



An Analysis of the effectiveness of conditional cash transfers on household food security in Mwanza EPA- Mwanza district, Malawi.

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ABSTRACT:

In Mwanza EPA, a district in southern Malawi, this study examined the effects of conditional cash transfers on the food security of households.

Understanding food insecurities in the study area was a major focus of the study. The study included determining the socioeconomic status of conditional cash transfer users, emphasizing their advantages, emphasizing implementation challenges, and evaluating how conditional cash transfers influenced household food insecurity. The descriptive method was mostly used to carry out the investigation and analyze the quantitative data, although qualitative evidence was gathered in line with the study's primary subjects.

The empirical analysis highlighted the crucial role of economic variables in households' food insecurity, especially the reality that CCT-receiving household members practiced CSA and used the proceeds to invest in small-scale enterprises, save in VSLAs, or purchase livestock, showing that their food insecurity reduced as a result of doing so.

KEYWORDS: Food security, Conditional cash transfer, Household, Analysis

I. INTRODUCTION

The ability of conditional cash transfer (CCT) programs to influence both the poor's income in the short term and to enhance their human potential in the medium and long term makes them a prominent social policy tool. CCT initiatives have also received great praise or admiration for their capacity to concentrate on the underprivileged. Along with being

State in which all people are consistently in good physical, social, and economic health and have access to enough preferable, nourishing, and safe food to

cost effective, it also seamlessly integrates several social service sectors including education, health, food, and nutrition.

Furthermore, CCT prevents price distortions that may result from regulations like food and energy subsidies.

Co-responsibility programs or conditional cash transfers (CCT) have become popular tools in Latin America and the Caribbean for reducing poverty. However, these programs differ in terms of how important they are to social protection systems and how they reflect the various social policy frameworks in the nations where they are being implemented.

Programs that offer conditional cash transfers must accomplish two objectives: first, they must consider both the reduction of poverty in the short term through transfers and the reduction of poverty in the long run through investment in human capital. To accomplish the first goal, it is difficult to efficiently target the most impoverished households with the subsidies. Since every family is unique, it could be difficult to describe them, which might result in improper targeting. Cash transfers come in two varieties: unconditional and constrained.

Non-conditional cash transfers are payments made directly to targeted low-income households without any conditions and are intended to help them with their basic needs, as opposed to conditional transfers, which are made to low-income households with the requirement that they spend the money on things like food, healthcare, or their children's education (Parker and Todd, 2017). According to the FAO (2012), food security is the condition or



lead healthy lives. It is founded on each of the four pillars of food security (Availability, Access,

II. Problem Statement

Despite the multiple cash transfer programs taken by the government and other foreign and local entities to attain resilience in food and economic security in the country, there is no doubt that food insecurity remains a serious and recurring occurrence in many parts of Malawi.

In the Mwanza region, and specifically the Mwanza EPA, households use a variety of coping techniques, usually more than one (World Bank, 2017; IMF, 2017). When households are affected by environmental disasters, coping methods have to do with how they continue to live their normal lives. In Malawi, food insecurity is a serious issue.

This is particularly evident in the southern part of Malawi, where Mwanza, the study area, is included. This region has the highest rates of both short-term and long-term food insecurity, according to MNREM (2015). The Mwanza district in Malawi is one of the 28 districts that has been badly affected by food insecurity as a result of a prolonged drought brought on by climate change. Due to the

Utilization and stability).

phenomenon of climate change, the districts' rainfall patterns have changed during the past ten years.

Households in the Mwanza district work to lessen the scope and duration of the food insecurity issue by making use of all available resources.

Households vary in their capacity to gather and manage resources and, consequently, to adapt. Each household's ability to cope with stress is impacted by complex decision-making processes depending on options that are available to it. A number of household factors, such as gender, unofficial agreements and social networks, demographic and economic structure, skills, and labor capacity, have an impact on a household's coping mechanisms at any given time (DFID, 2004). This variation between households and over time needs to be investigated in order to identify the critical elements or mechanisms that influence household resistance to food insecurity in the research area.

