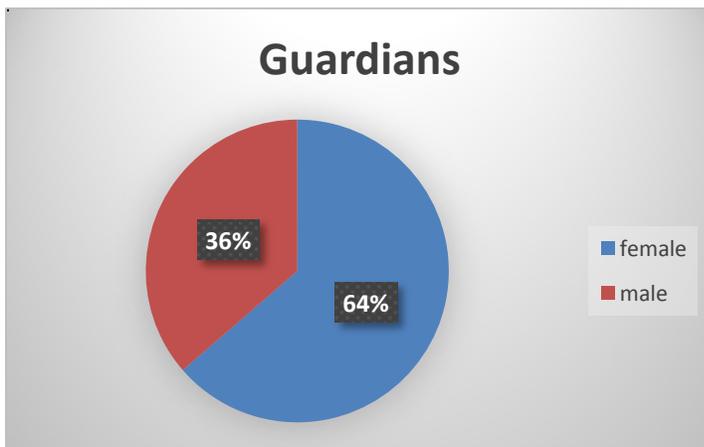
The pie chart above shows that the female beneficiaries who responded to the questionnaire constituted the modal group from the respondents having 58% whilst 42% of the respondents were male. The female beneficiaries constituted the modal group since generally in the population they make the majority in the population.

4.1 Respondents in stratas



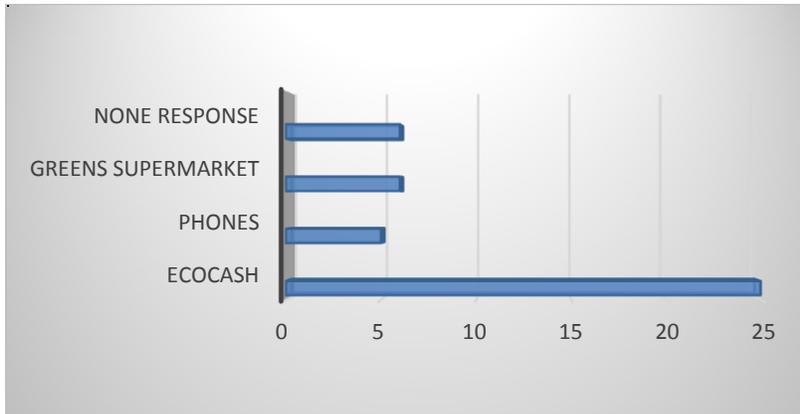
The researchers put respondents in stratas according to their levels in school .The majority of the respondents are in grade 4-7 mainly because it was noted that Coghlan Foundation food beneficiaries comprise mostly of primary students. The second category with a number of beneficiaries is the form 1-3 category and lastly the grade1-3 and the form 4-6.

4.2 Composition of guardian respondents by sex



According to the chart above 64% of the respondents amongst guardians were females and 36% males. This is an indication of the food security situation which mostly affects women and children. Considering that Coghlan Foundation beneficiaries are orphans the possibility here is that the bread winner is the one that passed away. This makes this group legible to assist in giving information on how cash transfers can promote food security.

4.3 Fig 2, Responses to question 1 on how food is accessed under the Coghlan Foundation food program.



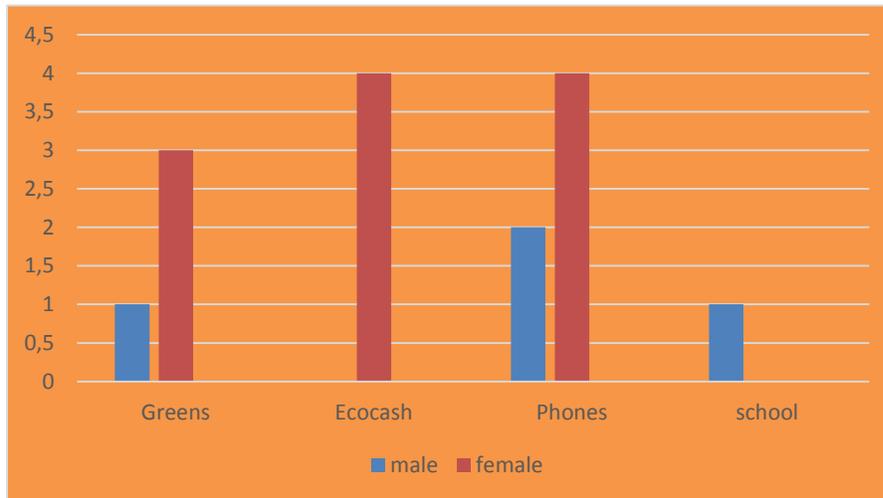
On the above graph 59% of the respondents knew that they receive their food assistant through Ecocash which is cash transfer system.11.9% indicated that they get their assistance through phones this indicates that somehow they are aware that they do not get food physically but receive cash through the phone. Fourteen percent indicated that they get their food through greens supermarket and the other 14% did not respond to the question.

