



BRIEF



Funded by the
European Union



ACTION
CONTRE
LA FAIM



CARE

Are there gendered impacts to multi-purpose cash transfers intended to build resilience?

Early Learning from “Addressing the Food Crisis in Yemen: Amran and Abyan Governorates”¹

RESPONSE

STARTING IN 2017 CARE YEMEN, in partnership with Action Contre la Faim (ACF), implemented a European Union (EU) consortium-funded resilience program in Abyan and Amran governorates. The project used a “Cash Plus” approach, combining ten monthly multi-purpose cash (MPC) transfers with the rehabilitation of vital community assets and livelihoods skills support. The program focused on previously underserved areas to enhance food and nutrition security, promote livelihood recovery and resilience of vulnerable households, and stimulate local markets. Both interventions were deliberately integrated to enhance resilience building at the household and community levels. The program reached 74,656 beneficiaries (36,871 male

37785 female). This includes 12,871 individuals (6,424 male, 6447 female, 2,010 households) supported with multipurpose cash assistance.

The EU consortium commissioned a study to assess the impact of the project on the resilience of households targeted by the program using CARE’s Resilience Framework. The framework explains resilience as “strengthening poor households’ capacities to deal with shocks and stresses, manage risks, and transform their lives for the better in response to hazards and opportunities.”² It looks across four areas of change — absorptive, anticipatory, adaptive, and transformative.

Participating households demonstrated significant improvement over all of these measures—on average a 67% positive change in Coping Strategy Index³ (CSI) scores across the two governorates. The study sought to look deeper into the experiences of female-headed households, their challenges with increasing their resilience, and barriers they face that male-headed households do not.



1 This an excerpt from the full report “The Gendered Dimension of Multi-Purpose Cash Supporting Disaster Resilience”. For complete findings, please see the full report by ACFAR Consulting. The project was implemented through support from CARE Nederland.

2 CARE (2016). “Increasing Resilience”

3 See the guidance on the [CSI methodology](#).

In Amran governorate, Livelihoods Coping Strategy Index (LCSI) scores were initially very high and no international support service was available. The study found a 62% change for male-headed households and an 84% change for female-headed households. Based on KIIs, there were also significant improvements in women's ability to maintain and even grow their livelihood options after participation in the program in Amran.

WHAT WERE THE GENDERED FINDINGS ACROSS THE FRAMEWORK?

ABSORPTIVE: There was not a significant difference in experiences for female- and male-headed households.

ANTICIPATORY: No gendered findings were noted.

ADAPTIVE: When asked “who made the decision on how to spend the cash transfer?” the answers skewed to the gender of the respondent—80% of female respondents claimed that they made the decision and 91% of male respondents did the same. This pattern seems to indicate that targeting female-headed households and focusing on their perspective could empower them to make household economic decisions. It also suggests that both asking and working with male-headed households overwhelmingly supports their self-perception as household decision-makers.

Women were not as likely as men to engage in non-home-based labor to diversify their income stream. They were just as likely as men, and sometimes more likely, to save or invest in household productive assets. Both men and women were equally likely to buy livestock during the six months of the study. Gender did not seem to be a barrier to resilience nor improvement in CSI or livelihood index scoring; the percentage differences between men and women were not significant.

TRANSFORMATIVE: The market actors who benefited were predominantly male-run enterprises.

OTHER GENDERED FINDINGS

GENDER-SPECIFIC CHALLENGES TO SECURITY: Out of all women surveyed in the Adapted-Self-Reliance Index (SRI)⁴, only 9 (6%) reported any feelings of insecurity that would interfere with their daily lives. Within the Post Distribution Monitoring, minimal security issues were reported over the course of the ten month MPCs. While there is no way to show direct causality, this does suggest that the design of the project considered and mitigated security concerns that may have existed.

