



Guidance Note on transfer for Cooking Fuel (Cash Voucher Assistance) - October 2020

Background

Various reports consistently indicated that lack of cooking fuel for households had not only made food preparation hence utilization more difficult, but also posed risks for the households' members especially the girls and women in accessing fuel. Some beneficiaries reported selling part of the food and non-food items in order to access fuel for cooking. Findings from Food Security and Protection assessments indicated that household members especially women and girls often travel long distances to find enough firewood to cook for their families, which exposes them to the risk of physical and sexual violence.

Following the April EFSA 2019 data which confirmed that the median expenditure on fuel/firewood was around NGN 2,000. A recommendation was made by the Food Basket Harmonization Taskforce of the Food Security Sector that an equivalent of 2,000 Naira cooking fuel on a monthly basis be added to the food basket transfer by the Food Assistance Partners operating in the North East of Nigeria. This was validated by the Food Security Partners at the Abuja level Food Security Sector Meeting on May 14, 2020.

Objective of the Assessment

To assess **the most efficient, effective and safe way of transferring the 2,000 Naira worth of energy to the respective households.** This includes the transfer of energy to households already receiving food assistance Cash and Voucher modalities. (For in-kind modality to be followed up later)

Specific Objectives of the assessment

1. How do households currently access fuel for cooking?
2. What are the challenges in accessing energy above?
3. How best can the 2,000 Naira be transferred for the respective food transfer modality?

Methodology

Consultations were done through 2 FGDs (Male and Female) of community groups in Damboa and with 2 groups of vendors in MMC and Jere. Consultations were also held with 12 Partner Staff and government officials.

The discussions took into consideration the need to conserve the environment and compliance with the policies regarding cash transfers, especially with the context in the Northeastern Nigeria.

The discussions were held only with beneficiaries receiving food assistance through Cash Voucher Assistance. This was designed to link the food assistance and energy transfer modalities. Separate discussions will be made with stakeholders taking part through in-kind transfers.

Findings from the assessment

Majority (81%) use firewood while 19% use charcoal as the main sources of fuel. Some of the firewood users must buy it while others go to the bush to collect it (firewood). For those who buy the fire, they mentioned that in times when the firewood is scarce in the markets, they also go to the bush to collect.

The households that use charcoal mentioned that it is purchased. The main challenge purchasing firewood as reported by the FGD respondents is the lack of finances, whereas for those who collect firewood in the bushes, the main challenge is the insecurity in bushes posed by various reasons including Armed Groups. According to the female respondents, cooking fuel has become scarce nearby the homesteads. Therefore, one must go “deep” in the bush to collect firewood. Additionally, firewood becomes more difficult to find during certain seasons. There are days when firewood is unavailable even though some households may have money to buy it.

In the absence of the main sources of fuel in firewood and charcoal, the male respondents mentioned that they use kerosene and cow dung. The male respondents also mentioned that if electricity would be restored in future, it would be an option. On the other hand, the female respondents mentioned that in event of absence of the main source of fuel above, they use cow dung, green husks of maize, old clothing, waste rubber, empty boxes of merchandise such as biscuits, match boxes etc.

In Summary, beneficiaries mentioned that they would want cooking fuel (specifically mentioning firewood) to be added to the food basket item list for redemption so that they can redeem from the vendors. However, the discussion with vendors revealed that they (vendors) do not have the capacity to supply cooking fuel as part of the food items list, mainly due to the stringent environment policies which limit the cutting of trees in order to protect the environment. Additionally, the transportation of firewood is very difficult given that there are stringent security checks to ensure that Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs) do not use the opportunity to “sneak in” explosives. However, the vendors would rather be available provide two options to beneficiaries.

- 1) Provide a cash of 2,000 Naira to beneficiaries to purchase their own cooking fuel
- 2) Provide additional food commodities worth 2,000 Naira to compensate households for the costs spent on cooking fuel.

Going forward

Therefore, based on the analysis of the contextual challenges by Food Assistance Task Force of the Food Security Sector, the Task Force agreed on and recommend the following:

1. The 2,000 Naira be added to the Monthly Transfer Value for Food Assistance through Cash Voucher Assistance.
2. The vendors will provide two options to beneficiaries.
 - a) Provide a cash of 2,000 Naira to beneficiaries to purchase their own cooking fuel
 - b) Provide additional food commodities worth 2,000 Naira to compensate households for the costs spent on cooking fuel.