OVERVIEW

The impact of drought and famine are influenced by the distinct needs and vulnerability of women, men, boys and girls and their capacities 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 a flexible, cost-effective way to address food insecurity, benefit local markets and potentially empower marginalised groups. 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. nutrition and school) and for domestic food consumption and are therefore more reliable in using resources to increase household welfare. Yet, it is not clear if targeting women for CTPs does increases food security; if it empowers women through increased roles in household decision-making and allocation of income transfers or reinforces inequalities; and if 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 some tips on key gender considerations for humanitarian staff to take into account when designing and implementing CTPs in the context of drought and famine response.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM PAST CTPS

A 2011 report on cash transfers and Gender Dynamics by Oxfam and Concern noted that the impact of CTPs 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:

- The experience of receiving cash was and 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 were welcomed by men and women as a means to support households in times of crises;
- In Kenya, the use by women and girls of transactional sex for food 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. For instance, there was no sense of community participation, ownership or real understanding of the CTP, which led to divisions and jealousy within the community; they eroded traditional and critical community sharing practices in communities (i.e. while women would traditionally share food handouts, they would not share cash);
- 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 where it already existed);
- CTPs targeting women rarely changed gendered patterns of decision-making and food distribution with 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 and polygamous households;

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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.
• Targeting criteria was not informed by a gender analysis and terminology of target groups was not always clear (i.e. “head of household”);
• 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 summarised above, staff planning CTPs in crisis contexts should take the following issues into consideration when designing and implementing the response:

I. Ensure the design of the CTP is informed by a participatory gender and social analysis. Given the short timeframe for response and the challenge of humanitarian access characterising crises, staff might consider drawing much data for this analysis from pre-existing studies and reports or from analysis carried out by NGOs currently implementing CTPs. Ideally, this can be verified through separate consultations with women and men. The analysis should:
   o 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.
   o understand who is benefitting and managing resources
   o obtain community assurance that women’s social roles and relations are not damaged by the interventions.
   o ask questions about who controls cash and how community decisions are reached.
   o 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.

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. 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, ensure that distribution points take into consideration location, time and safety issues, to ensure ease of access and minimise overburdening 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 and quantitative indicators and systemically monitor them. Monitoring should include routine consultations with women and men (together and separately) to find out how the 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.

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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.