III. Literature Review

Conditional Cash Transfers

Conditional Cash Transfers (CCT) programs are essential to social policy in many poor countries (Fitzsbein 2009). These initiatives' main objective is to provide low-income families with financial assistance in exchange for their enrollment and regular attendance of their children in school, regular health visits, and participation in rural livelihood activities. Conditional cash transfers are a glaring example of a new way of looking at social assistance programs that places an emphasis on building long-term human capital. Conditional cash transfers may be one of the main components of modern social protection strategies to address vulnerability and poverty in developing nations. But the social safety policy as a whole includes numerous different programs in addition to cash transfers. CCT programs, according to De la Brière and Rawlings (2006), are a subset of social assistance programs that go beyond traditional social protection and are based on a comprehensive understanding of eradicating poverty that broadens the beneficial effects of growth on development. Like other social protection programs, they help to

protect people and productive assets against the long-term effects of individual and collective shocks caused by diminishing capabilities. The "From Safety Nets to Springboards" social protection programme of the World Bank has been implemented successfully in large part because of CCTs. The UN System's 'Social Protection Floor' project, which aims to give individuals a "minimum level of access to critical services and financial stability for people in the context of current crises and beyond," has more recently included CCTs.

Food Security

A broad definition of food security, according to Ahmed et al. (2007), is "the physical and economic access by all people at all times to sufficient food to meet their dietary needs for a healthy and productive life." This is in line with the definition of food security given by The World Food Summit (1996), which states that it can only exist if everyone, at all times, has physical and financial access to an adequate supply of food that is safe, nourishing, and meets both their dietary needs and their preferences for an active and healthy life. Three critical food security indicators that require specific



attention are access, usage, and "availability" (WFP, 2009: 22–23). In light of this, it is established that a household's ability to acquire food is influenced by the cost of food, household income, and asset or resource base. A higher household income can boost food access, hence enhancing food security. According to Von Braun et al. (1992), an increased asset base lessens a household's susceptibility to short-term interruptions in income flow because some of the asset base can be sold during difficult times. Therefore, poverty is a key factor in chronic household food insecurity, which occurs when low-income people lack the means to ensure their access to food, even when it is available in local markets.

Relevance of CCTs to the SDGs

CCTs have been applauded as a way to lessen inequality, help families break the cycle of generational poverty, and improve children's health, nutrition, and education. The effectiveness of conditional cash transfers has been significantly attributed to the execution of extensive program evaluations, which frequently demonstrated

improved food intake, increased use of education and health services, and adoption of climate-smart agriculture among beneficiary households. Participation in Oportunidades, for example, is associated with improvements in infant mortality (SDG 3), enhanced nutrition and advancements in measurements of anthropometry among young children (SDG 3), and improvements in school attendance and enrollment, including among girls (SDGs 4 and 3). Additionally, CCTs are believed to be helpful in reducing child labor. There is, however, little evidence that adult beneficiaries reduced their work efforts; in some instances, recipients increased their involvement in the labor force. None of them left their home jobs in the corporate world as the result of taking part in the program. Due to the combination of affordable prices, demonstrated results in human growth, and vast population coverage, policymakers have a choice that is both economically and politically viable and worthwhile to continue regardless of how governments change (Gasper Faith, 2010)

IV. Significance of the Study

Based on earlier research (Kita, 2014), individuals have become more conscious of the extent to which food scarcity is and how it impacts household' long-term ability to live. Given that conditioned cash transfers are connected to climate-smart agricultural programs like conservation farming, agroforestry and irrigation, managing watersheds, and swale constructing that are designed to mitigate the impacts of weather-related events like severe droughts, irregular rains, dry spells, and fall army worms in along with flooding, there are a few investigations that empirically describe resilience of households in food security. The evidence that is currently available is extremely weak because so little study has been done on the role that conditional cash transfers play in achieving food security in Mwanza EPA in the Mwanza district. This investigation will help responsible organizations and authorities create initiatives and laws that are appropriate for eliminating poverty within Mwanza district. The study will also be helpful in planning and developing interventions to improve the availability of food at the family level.

This background information served as the basis for the current study, which examined whether

or not conditions around transfers of cash enhances household food insecurity nor the extent to which households become resilient to food insecurity. Additionally, the study supports SDG 2's aim of eradicating hunger in addition to the one-third of the present five cornerstones of the Malawi poverty reduction Strategies that aims to enhance living conditions for the most vulnerable. It is crucial to guarantee that the quality of life for those who are most at risk is improved and maintained at an acceptable level. To do this, substantial transfers are given to the chronically impoverished while only little assistance is provided to the temporarily poor. To support the overall goal, four distinct kinds of safety nets have been created, one of that focuses on an inputs programme to boost the productivity of the poor with little money by providing free agricultural inputs.

The study will also add to the body of evidence by focusing on problems associated with food insecurity in smallholder farmer households, clearly articulating them, and offering suggestions for future conditional cash transfer administration that will enable them to effectively achieve their intended goals.



