

Gender Tip Sheet for UNICEF's Cash Transfer Programme in the Horn of Africa Crisis¹

EMOPS/HPS, 27 July, 2011

Overview

The impact of drought and famine are not neutral, but are influenced by the distinct needs, vulnerability and capacities of women, men, boys and girls to respond. As with all humanitarian response activities, Cash Transfer Programmes (CTPs) are not neutral and can increase, reinforce, or reduce existing inequalities.

CTPs are increasingly seen as a more flexible, cost effective way to address food insecurity, benefit local markets, and potentially empower marginalized groups including women. More and more agencies are targeting CTPs to women in households to promote responsible use. The assumption is that women are traditionally responsible for children's welfare (i.e. school and nutrition) and for domestic food consumption, and are thus more reliable in using resources to increase household welfare. Yet, the impact of targeting women for CTPs is not clear in terms of whether or not it increases food security, whether or not it can be used to empower women through increased roles in household decision-making and allocation of income transfers, or reinforce inequalities, and whether or not it challenges, or serves to reinforce traditional gender roles and related inequalities.

The following note outlines gender-related lessons learned from past CTPs and provides tips on key gender considerations for UNICEF staff to take into account when designing and implementing CTPs in the context of the current drought and famine response.

Lessons Learned from past CTPs.

A recent report on CT and Gender Dynamics by Oxfam and Concern (2011) noted that the impact of CT programmes targeting women depended very much on the setting, as power relations and gender roles within households and the community are culturally and geographically specific.

Overall, **positive benefits** of CTPs targeting women included:

- CTPs were welcomed by men and women as a means to support households in times of crisis;
- The experience of receiving cash was an important social and individual experience for women;
- CTPs increased intra-household discussion on how to spend the money given, in contrast to traditional male-dominated decision making;
- CTPs gave breathing room to both women and men by easing pressure to earn money to feed the family;
- In Kenya, the use of transactional sex for food by women and girls reportedly declined.

Overall, **negative impacts** of CTPs included:

- Community relations did not necessarily improve, and in some cases worsened as a result of the programmes (i.e. no sense of community participation, ownership or real understanding of the CTP which led to divisions and jealousy within the community and a sense of community alienation and disempowerment; eroded community sharing practices, which are traditional and critical safety nets in communities (i.e. while women would traditionally share food handouts, they would not share cash));

¹ The content for this note was drawn primarily from *Walking the Talk: Cash Transfers and Gender Dynamics*, prepared by Carol Brady, commissioned by Concern Worldwide and Oxfam GB, 12 May, 2011; <http://www.oxfam.org.uk/resources/policy/gender/walking-the-talk-cash-transfers-gender.html>, with supplementary information drawn from the IASC Gender Handbook and EMOPS' experience working on gender equality in humanitarian action.

- CTPs also tended to reinforce rather than challenge women’s traditional household and social roles (i.e. women and girls expected to carry the burden of food provision and to manage CT payments responsibly, often in face of multiple pressures and claims);
- Male roles were imbued with negative stereotypes (i.e. irresponsible), and at times CTPs , marginalised men (i.e. exacerbating domestic violence when it already existed);
- CTPs targeting women also rarely changed gendered patterns of decision making and food distribution within the household (i.e. men may take money once received by women; i.e. women and children received less food than male household heads – this was exacerbated in polygamous households or where daughters in law lived in paternal home, or women receiving less food because of their status);

Many of these negative impacts were due to **challenges in the programme design**. For example:

- A gender analysis was not conducted prior to CTP design/implementation to understand how money is divided, controlled, and used within households;
- The impact of programmes was not analysed, followed through or measured;
- CTP design generally lacked clarity about dynamics within shared housing and polygamous households;
- Targeting criteria was not informed by a gender analysis, and terminology of target groups was not always clear (i.e. “head of household”);
- Cash/voucher distribution mechanisms did not take into consideration issues of location and timing which have an impact on who has access;
- Communication with the community was not clear, for instance, it was never made clear why women were the main beneficiaries of CTPs and what the expectations were associated with this targeting;
- Complaints mechanisms were not in place, or when they existed, were only staffed by men so women did not feel comfortable reporting concerns.

Recommendations:

Given the lessons summarized above, and in light of UNICEF’s upcoming CTP programme to be implemented in response to drought and famine in the Horn of Africa, staff should take the following issues into consideration when designing and implementing the response²:

- I. Ensure the the design of the Cash Transfer Programme is **informed by a participatory gender and social analysis**.³ Given the short time frame for response and the challenge of humanitarian access characterizing the crisis in Somalia, staff might consider drawing much data for this analysis from pre-existing studies and reports on Somalia or from analysis carried out by NGOs currently implementing CTPs. Ideally this can be verified through (remote) consultations with different members of the community, including holding separate consultations women and men. The gender and social analysis should:
 - be sensitive to local coping strategies and understand local priorities, as CTPs are unlikely to be successful when the community does not agree with criteria or processes for beneficiary selection. **If the community perceive targeting to be unfair, considerable damage can be done to community dynamics.**

² The majority of these recommendations are drawn from the Concern/Oxfam report (May 2011) with supplementary information from UNICEF.

³ This should include: analysis of whether and why women are especially vulnerable to poverty; understanding of women’s role in relation to control over, decision making about, and access to food and cash; analysis of differences between male and female headed households; addressing polygamy including relationship between wives; understanding of the way money is divided, controlled and used within households.

- **At minimum**, programmers need to have an **understanding of who is benefitting and managing resources**, and an **assurance that women’s social roles and relations are not damaged by the interventions**.
 - Ask questions about who controls decision making, cash and how community decisions are reached.
 - **Ensure the participation of women, men, boys and girls in the assessment and ensure there are both males and females on assessment teams**. Consultative participatory approaches, will help promote legitimacy for the initiative among the community including among men, and if done properly, can avoid alienation which can have unintended consequences. Given limited humanitarian access to Somalia, staff might consider conducting remote consultations through local implementing partners.
- II. Ensure that **targeting criteria** are context specific and that terminology such as ‘single women’ ‘married women’, ‘head of household’, ‘polygamous families’ is clearly defined. Ensure that targeting effectively address distinct needs of shared households and polygamous households.
- III. **Communication with different members of the community** about procedures should be clear, and related accountability explained. For example, explain what the criteria for targeting is and why, and what the expectations are associated with this targeting. Consulting with the community in developing the criteria can help ensure cultural and social relevance. Mediums of communication should be tailored to different audiences (i.e. including illiterate audiences, or those who may have limited mobility due to security, cultural, social or other factors).
- IV. Ensure that **distribution mechanisms take gender considerations into account** – for instance, if considering using mobile phone technology for distribution, ensure that women and men have equal access to that technology. Ensure that distribution points take into consideration location, time and safety issues, to ensure ease of access and minimize overburdening of beneficiaries.
- V. Establish **accountability mechanisms, including complaints procedures**. Ensure that both women and men staff the complaints section, so that different members of community feel comfortable reporting.
- VI. Set both **qualitative as well as quantitative indicators and systemically monitor** them. Given challenges in humanitarian access, staff may have to be creative about remote monitoring through, for example local implementing partners. Regardless of who carries out monitoring, it should ideally include **routine consultations with women and men** (together and separately) to find out how CTP has benefited the household, what has changed for women and men, what are spending and consumption patterns, how have household relations improved or deteriorated, how existing coping strategies and household and community relations were strengthened, and whether negative behaviours arose.