4.4 Responses from the focus group discussions done with guardians.

4.4.1 Question on how Capernaum gives food.

The guardians that attended the focus group discussion were six. On the question of how Coghlan Foundation assists them with food some indicated through Ecocash, others said from greens. There was an understanding of the cash transfer being the means of their children getting food. There were some however who said they received their food from the schools where their children learn. Generally the respondents knew about the cash transfer system as a means of them receiving food on behalf of the beneficiaries.

Fig 6: How food from Capernaum is accessed



The chart above indicates that females seem to be so aware of how Coghlan Foundation is giving food. This could be because of the role of women in food security which makes them to be active players.

4.4.2 Responses to the question if it is worthwhile to give cash for food.

The general view of most guardians was that cash should not be availed but rather food. The guardians highlighted that the Ecocash system that Capernaum was using was a challenge to some of them as they were not on Ecocash and some did not have phones. Quoting one of the guardians said, “It is difficult to get a phone and register on this Ecocash they are using why can’t we get food like we used to.....” They also indicated that due to the economic hardships most of them face they are likely to divert the funds. Precisely the guardians were saying if assistance of food is being given let the donor organizations give food and not put guardians into temptation with cash. This clearly shows given the choice the guardians would prefer getting food than cash.

4.4.3 Response to the question on if they bought preferred food with the money they got.

The issue of preferences promote food utilization will eventually promote food security. This question was asked of the guardians for the researcher to seek clarity if the food received was utilized and was preferred. All guardians indicated that Coghlan Foundation had a food basket that they were supposed to abide by. They also highlighted that they felt its donation so they have no choice of getting what they want. Though they said they appreciated the food they got as they bought it locally and it was not these GMOs that they were hearing of. In terms of preferences the responses showed that the guardians needed extra luxuries like meat and flour. Upon assessing this the researcher concluded that the current basket was essential as it comprised of beans, cooking oil, kapenta, mealie meal, salt, sugar and honey. This would be termed an ideal food basket thus in this case even though the beneficiaries have other preferences but in terms of addressing food security the food basket is ideal.

4.4.5 Response to the advantages and challenges of the cash transfer system

The guardians were concerned about the challenge of misusing funds as well as diversion of the food by some selfish guardians .They however thought the cash transfer system was a convenient system which promoted local shops as they will buy locally. The guardians also appreciated that the cash transfer system left them knowledgeable on technology as they had to do Ecocash and learn how to use mobile money. However the phase one Capernaum system was a disadvantage especially to the guardians in Red bank as they said network was a challenge. Below are some of the challenges as noted by the guardians:

- About 54% of the guardians were not familiar with eco cash so they had challenges in transacting
- The message of transaction was misleading as the money was credited as a salary which led to some guardians withdrawing the money
- Some funds delayed to reflect in guardians' phones
- The eco cash system was sometimes down delaying transactions.

The guardians only highlighted their challenges but did not give any recommendation in terms of improving the Coghlan Foundation system.

4.4.6 Response on any changes noticed on children and families after getting the food

The guardians indicated that on their part they appreciated the system in that they saw a significant change as they are now able to transact with eco cash thus they were left empowered. They also indicated that though the food is not enough the children were able to go school having eaten something .Some guardians clearly stated that the food gave them a second meal in day that they did not have before. Joy in the families was reported of by some guardians as they said lack of food brought stress in the families but the coming in of the cash through Capernaum gave them joy of shopping and bringing food home.