V. Research Objectives

5.1 Main objective

To analyze the effectiveness of conditional cash transfers on household food security.

5.2 Specific objective

- a. To understand the food insecurities in the Mwanza EPA
- b. To investigate the socio-economic status of conditional cash transfers beneficiaries.
- c. Identify the benefits of conditional cash transfer
- d. Identify challenges of implementing conditional cash transfers
- e. To assess the effects of conditional cash transfers on household food security

5.3 Research Question and Hypothesis

What is the effectiveness of conditional cash transfers?

- i. How do conditional cash transfers affect household food security?
- ii. What is the socio-economic status of conditional cash transfer beneficiaries?
- iii. What are the benefits of conditional cash transfer?
- iv. What are the challenges of conditional cash transfer?
- v. What can be done differently to achieve food security at household level?

VI. Methodology

6.1 Research Approach and design

According to Saunders et al. and Miller, descriptive research accurately profiles people, events, or circumstances. This design provides researchers with a profile of relevant phenomena-related elements from a household, organizational, and individual standpoint. As a result, the researcher can collect information from a variety of respondents using this research design to analyze how well conditional cash transfers have affected household food security in the Mwanza EPA.

The study will make use of a survey method and a cross-sectional methodology. A cross-sectional survey entails polling a sample of the population that is representative of the entire population at one particular period. To ensure the accuracy of the data gathered, the survey approach will ask both open ended and close ended questions. The design, according to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), allows a researcher to look into the state of behavior at the moment.

6.2 Study Population

To choose which families to include in the study, a purposeful sampling technique will be employed. This study will be non-probabilistic and even deliberate in that the participants will be chosen based on precise inclusion and exclusion criteria. Households from the conditional cash transfer project in the area will be enrolled for participation if they comply with the program's requirements. A random sample procedure was used to determine the study's population. Although all of the criteria were challenging to meet, the households were chosen based on their duration in the study, household availability at the time of research, land ownership, and acceptance of the project requirements.

6.3 Sampling Procedure

In order to ensure that specific types of cases of persons who might be included are represented in the research study's final sample, purposeful sampling processes avoid any kind of random sampling. The justification for using a purposive sampling strategy is based on the assumption that given the goals and objectives of the study, specific types of people may have distinctive and significant opinions about the theories and issues under consideration, according to Mason (2002) and Trost (1986).

With a margin of error of 6%, the predicted sample size for households receiving conditional cash transfers was 123. However, after discarding certain data for having more missing values in the responses from the homes, the collected data showed that only 101 populations were included for the analysis. 50 of the 101 surveys were qualitative, and 51 were quantitative.

Thus, the actual data collection had a response rate of 82%.

VII. Research Findings, discussions and Analysis

Understanding food insecurities in the study area

The focus group discussions and structured interview for key informants showed that there were different perceptions of what food insecurities at household level is all about. Some of the key informants who participated in the study defined food insecurity as having no food at all or eating once or few meals a day while others defined it as eating an unbalanced food with others defining it a crop failure. Some respondents described a food insecure household as that which begs for food during lean periods. Others



continued to add that a food insecure household can also be described as that which goes on to migrate to other places like Mozambique for food or work to get cash in order for them to afford a meal and this was noted that the most difficult times start when people have just harvested.

Average Food shortages

55 respondents were interviewed and the analysis category was used ranging from food secure, moderate food secure, moderate food insecure, food insecure to acute or severe food insecure. The responses for the variables indicated that cumulatively 52 % of the households were food secure while 32 % were food insecure with only 16 % being severely food insecure.

Socio-economic Factors that Determine Household Food Insecurity in the Study Area

The study also examined a number of socioeconomic characteristics, including human capital, including the sex of the household head, marital status, household head's reading level, and family size: Natural capital elements like land ownership and physical capital elements like cattle ownership. These play a role in household food security.

Benefits of Conditional Cash Transfers

The study also sought to determine the advantages of cash transfers, and it was discovered through focus group discussions (FGDs) that 68% of recipients prioritized purchasing agricultural inputs with their monthly cash transfers, while 40% said that this was their number two priority use. Most recipients of conditional cash transfers reported purchasing improved seeds.

Another 60% of CCT recipients said they used their monthly cash infusions to buy food for their families, while 90% saved it in village savings and loans associations and rotating savings and credit associations, and only 60% used it as their top priority to launch small businesses.

