

ABSTRACT

Inspired by other researches conducted on the need for social protection initiatives in order to protect the chronically vulnerable groups in Zimbabwe, few studies have been focusing on cash transfers and those that did, concentrated on the forms of assistance. Debate has mainly focused on either providing communities with direct hard cash, cash vouchers, commodity vouchers, in-kind aid (food aid) or any of the interventions combined. The major thrust in the past studies was the notion that by providing any of these initiatives or a combination it will help in mitigating the ravaging effects of food shortages within the community. Some of the initiatives relied heavily on issues of access, availability and the quality of the product. None of the studies conducted on Zimbabwean cash transfer projects had focused on evaluating the impact and effectiveness of the initiatives on food security.

The main reason for any project evaluation is to determine the suitability of the project in relation to the target group, and to help identify gaps which will form the basis for either future programming or scale-up of the existing project.

This study focused on determining the impact and efficacy (effectiveness) of cash transfers in addressing acute food shortages in Zimbabwe. The research was conducted in Sakubva, a high density suburb of Zimbabwe's eastern city of Mutare where Catholic Relief Services (CRS) had previously conducted a food security guided cash transfer programme.

The research focused on identifying the effectiveness of the targeting process, the community progression regarding food security and the associated coping strategies. It also determined changes in the household dietary diversity caused by the introduction of the cash transfers project in the community and generated food consumption scores (FCS). Thereby it determined the impact of cash transfers on the food security status/levels of the community.

Consolidating and analysing the results from the research revealed that the cash transfer project rightfully targeted the food insecure highly vulnerable groups of the community which included the elderly, chronically ill, widows, disabled and destitute.

iii

These groups were also found to be highly illiterate with only eight percent attaining tertiary education.

From the analysis 76% of the money borrowed by non beneficiaries was spent on food and this led to the conclusion that the targeted area was highly food insecure. There was a remarkable improvement in food consumption due to the introduction of the CT project and this was shown by the radical shift in food consumption score (FCS) from 18 for non beneficiaries (poor food consumption) to 54.5 for beneficiaries (above acceptable food consumption). This was also supported by the remarkable dietary diversity where the index was 1.98 for non beneficiaries, and cash transfers improved it to 4.20.