4.5.0 Responses from interview guide for Coghlan Foundation officers

4.5.1 The nature of Coghlan Foundation cash transfer system

The interviewees revealed that the organization first introduced a project where cash was transferred to the guardians and they then go to a given supermarket to purchase the food. This was initiated in 2013 according to the response of the officers. They said the move to cash transfer was to reduce logistics costs involved with physical distribution as well as save on time taken to distribute the food. The second phase which is the currently running program involves cash being transferred to a supermarket and the guardian together with the child go and get their food from the supermarket. Both scenarios are conditional transfers as revealed by the interview.

4.5.2 How cash transfers will solve the food security challenge according to Capernaum officers.

In the interview the officers revealed that they think cash transfers will ensure food is available to the beneficiaries as they will access it from their local shops. They also indicated that cash transfers promote access as they will involve both the guardian and the child. Food security is all about access, utilization and availability which they say are all promoted through cash transfers. The officers said in the case of children who were getting one meal per day, a second meal was availed through the transfers thus reducing hunger. They also stated that as long as conditions are attached to the cash like in the case of their organization where one is told to get then sure cash transfers will be contributing towards food security.

4.5.3 Advantages and challenges of cash transfers

Respondents during the interview noted that their first phase of the cash transfers gave them a challenge in that they had to first assist guardians to register on eco cash a platform they would use to distribute the cash. They highlighted that network challenges also made it difficult for some guardians to access their cash. The system transferred the money as a salary as the officers indicated and this resulted in guardians using the money as there was nothing to show the cash was from Coghlan Foundation. According to the officers their second phase is a convenient one as cash is transferred to a supermarkets and guardians together with the child go and buy food from the given food basket. However generally they indicated the system is convenient.

4.6 Responses from the teachers

4.6.1 Response on how many children in schools are benefiting from the food program

The participants pointed out that most of them did not have 10 beneficiaries the numbers ranged from 3-5 but not more than 10. The need to check on the numbers was to try and assess the impact of the program. In this case very few are benefiting which might affect the impact of the program in promoting food security.

4.6.2 Is it worthwhile to provide cash for food?

The response to this question by the teachers was balanced. Some said it was not worthwhile and others said it was. Those that were in favor of cash indicated that it was cheap as it reduced costs on logistics as well as its support on local markets. They also indicated that there was empowerment as children and their guardians would be empowered one through technology and two through them being able to buy on their own. The other respondents that were against the availing of cash were mainly worried about funds being diverted.

4.6.2 Does the cash transfer system address food security?

The respondents to this question agreed that to some extent yes the cash transfer system addresses food security. This they suggested that cash transfers promoted beneficiaries to get food which makes them to at least get a meal per day which addresses the hunger situation in

their homes. Some indicated that cash transfers made food accessible and available which are aspects of food security.

4.6.3 Role of the teacher in the cash transfer system.

In a bid to ensure that children or the intended beneficiaries get their food the teachers indicated that their role is to ensure that food has been given to the intended beneficiary. In the case of Coghlan Foundation the teachers assisted the guardians to register for eco cash and they also mobilize guardian and children to go and get their food.

4.6.4 Advantages and challenges of cash transfers

Respondents noted that cash transfers were good and a fast way for beneficiaries getting food unlike physical distributions. One of the teachers noted that the cash transfer system promoted local markets as the food was then bought locally. On the challenges they all seemed to agree in that the issue of abuse of cash was a concern with cash transfers. These are the responses as noted by teachers in the various schools benefiting from the Coghlan Foundation food program.

4.6.5 How to improve the Coghlan Foundation cash transfer system.

Respondents noted that for the system to improve there was more monitoring needed to ensure the intended beneficiary is reached. They also recommended the current system where cash is sent to the supermarket not direct to the guardian.

4.7. Nature of Coghlan Foundation cash transfer approach

4.7.1 Response of Coghlan Foundation staff, teachers and guardians

According to the response from the Coghlan Foundation staff the cash transfer approach being implemented by Capernaum is conditional. It is conditional in the sense that beneficiaries are told what to buy with the cash sent to them. The guardians also agreed to this form of approach as they indicated in the discussion that they buy food as per Coghlan Foundation's instruction. During the research it became clear that the organization first tried the approach where cash was sent to the guardians directly which was later changed as the officers indicated. The current approach as stated by the interviewees involves cash being sent to a selected supermarket in

Bulawayo, guardians are then informed of the transfer and they go and pick their groceries according to a specified food basket. This approach seems to be addressing the issues of guardians diverting the money. Thus in terms of the cash being diverted within the Capernaum approach that is highly unlikely as none of the beneficiaries handles the cash directly.