Benefits in Terms of Livestock Ownership

In addition, the study found that 30% of respondents owned livestock obtained via CCTs in order to preserve for the future and provide for those in times of hunger, while less than 5% did not.

Type of CSA intervention as influenced by CCTs

In the instance of the advantages of conditionality in the cash transfers, several climate wise agriculture actions were identified during the focus group talks. Several of the interventions were conservation agriculture, which tries to reduce labor input by applying mulch to manage runoff, prevent weed emergence, and retain moisture during droughts. In order to improve soil fertility and successfully contribute to less fertilizer application, which results

in lower costs and improved yields due to improved soils, the technique also tries to implement crop association by combining numerous nitrogen-fixing crops.

According to the survey, 28% of respondents chose irrigation farming to boost food production at the household level, whereas 48% of respondents chose conservation agriculture. By building contour ridges, swales, and vetivers grass for soil and water conservation, 16% and 8% of respondents, respectively, adopted catchment conservation and agroforestry. In order to improve soil fertility, the respondents also mentioned that they adopted and planted agroforestry trees in their gardens.

Major Food Coping Strategies

The investigation also learned from the family interviews that people occasionally travel to South Africa and receive food aid from relatives and NGOs. To make sure that only the most significant coping mechanisms were kept for use in further study, coping methods were screened.

The poll found that the majority of individuals use loan shacks as a coping mechanism, as indicated by the fact that 32% of respondents use them, while 24% use reduced meals and 16% use casual labor, the selling of firewood, and locally brewed beer.

Assessing the effects of CCT on household food security

The study shows that it improves food security in a long run as the condition is to have a land for food production. The household have access to markets and the food is available on the market.

The household also said by buying new improved seeds and doing irrigation then food security is certain. One household said the last growing season she harvested 20 bags higher than the past 2 growing season.

Challenges in Implementation of CCTs

It is difficult to identify beneficiaries who are hungry and destitute but willing and able to accept conditionality. The majority of farmers experienced food insecurity but were unwilling to embrace conditionalities, making it difficult to achieve all of the aforementioned requirements.

The district's primary issue, which resulted in some worthy homes being excluded, was the lack of a Unified Beneficiary Register (UBR). The targeting mechanism depended heavily on other members of the community, which made it vulnerable.

VIII. Suggestions and Recommendations

- It is recommended that the Malawian government's Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Food Security, along with the ministry in charge of social services, other



pertinent government departments, and non-governmental organizations interested in cash transfers and climate smart agriculture, incorporate various research outputs to design programs for food insecurity interventions

- Policymakers must consider the best approaches to support the variety of coping mechanisms for food insecurity. To start small businesses, expand existing ones, and prevent gains already made in the form of assets from being sold off or otherwise disposed of during lean times, policies that recognize the value of advantageous strategies like off-farm activities like financial services are needed.
- A better conditional cash transfer program needs to be developed that ensures that the interventions suggested as conditions or criteria to receive cash transfers are followed and that extension workers are involved with the communities at all levels. This will help to consolidate success.
- Communities at the household level should work to actively support elements like asset ownership (both agricultural and non-agricultural), as this study has shown that asset ownership significantly increases a household's ability to withstand the precarious and unpredictably changing environments in which it finds itself.
- In order to provide food security at the household level, a multi-sectoral approach is required. Food security is a problem that shouldn't be left up to the agriculture ministry alone; other sectors are involved as well. Where there is decent health, sanitation, psychosocial support, education, trade, and industry, among other things, a household's livelihood can be best pursued.

IX. Conclusion

This study's main goal was to evaluate how conditional cash transfers affected Mwanza households' access to food. Understanding the socioeconomic status of CCT recipients, identifying the advantages of conditional cash transfers that in turn influence households to be food secure, and looking into the coping mechanisms used by households that ultimately contribute to factors affecting household food security are all necessary. The study also aimed to uncover the difficulties experienced during CCT implementation.

According to the study, conditional cash transfers can increase food security at the family level to some amount provided that the household has all the resources and support it needs. Due to family size, a lack of domestic labor, and other household dynamics, the study found that some households still experienced food insecurity. Beneficiaries of conditional cash transfers have a better likelihood of improving their socioeconomic situation if they receive support.

According to the results, there is still a significant issue with food insecurity in the research area. Given that the majority of the households in the research area reported moderate food shortages during lean times, it was determined that more than half of them experienced food insecurity. The findings also show that having assets like land and livestock improves a household's food security situation because beneficiaries use some of the funds they receive to buy them before eventually selling them to pay off loans and stock up on food during times of famine.

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