GENDER-SPECIFIC CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS IN BUILDING RESILIENCE: There was no baseline gender assessment, which prevented comparison during the study. In the study, the researchers sought to review the topic through key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) and analyzed the experiences of male- and female-headed households in the project. Based on this data, no significant gender differences in barriers to building resilience were identified. Where there were disparities, there was not a clear causal link to gender. For example, there were significantly higher reports of improvement from households in Abyan governorate compared to Amran governorate, but these were not gender-specific; it is more likely that this discrepancy was related to Amran's isolation and previous lack of support from any agency.

Cultural norms – such as women's limited freedom of movement, perceptions of more significant security risks when traveling alone, and pressures to stay within their traditional areas of activity when earning income – did not shift significantly as a result of the project. Beyond the focus on including female-headed households, which was framed as a vulnerability criterion not as a way to support empowerment, and including women's perspectives in the community project selection processes, there were no specific investments or project activities on shifting gendered norms. As a result, it is not unusual to see these areas unaffected.⁵

ARE THERE VARIATIONS BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN, WOMEN WHO ARE PART OF A MALE-HEADED HOUSEHOLD, AND WOMEN WHO ARE PART OF FEMALE-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS?: Measuring resilience can be very subjective and perception-based. However, the findings of this study indicate that there was not a significant difference between male- and female-headed households' experiences. Observed variations seem instead to be based in cultural norms, such as women not engaging in commercial farming and, when working, focusing

4 SRI Tool Information Sheet available on request

5 Similar results were found in a recent study on gender and cash: **The potential of cash-based interventions to promote gender equality and women's empowerment: A multi-country study, WFP, February 2019.**

on home-based or localized income activities. These patterns did not shift significantly over the course of the project.

There were isolated incidences where women, due to the crisis state of the family, took on tasks that were not within their normative gender roles. For instance, some women expanded their businesses to become the primary household earners, worked in the fields as laborers, or took on other non-traditional tasks. While the project did work to support women in new roles, the project cannot be viewed as the primary driver of the adoption of these new roles nor did all women and men see these as positive developments. In fact, in some cases these new roles were seen as negative coping strategies to be abandoned when the family had more resources, especially women traveling to engage in commercial farm labor.

DID THE MPC SUPPORT FLEXIBILITY?: The targeting of female-headed households for MPC assistance did support their resilience. Female heads of households reported significant decision-making power over the use of the money in the household.

The participation in and use of community projects did not seem to be gender dependent; there was no difference in the way women or men reported their experience, access to, or use of community resilience projects. In KIIs with staff, the inclusive process to select the community resilience projects were often cited as one of the most positive impacts on the communities, allowing male and female voices to be heard during the critical reflection on prioritizing projects that would have short- to medium-term impact on people's recovery. It is worth noting that neither men nor women reported significant effects from or use of many of the infrastructure projects when they talked about how they dealt with crises and what supports mattered to them.

“What did I do when things went wrong? I had the cash grant, so I saved money and repaid some of my debt. I also bought cattle and a donkey to carry water to the house and agriculture tools, did some beekeeping and invested in two goats, 30 kilos of white corn and around 30,000 YER in the VSLA [Village Savings and Loan Association]. However, now that the assistance has stopped, I have started to sell the assets and access my savings for Ramadan. If it did not stop, I would not have to do that and could keep moving forward.”

- FEMALE HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD, AMRAN

DOES SUSTAINED MPC ASSISTANCE INFLUENCE BENEFICIARIES' EXPENDITURE BEHAVIOR (CAPACITY FOR PLANNING AND INVESTING) OR A HANDOUT MENTALITY?: When asked if family members were taking action to improve their fate and circumstances, over 84% of respondents answered in the affirmative. However, female-headed households were 20% less likely to say adults were actively working hard to improve their household situation.

This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of CARE International and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.

CARE YEMEN

Hadda Area, off Iran Street
Sana'a, Yemen
T) +967 1433464/5
F) +967 1433463
YEM.Info@care.org

CARE NEDERLANDS

Parkstraat 19
2514 JD The Hague
T) +31 (0)70-310 50 55
care@carenederland.org

CARE USA

151 Ellis Street, NE
Atlanta, GA, 30303
T) +1 (404) 681-2552
info@care.org