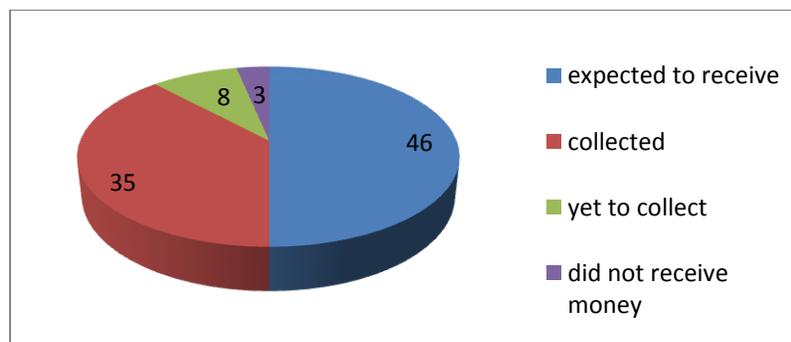
The picture below shows guardians collecting food from one of the supermarkets in Bulawayo



Picture from Coghlan Foundation food distribution archives 2013

Below is a table and chart adopted from Coghlan Foundation cash transfer pilot report document 2013

Number expected to receive	Collected	Yet to collect	Did not receive money
46	35	8	3



According to Capernaum these are statistics from the first phase of their cash transfer where they gave money directly to guardians, as is clearly seen in the graph above, 76% of the intended beneficiaries collected their food. This according to the Capernaum officer makes it a convenient and efficient approach though there is a percentage that could not access the fund due to technological challenges. This according to the officers prompted the move to the current approach where the supermarket receives cash.

4.7.2 Factors affecting the use of cash availed for food

The other objective of this research was to establish the factors affecting the use of money which would have been availed for food. This question was posed to the beneficiaries and to their guardians and various factors came up. The guardians indicated the following as some of the factors:

- Economic hardships in the country (guardians have no money so the cash received will be used for other pressing issues like Zesa bills and water bills.)
- Misinformation or lack of communication on purpose of the money before it is received.
- Other ancillary needs for the beneficiary like stationary, medication, uniforms etc.
- Failing to use technology (guardians seeking help from people who will instead use the money.

The children also seemed to be in agreement to the factors that affect the use of cash. This is evidenced by their indication that at some point the cash they receive was used for something else not food, some of them indicated the money had to be used for their school staff or medication of a siblings .The findings of this research are therefore that due to other social

challenges guardians of the children are forced to weigh between food and the challenges thus they end up diverting the cash.

5.0 Conclusion

The study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of cash transfers which are administered by Mercy Corps. The study has shown that the programme is beneficial to a greater extent in as far as social and economic development is concerned. The effectiveness of the programme can be traced from the way beneficiaries are selected into the programme. Beneficiaries are selected consultatively. Community leaders are involved in the vetting and identification process, this increasing the chances of targeting the correct households and minimizing chances of corruption. Transparency is enhanced when a number of individuals are involved in the process. The cash is deposited into a bank which is convenient way of sending and receiving money in this day and age. The programme has helped beneficiaries embark on income generating activities as well as maintaining these projects. Respondents have argued that cash transfers have allowed them to access some economic benefits they have not been enjoying before they enrolled into the programme. It also emerged from the study that beneficiaries of the programme have benefited socially in the sense that they are now more accepted as equal social partners, unlike before where they would be labelled as social outcasts due to poverty. It was shown that the ability to meet life's basic requirements has enabled them to be viewed from a different perspective by the society unlike before.

Recommendations

The study has revealed that although the cash transfer programme has managed to transform the social and economic life of beneficiaries. More needs to be done to make sure more is achieved. There is need for the government as well as the private sector to increase its commitment to the noble cause of poverty alleviation in communities. More will be achieved if the fight against poverty is to be tackled from a variety of angles. Poverty should be viewed as a social problem and a threat to the country, thus attracting more players to it. The amount issued is inadequate and needs to be supplemented by other organizations' input as well. It is also recommended that cash transfers be augmented with kind transfers. This will allow in kind transfers to be used mainly for consumption while cash transfers will be used to enhance development in the form of human capital investment as well as economic investment.

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